

Mechanic 1091

1091 Making It Clear

The day after the Black Star Cup's announcement, countless representatives of the media and financial groups came with money in their pockets, wanting to buy the rights to broadcast the event.

Inside the large conference room of the army's headquarters, Sylvia sat in the top seat. Countless remote projections of representatives sat below and chatted nonstop. The room was noisy.

"Silence."

Sylvia knocked on the table, and the entire place did indeed become silent. Everyone turned to look at her.

As the Chief Administrative Official of the army, Sylvia was also in charge of communicating with the outside. In the eyes of many organizations, she was no doubt someone who held a high position and a lot of power. Even though all the people sitting there were upper echelons of their own media and financial groups, they were still very obedient in front of Sylvia.

Sylvia looked around and said with a serious tone, "You're all here for the same purpose. About the Black Star Cup Army Tournament, the Army Commander intends to develop it into an integrated sports event for Supers. The first season will temporarily be limited only to the army itself, but in the future, people from other forces might participate too. The details are in the introduction of the rules and regulations of the competition, which I believe you have all already read.

"The army hopes to broadcast the event to the entire universe, so the broadcasting rights will be sold by areas. Planet-level broadcasting rights will not be sold alone. The lowest will be at the Star Zone level, which costs 15 million Enas. The broadcasting rights for a Star System costs 120 million Enas, and the Star Cluster broadcasting rights costs 980 million Enas. It can be paid in one go or up to five terms. This is only the initial price for reference. If any of you want to be the only one broadcasting it in the area, the sale will be done in the form of bidding."

Hearing this, a commotion began under the stage. Many people exchanged looks and saw the surprise in each other's eyes.

Given the Black Star Army's position and the popularity of this competition, this price was more than just generous. It was much lower than they expected.

Usually, there would only be two ways to sell the broadcasting rights of this kind of event. The most common one would be selling it to the media, not restricting the areas where the said media would play it in. Another would be to sell it by areas, which was usually used for large-scale broadcasting. Very few could do the latter, or the media would not allow it. Of course, the Black Star Army had the right to.

The basic unit was Star Zone, which meant that if bought, it would only be allowed to be broadcast in one Star Zone. Although the current quantum network was extremely developed and connected the entire galactic society, most viewers still had area-based preferences. It was basically like the local channel.

Indeed, the price of 15 million Enas was not low, but any media or financial group that dared to come to make deals with the army had no shortage of that much money.

If the broadcasting areas overlapped, the event would then be broadcast together unless an auction was held for the exclusive rights. If different levels of broadcasting areas were to overlap—for example, if one media bought the Star System broadcasting rights while the other brought the Star Zone broadcasting rights that included this Star System—the issue would either be left undealt with or they could request to negotiate with the army. The army would then either refund the broadcasting rights or have the two media groups work together. However, any media purchasing a large area broadcasting right, selling it themselves was absolutely forbidden.

Sylvia called out Phillip's doppelgangers, which appeared beside every representative, to record the prices they were willing to pay.

The media representatives contemplated for a while and wrote down their requests and prices.

They could all see the business potential of the Black Star Cup. Lately, the Black Star Army had done a lot of shocking things and attracted a lot of attention, especially Black Star's Godlike Battle and the Holy Light Particle incidents. The army had welcomed a lot of traffic. In fact, in every ten galactic residents, at least four would pay attention to news about the army.

Furthermore, the Black Star Cup itself was also very appealing. Although there were many Supers in the universe and battles between them were anything but rare, a competition where countless Supers of different Grades all participated together was extremely rare. Plus, there were even things like selections and drafting events, which would make things much more interesting for the audience.

Also, the competition had way too many items. Where else could anyone see such an interesting sports entertainment event with so many Supers attending?

According to the blueprint of the Black Star Cup, there was a chance this would turn into a league festival in the future that more organizations would take part in. With the Black Star Army's position, anyone copying the idea was nothing to be worried about. From a long-term perspective, this competition had a lot of growth potential. The representatives present not only wanted to sign this competition, but some even wanted to immediately sign the next few seasons too as a long-term investment.

"That's a win-win for us." Sylvia continued speaking while they were considering the prices to pay. "The army wants to make the Black Star Cup big, so we need more media groups to broadcast it and increase the event's popularity, while you guys need people to watch your channel. I'm sure I don't have to emphasize the scale of the Black Star Cup. It's a festival that..."

At this time, a financial group representative raised his hand and said, "I heard that the army is opening up bets internally. Do you accept exterior bets?"

"You guys can set up bets yourselves, but the army's pot doesn't accept bets from the outside." Sylvia waved her hand.

"And why is that? If you guys open up the bet, the commission you can earn from it will be countless times greater." Someone questioned.

“This is the highest order from the Army Commander.”

Sylvia did not explain it to them. Actually, when she came to know that Han Xiao had made this decision, she was confused too. This was an opportunity to make a lot of money, and from what she knew about Han Xiao, he would not let this opportunity slip past. However, to her surprise, it was like her teacher’s personality changed on this matter.

Afterward, Han Xiao explained it to her. He said that although the army was quite wealthy, the bets from the outside world were still way too large. There were risks to opening the betting to the outside world, and some fool—Sorokin—might cause problems in the dark. Comparatively, if the bets were only open to the internal members, it was basically equivalent to cycling the funds within the army. No matter who won or lost, the money was still in the hands of the army’s members.

On the other hand, the people participating in the competition were their own army members, and if the army opened the bets to the outside world, the army members might have some disgruntled guesses about why it was the case. This was not beneficial to building their mindsets. If the bets were only limited to within the army, the image it gave would be much better. It would feel like a family betting with each other within the family.

Simply put...

We ain’t gonna earn this dirty money!

After retrieving all the price quotes, Iapetus brought his business team along and came in for negotiations, while Sylvia left the conference room and headed for the next meeting.

Other than the selling of broadcasting rights, the army also planned to find a lot of sponsors for the Black Star Cup. The partners of the army would provide some form of sponsorship, be it for the sake of profit or face, and all of that added together was quite a large amount of money.

Sorokin had approached Han Xiao for this purpose, too.

...

“You want to sponsor the Black Star Cup?”

Han Xiao sized up Sorokin’s remote projection.

“That’s right. You’re a shareholder of the Limitless Financial Group. Of course, I have to show my support for your projects.” Sorokin had his signature fake smile on his face.

“How much do you plan to sponsor?”

Sorokin gave a number, smiled, and said, “This number represents my sincerity.”

Han Xiao’s heart skipped a beat. This amount was quite outrageous.

Your sincerity is overflowing...

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, the Black Star Cup has a lot of potential. I have very high hopes in this investment.” Sorokin smiled and slowly said, “Plus, we’re partners now. Due to some reasons in the past, some cracks were made in our relationship, so I’m hoping to fix our relationship...”

Han Xiao understood.

Right, so you’re here to give me ‘protection fees’, hoping to compensate for the loss you’ve caused me before.

He had essentially threatened Sorokin to obtain the position of shareholder, which could not be changed. Sorokin had already accepted that, so he mainly wanted to fix their relationship. He had to say, this guy really knew when to compromise and take a step back.

Han Xiao suddenly thought of something.

This guy probably was not only there to make up for what he had done but also for Traveler.

Dark Lord had caught Traveler, and the dynasty had already announced that he would be openly executed. Han Xiao had gone to the secondary dimensions some time ago, so Sorokin might think that he had found something out. Thus, he had come to test Han Xiao.

After all, Sorokin meddled in the attack on Hila, and Traveler was one of the very few people who knew about it, so it was natural that he was worried.

“Alright then. About before, I shall hold you less responsible.” Han Xiao smiled, dragged his words, and said, “About Heber...”

Sorokin’s eyelid trembled. “This...”

Before he answered, Han Xiao laughed and said, “Don’t worry, I’m kidding. How can I let you void your agreement with him, use the methods you used on me on him, and take away all the developments you’ve helped him make? He and I are so very close.”

As if I’d believe you...

Sorokin adjusted his emotions and tested Han Xiao by saying, “I heard you went to the secondary dimensions recently. How was it?”

“Not bad. I went to quite a few places...”

Han Xiao chattered about everything but what he knew Sorokin really wanted to know about.

After patiently listening for a while, Sorokin realized that Han Xiao was deliberately avoiding the topic, so he had no choice but to cough and say, “I heard that Dark Lord caught Traveler in the secondary dimensions. Did you meet him?”

“Yes.” Han Xiao nodded.

Sorokin was glad. Just as he was about to listen to what Han Xiao was going to say next, he suddenly realized that Han Xiao had stopped and did not seem like he was going to continue at all.

“...”

The two of them looked at each other in silence for close to half a minute.

Finally, Sorokin could not take it anymore and asked with resignation, "What happened?"

"Back then, Dark Da... ahem, Traveler almost escaped from Dark Lord, but he ran into me, so I captured him." Han Xiao tutted. "Speaking of which, that guy hardly had a backbone. I only tortured him a little bit, and he gave up the identity of who was behind all this."

Sorokin's heart tightened. "Who?"

Han Xiao glanced at him and slowly said, "He said he isn't really a neutral mercenary but a secret direct member of a Super Star Cluster civilization. He was ordered by his superiors to disrupt me when Hila was attacked."

"Direct member?" Sorokin was curious. "Of whom?"

Han Xiao said with a grave tone, "None of us expected him to actually be a member of the Modo Civilization."

"Modo..."

Sorokin pondered.

Suddenly, realizing something, he became alarmed.

Wait a minute. There's no way Traveler would have covered the truth for me. He'd definitely expose the fact that I was the reason the Star Cluster sent him on this mission.

This meant that the dynasty knew he was involved.

"Then you..." Sorokin stared at Han Xiao but did not know what to say.

"What do you want to say?" Han Xiao raised his brows.

"What else did Traveler say?"

"Are you asking whether Traveler ratted you out?" Han Xiao said with a smile.

Sorokin's expression tightened. Since Black Star had said that, he was sure he was exposed.

This time, Han Xiao stopped smiling and coldly said, "What you've done behind my back isn't very nice."

He had planned to hide this, but when Sorokin came to find him, he understood that his initial plan of staying in the dark was not so realistic.

The dynasty was going to publicly execute Traveler, so Sorokin definitely had no room to daydream. He knew that there was a very high chance Traveler would throw the blame to him, nor did Traveler have any reason to cover up for him. Therefore, the dynasty most likely would know about what he did, and Black Star certainly was notified about him plotting against the Black Star Army.

This way, even if Han Xiao acted like he did not know it, Sorokin would only be more alarmed. Therefore, he might as well make it clear. According to what he knew about Sorokin, this guy definitely would not want to make things ugly but would instead try to compensate for it.

After all, even if Sorokin gave him compensation, it did not mean that he would stop targeting him.

Sorokin paused, sighed, and said, "Alright, got it. The motive behind what I did was just to maintain balance; it's not personal. Nonetheless, I owe you for this incident. Since we're now partners, I'll give you an appropriate answer."

Han Xiao carefully observed his expression and narrowed his eyes.

As he expected, given how thick-skinned Sorokin was, him panicking after being exposed was not likely. He would have instead confessed and apologized on the spot, then looked for compensation measures.

Furthermore, Sorokin was very cheeky and actually prepared for this—he deliberately told Traveler about 'how he really felt' and gave his actions the excuse of maintaining unity and disrupting the Beyond Grade A shared battlefield. This way, it would not seem personal.

With this mindset as the reason, even if he was exposed, he would not be targeted too much. This was because the stand he had displayed on this matter was actually the same as the three Universal Civilizations' stand.

The only difference was the methods he used. Even so, he had hardly offended the dynasty. After all, his method was just indirect disruption, not direct interference.

In the current complex universe structure, the three Universal Civilizations had conflicts of interest with the development union. As a member of the association that also had the same mindset as the three Universal Civilizations, Sorokin might become one of the people they might want to draw to their side.

Although having his stance exposed would lead to those Beyond Grade As who supported the shared battlefield such as Mechanic Emperor and Black Star distancing themselves from him, this also became an opportunity for him to get closer to the three Universal Civilizations. This way, his losses would be minimized.

Han Xiao could only praise Sorokin's intelligence. Relying on his resources, this guy could always deal with the negative side effects very well.

The biggest problem was that he had worked with the Super Star Cluster Alliance on this, so the three Universal Civilizations would definitely not be happy about it. Sorokin had no way of washing that off, so he had to pay a price.

The second problem was Han Xiao's attitude on this. Black Star was insulted, and no one could shake his position in the association now. Sorokin had no choice but to prepare for Han Xiao to make an outrageous demand.

Many thoughts flashed through Han Xiao's mind. He blinked and said coldly, "Let me hear how you're planning to express your apology to me."

1092 Opening

"I'll give the Black Star Army more support. For all the services and resources you purchase from the Limitless Financial Group in the future, you will only be charged the cost. At the same time, I'll bring in a lot of discounted business projects and partner up with the Germinal Financial Group under you, helping it grow. Also, I'm willing to invest and build factories in the Black Star Army's territory without any cost

or profit in mind. Through investing and helping your business to grow in various industries on your territory...”

Sorokin mentioned a lot of things. In conclusion, other than monetary compensation, he was also going to use the Limitless Financial Group’s businesses and funds to help the Black Star Army grow and develop.

Han Xiao made some calculations in his head. If these terms were all to be carried out, despite how wealthy the Limitless Financial Group was, it would not be a small expenditure at all. To the army’s territories, the construction would be sped up tremendously.

This guy really seemed serious about fixing the relationship.

In the past, Sorokin used a similar method to help the Bloodshed Land grow. Now, the Bloodshed Land had mostly completed their business transformation and become a strong competitor of the army in the Shattered Star Ring. Sorokin was now offering the same treatment to the Black Star Army, with even better terms.

As for the support he had been providing to Heber, even though Black Star did not mention it, Sorokin was going to stop it for the time being.

“Hmm...” Han Xiao neither agreed nor disagreed. He then brought up a new term. “Although the construction in the Flickering World territories is important, the army has a larger goal. I’m planning to develop the army in the other Star Fields too. Your Limitless Financial Group has influence and businesses in various Star Fields too. I suppose you can share some of that too.”

“...Okay.” Sorokin was smiling on the surface but actually clenching his teeth in his mind.

He knew that this request meant that Black Star was not satisfied with just resources but had his eyes on the Limitless Financial Group’s channels and connections across the Star Fields. Black Star wanted to suck the Limitless Financial Group’s blood and take its businesses to nurture the army’s businesses in the other Star Fields. It was quite an outrageous demand.

Although Sorokin was mentally prepared for it, he was still quite hurt.

One reason he was willing to give so much compensation was to fix his relationship with Black Star. It was worth investing in him despite the fact that the chance of Black Star no longer targeting him was only fifty percent. Another reason was to display his stance to the dynasty.

Although the Black Star Army might become a parasite to the Limitless Financial Group, leeching on its meat to grow, the most urgent matter now was to deal with the dynasty. Suffering from losses was inevitable, or Sorokin would not have compromised like this. The Black Star Army was strong indeed, but he was not afraid of Han Xiao in the field of business. It was the dynasty behind Han Xiao that concerned him.

After getting by this incident, the profit he lost could be slowly earned back in the future, and the agreements made now could be ignored in various ways too. Therefore, Sorokin decided to agree with it for the time being.

“Also, I like Universal Treasures. Be it complete products or blueprints, I like to collect them all. The Limitless Financial Group should have some ways to get them—share them with me,” Han Xiao said.

“I’ll do my best to collect them after I get back.” Sorokin agreed without hesitation. He was already agreeing to pay a lot of debts; agreeing to more did not really make a difference.

“That’s it then. Carry out these terms as soon as possible.” Han Xiao waved his hand. “I have some things to attend to later, so let’s end our chat here today.”

“Okay, I won’t disturb you any longer.”

Sorokin stood up, nodded slightly, and hung up the communication. His remote projection disappeared.

Han Xiao leaned back and pondered.

“Traveler is dead loyal to the Star Arc Civilization, and only I know about it for now. I wonder if the dynasty can get that from him in the interrogation. No matter what, as of now, Traveler is firm about Sorokin being the one behind it on the dynasty’s side. The dynasty will definitely send someone to question Sorokin’s motive.

“At that time, Sorokin will surely blame it on the Super Star Cluster Alliance. I told him Modo is the true mastermind, so he will most likely say the same to the dynasty. If the dynasty continues to ask, he’ll probably say I told him. The dynasty knows that I have beef with Modo, so they’ll know my motive. Although they clearly know this is a lie and framing, they might be happy to go along with it. In the future, they might use this as an excuse to cause trouble for the Modo Civilization and other Super Star Cluster civilizations.

“As for Sorokin, he might not believe what I said, but even if he doesn’t believe Traveler belongs to the Modo Civilization, he’ll definitely investigate it...”

Han Xiao shook his head and smiled.

This way, the one who suffered the most damage from this entire incident would be the Modo Civilization. It basically all fell onto their head out of nowhere.

In the three Universal Civilizations’ future operations to deal with the Super Star Cluster Alliance, the Modo Civilization would probably receive the most ‘love’.

“This way, the second requirement of that Grade S mission [Kunde Race Leader’s Last Wish] should be about complete...”

Han Xiao’s eyes slightly sparkled, and he rubbed his hands.

He had been tempted by the reward of this mission for a very long time. [Proof of Leadership], [The Enemy], and [Kunde Rage], a total of three excellent abilities. Currently, the Modo Civilization was protected by the Super Star Cluster Alliance and was keeping a low profile, so he could not target them directly. The only thing he could do was wait for the certain conflict in the future.

...

News about the Black Star Cup quickly spread. The entire army showed an extremely high passion for it; countless members registered.

Most people joined for entertainment purposes, but a few ambitious army warriors saw this as an opportunity to display their strength.

The Black Star Cup had also received a lot of attention among the army players. The forums were filled with posts about it once again.

Heaven Is Below Me: "What's going on? Wasn't Black Star just going to enter the show business not long ago, and now the army is going to enter the sports industry?"

Itchy Head: "That's how large factions are."

Never Starve Even Dead: "This feels more interesting than the Pro League."

Tiny And Weak: "The scale of this tournament is the biggest I've ever seen. It has a lot of events and a lot of participants. All participants are allowed to even join as many as five events. How many competitions are there going to be? There are card games and even bets too?"

Two White Rabbits: "Not just card games, there are even singing and dancing contests. I even saw people request stand-up comedy competitions, and it was even approved!"

Dragon Emperor Licker: "Honestly, I want to see Black Star dance..."

Sky High Professional Account Boosting Studio: "The rewards for these competitions are quite rich, and the items with the greatest rewards are still related to combat. The top 300,000 will all be rewarded, and our weapons are not even limited. This means that if we participate in group battles, use our explosion backpacks and evolution badges, and utilize similar dirty tactics, will we take all of the top positions?"

Feidin Supporters Group President: "Let me take a look. Whose wallets are getting thick again? (Black Star's Smile.jpg)"

Cow Lover: "Army Commander, this is my protection fee for this year."

While the Black Star Cup was still in preparation, countless players were already getting their wallets ready.

For the days that followed, the sales of the logistics department skyrocketed. The EXP Han Xiao received every day increased by a huge portion too. Tons of players spent more than half of the resources they had been accumulating since the start of the Flickering World version on studying and leveling up abilities.

Seeing the EXP growth every day, Han Xiao felt very good.

If I don't take the players' hard-earn money, am I still human?

At this rate, level 340 was not going to be far away. However, to obtain one more God's Trait Transformation Point during Promotion, he decided to use the EXP he earned to level up some blueprint abilities and all his class knowledges to the max level.

Sylvia and Phillip were very efficient. With the Black Star Army's current position, all the administrative procedures were approved smoothly without any hiccups.

Han Xiao selected many desolate planets as the event venues. The professional galactic construction teams called over by the Limitless Financial Group quickly built up the facilities needed, while the army members participating in the Black Star Cup arrived one after another.

The schedule was similar to the Pro League. Due to the extremely large number of participants, a group of people would first be eliminated in the qualifiers, then it would move on to the actual event.

After preheating it for more than two months, the preparations for the first season Black Star Cup were finally complete.

On October 28th, Year 730 of the Galaxy Calendar, the Black Star Cup opening ceremony was held as scheduled. With help from the media groups, the eyes of the entire universe were focused on this giant festival.

Chapter 1093 Tide from Afar

Countless spaceships surrounded a sapphire planet. Colorful lights penetrated the artificial atmosphere and made the sky of this planet as beautiful as the northern lights. This was one of the desolate planets in the army's territory, it was rebuilt into one of the venues for the Black Star Cup. Countless facilities such as stages, rings, large stadiums, and low altitude racing tracks were built on the surface, visible to the naked eye even from outside the atmosphere. Other than the buildings on the surface, there were also floating stages in the air. Some were VIP seats exclusive to the army members above Grade C, and others were more rings. As there were many items and participants, as many competition venues were needed as possible to increase the efficiency of the qualifiers.

At this time, the sights of all the media groups and army spaceships were locked onto the biggest floating stage. On it was a lectern.

Today was the opening ceremony. As the leader of the army, the founder of the Black Star Cup, Han Xiao was going to speak to the entire universe here.

Countless galactic residents of the explored universe watched their communicators as time passed by. Finally, the time for the official start of the opening ceremony had arrived.

Hu!

Watched by countless people, a black silhouette descended like a meteor from space, gradually decelerating and accurately landing on the edge of the stage. With a light spin, the dancing black and gold coat spun like a black tornado, getting rid of the flames from when he penetrated the atmosphere.

Han Xiao slowly walked to the speaking desk and looked up at the sky. The spotlights from countless spaceships above were like distant stars. Countless eyes were watching him through the live broadcast.

With his hands placed on the sides of the lectern, Han Xiao looked around at the starlight in the sky and slowly spoke. Through the specially made speaker, his voice echoed across the planet.

"October 2nd, Year 688 of the Galaxy Calendar, that was the day the army's former identity—the Black Star Mercenary Group—was founded. Back then, I was only a surface civilization native who had just

stepped off Planet Aquamarine. To save my mother planet, like a newborn animal, I headed into the wide universe, ignorant and weak. To me, this was a world filled with unknown danger. However, for the survival of my mother planet, and the safety of my friends who stayed there, without any hesitation, I...”

The speech was played out live in the various Star Fields. To the Planet Aquamarine people who were watching the broadcast, this old memory started floating to the surface. A sense of pride appeared in their heart.

No matter what Black Star’s position was in the universe, in the eyes of the Planet Aquamarine people, he had only one identity—the greatest man of their planet, the pioneer of Planet Aquamarine who first stepped into the universe. That was a small step for Black Star but a big step for Planet Aquamarine.

Inside the national headquarters of the Aquamarine Federation, Bennett pushed back a political meeting and watched the broadcast.

His hair had already turned white, but it was still combed neatly. He had more wrinkles on his face too. He had become an old man. Having possessed the top power of the planet for many years, he had already developed the vibe of a man with power.

However, at this time, Bennett’s lips were slightly raised, making more wrinkles on his face, and the corners of his eyes were glistening.

Decades ago, when he first met Han Xiao, that lonely man in his memories seemed to overlap with the tall and strong Black Star now.

Thousands of words rushed up to his mind, but all turned into a satisfied sigh.

I’m glad to have met you...

The speech was still going. Han Xiao’s tone gradually became more emotional.

“When I was weak, I met dangers, and I met great men. On the way, I found both enemies and friends. The experiences I had at that time are still vivid in my mind, but when I think about them now, it almost feels like it was an entire lifetime ago.

“I worked hard and spent more than forty years developing the Black Star Army to what it is today. I think I have the right to be proud of it...”

Many army members nodded with admiration.

Almost all army members had taken thought-alignment classes; they knew about the rise of the army. Even those who joined the army for their own future admired the achievements Black Star had made in just over forty years.

Looking at the entire history of the Galaxy, how many people were able to start with nothing and build such an enormous force in such a short time? There was no one else!

Of course, there were people who had achieved more than Black Star, but they also spent a longer time. Black Star, and only Black Star, had risen in the Galaxy at a speed no one in the past could ever compare with.

In the exploration frontline stronghold at the free competition zone, Hila watched Han Xiao from the screen. The adventures they had together in the past flashed through her mind, and her gaze softened.

Manison, Kasuyi, Sorokin, and other Beyond Grade As were also watching the broadcast. Even the Dynasty Ruler Urranrell squeezed out some time in her extremely busy schedule to watch it. Hearing Han Xiao's words, these people uncontrollably sighed.

Maybe Black Star had conflicts with them, but from the bottom of their heart, they still admired what Black Star had achieved. None of them felt they could have done better than Black Star if they were in his position.

"What was I doing again when I was younger than a hundred years old? Still managing the logistics for the former chief?"

Manison was nostalgic.

At the venue, after Han Xiao listed the achievements of the army, his tone became formal.

"As I've just mentioned, although the Black Star Army has achieved many great things, its contribution to the universe is still too little, and I'm ashamed of that. Therefore, I felt that I should start a public report to the entire universe to show everyone what we're capable of, to do my best to give anyone with potential the chance to showcase themselves. And that is why I've founded the Black Star Cup..."

"That's quite a good way to put it..." Urranrell nodded in agreement.

She liked seeing Beyond Grade As enjoying their privileges while not forgetting about making contributions to the entire universe. Sadly, most people did not have this resolve. Although Black Star was unashamedly profit-oriented, she was quite happy he even had this mindset.

When the speech came to an end, Han Xiao smiled and said, "I've said enough. Now, this stage shall be given to the great kids of the Black Star Army. I hereby announce, the first season of the Black Star Cup Army Tournament starts now!"

As his speech ended, deafening applause sounded at the venue!

This was indeed an added sound effect.

If the speech ended and no one applauded, that would have been hella awkward. Plus, the army members were all in the spaceships, so their applause could not reach there.

In the cheering and applause, Han Xiao teleported away. The organizers of the competition showed up right after and started to direct the participants into the venue.

The audience also landed in their seats. The venue became boisterous.

According to the planning that Sylvia had hired some professional event organizers to do, there would be a large performance at the opening ceremony, and only a few more important competition items would be held.

Of course, combat-related events were a must. Referring to the Pro League, Han Xiao had also set up Singles, Groups, Duels, Flag Modes, and so on. He even brought up modes that only appeared in the later Pro Leagues and used them in the Black Star Cup.

There were ordinary people groups all the way up to Calamity Grade groups, as well as groups exclusive to Immortals. All the groups had to choose a representative to participate in the opening ceremony and showcase themselves.

As for the tons of sports and entertainment items, those more popular ones would be carried out.

Quite a number of sports and entertainment items did not have groupings, and Wayne Cards was one of them. Although there were no groupings, it surprisingly had the most participants, so it was chosen to be displayed in the opening ceremony.

The two Wayne Cards players who were about to play in the opening ceremony were Herlous, who was respected in the army's card social circle, and Hadavy, who was a known rascal in the gambling social circle of the army.

Inside an indoor venue, a Wayne Cards board was set up. As soon as the two players stepped into the venue, the difference in their treatments was already clearly visible.

The moment Herlous appeared, cheering from the countless card friends he had sounded, he was clearly very sociable. Hadavy, however, received a deafening hush when he took just a few steps. The audiences were paying their sincerest respect to this rascal who was horrible at gambling.

"Idiots." Hadavy rolled his eyes.

This time, Herlous looked over. These two card arch-enemies who had battled each other countless times looked into each other's eyes. They both saw the same thought in the other's eyes.

Without Feidin and Nero, the king of cards in the army shall be mine!

At the same time, the other stage was already at the Grade D group, and a player had appeared. It was a battle between a graduate of the Super Academy and a newbie player who had only joined in Version 4.0. The two of them looked at each other.

"Remember the rules. Don't continue attacking when the enemy has lost the ability to fight. Deliberately causing heavy injuries is not allowed, as is killing the opponent. The winner shall be determined when one side leaves the stage or admits defeat..."

The mechanical judge explained the rules from the side. Basically, other than deliberately causing heavy injuries to the opponent, there were no rules.

However, there was a special rule against players—as long as the player did not admit defeat, the opponent could beat up the player as much as they wanted; the player would not die anyway.

"That's all. The fight starts... now!"

As the judge gave the word, this academy graduate stomped the ground and charged toward his opponent without hesitation.

Clearly, this newbie player lacked combat experience. In the face of such an aggressive opponent, he immediately panicked. He raised his hand and summoned his two guns, and the high-quality mechanical suit he had bought from the logistics department quickly covered his body. He turned into a ghost-like phantom and swiftly moved around the enemy while continuously firing his guns. He was a Cannon Master.

“Shield!”

The academy graduate activated his mechanical suit too. A foldable ally shield extended on his arm, and the thin energy coating on it deflected all the blue laser beams of the newbie player.

At the same time, his other hand pulled out an intricate mechanical spear. The spear’s tip split open, exposing the barrel within, and shot out explosive bullets one after another, chasing after the fast-moving opponent. The stage was quickly filled with dust and explosions.

This man was a Mechanical Pugilist.

As the Black Star Army’s logistics department provided a lot of high-quality faction-exclusive mechanical weapons, be it the players or ordinary members under the army, many were willing to become Mechanics. After all, they could directly purchase the best equipment for their level in the army.

As long as they had money, they could even skip the gunpowder weapons and buy energy weapons very early on.

Actually, in the face of an Immortal, this academy graduate was more nervous.

Within the army, the players were a group of special beings that were almost deified. In the eyes of most of the lower-level army members, they were very mysterious. There were a lot of rumors about them possessing great power and being maniacs.

Just being unkillable was alright, but according to the rumors, the Immortals were maniacs who did not care about their own lives, which was terrifying...

The two of them fought intensely. Flames and lightning appeared everywhere they went.

The academy graduate fought cautiously, only to surprisingly realize his opponent clearly lacked combat experience. This made him much more confident. His attacks became more aggressive, and he gradually gained the upper hand.

“Looks like I’m about to lose...”

The newbie player looked at his steadily decreasing health, tutted, and took out Black Star Army Badge: Evolution with frustration.

“Roar!”

The next moment, an Aberration appeared on the stage!

This muscular monster pounced forward and pressed the academy graduate onto the ground in an instant, completely locking his movements.

An Aberration with Grade B combat capabilities was completely unbeatable in the Grade D group!

This time, the Aberration opened its enormous mouth, showing its rows of sharp teeth, and looked like he was about to bite down.

“I admit loss! H-help!”

The academy graduate was horrified. Looking at the foul mouth get closer, he subconsciously closed his eyes.

However, the bite he expected did not arrive. Instead, he felt an enormous wet and soft tongue lick him from top to bottom.

“The battle has ended. Blue has won!” the judge announced right on time.

“Ah, I’ve won!”

The newbie player jumped with excitement, shook his butt alluringly for a bit, and then ran to the edge of the floating stage and jumped right down, using the quickest method to get out of this dreadful look.

The dance of the Aberration was too beautiful. The spectators who saw it had to hold back the urge to dig out their eyes.

At the same time, countless viewers felt a chill up their spine.

The rumors were right. The Immortals were indeed maniacs.

On the stage, the academy graduate lay on the ground covered with saliva. His eyes had their vibrance, and he started to doubt the definition of life.

It was a sure win, but the tables had been turned instantly by the opponent’s suicidal shapeshift.

What a hard life I have...

As long as no additional damage was done, items could be used freely in the Black Star Cup. The players were very satisfied with this rule.

In the Pro League, the various powerful weapons of the army were all forbidden. Now that they could use them freely, it felt really good.

Although this was not fair to the army members in the lower grades, this was exactly what Han Xiao wanted. He had a few reasons for it. The first was to show the outside world the terrifying side of the players, that they could possess very high combat capability even at very low grades.

The second reason was to stimulate the sales of the evolution badge. If those players in the lower grade competitions saw that the evolution badge could basically make them invincible and ensure they could achieve a high placement, why would they not buy it?

Furthermore, the evolution badge was not a one-use item, but it had to be recharged.

The last reason was that Han Xiao actually wanted the players to receive the reward for the lower grade competitions. After all, there was not much he could gain from the normal members, and giving the players these rewards was indirectly fertilizing his leek field.

What, the normal players are not happy about it? I didn't say they can't use those strong items, did I? If they have the resolve to not take their life seriously, they can go ahead and use them just like the players.

Even if someone really did it, the judge would not approve of it. Sportsmanship first, competition second. Committing suicide on-stage was not allowed... Oh, except for those who could not die.

Unfair? It is what it is. Not being able to die is their talent. Like those people who have healing powers, you can't not let them use those powers too, can you? Wouldn't that be unfair to them?

If you need to blame it on something, blame it on the fact that you're not an Immortal. Anyway, the final rules are made by the Army Commander. Go find him if you have a problem.

Therefore, even the low-grade army members could not say anything about it. They might even think it made sense.

Without having to make other arrangements, this rule was all the Great Mechanic Han needed to achieve the results he wanted.

...

When the Black Star Cup opening ceremony was being carried out, at the same time, in the Ancient Star Desert Star Field, a civilian archaeological team landed on a desolate planet that no one had been to in many years.

It was called an archaeological team, but they were actually scavengers.

The Ancient Star Desert was very old. Many of its locations were ancient battlefields. There were many mysterious ruins and wastes. Therefore, this Star Field was filled with scavengers trying their luck, hoping to find something good, sell it to the black market, and make a fortune.

In the midst of a blurry corrosive sandstorm that roared across the land, a scavenger wearing a bloated protection suit was using all kinds of mechanical devices to observe underground.

A short, skinny, monkey-like looking team member operated on the screen for a while, then suddenly yelled with surprise.

"Haha, we're in luck! There's an ancient stratum on this planet, and the age of it can't be detected. This means that it's so ancient that it exceeded the upper limit of this device of ours, and more complex tests need to be done to come to a result. I'm now using shock wave detection to draw the map of the underground... Done!"

A complicated underground cavity appeared on the screen. It had a lot of splits and corners that seemed like they were built for the purpose of confusing anyone who went in. With a simple look, it was quite large.

"There are no signs of it ever being discovered!" The short man was overjoyed. "We might have run into a previously-undiscovered ancient civilization ruin!"

"Or it could be filled with rusted metal." Another team member shrugged.

“No matter what, let’s dig in first,” someone who looked like the team leader said with a calm tone.
“Have the spaceship send in the drilling rig. Let’s dive down.”

While they were about to move, this time, a team member pulled the captain’s arm and wiped away the dust on his mask with his other hand, showing a young and handsome face. He was frowning and looked worried.

“Don’t go down first...”

This man’s tone was hesitant.

“I have a feeling that we might dig out something bad...”

If Han Xiao was there, he would have definitely recognized this face.

This was a renowned explorer in the World Tree version.

The first person who discovered the main body of the World Tree!

Chapter 1094 Pandora’s Box

Harrison Moore, a well-known interstellar free explorer, had been passionate about digging for relics and searching for the unknown throughout his life. Though his strength was low, he would magically unearth and discover countless historical relics over the years. He had written more than ten works, and his adventurous spirit had attracted a large number of followers in the universe. He was regarded as a spiritual leader and a beacon of light in life. During the war against the World Tree Civilization, Harrison was in his old age and had already semi-retired. The three Universal Civilizations were the ones to be discovered and thus raided by the World Tree Civilization. They were caught off guard, suffering heavy losses. Because they did not know the origin of the enemy, all civilizations within the explored universe were basically beaten in the early stage. Their entire universe was on the defensive and could only passively resist the endless stream of invaders, as all their planets were occupied by the World Tree Civilization and used as nourishment.

The three Universal Civilizations tried their best to collect clues about the World Tree Civilization, of which the most important one was where the World Tree itself was located.

The World Tree was a Universal Treasure, and it was discovered by the World Tree Civilization during the slash-and-burn era of farming. As such, it gave rise to a distorted form of civilization, where all the development of the civilization was carried out with the World Tree as the core. Countless people tried their best to nourish and enhance this Universal Treasure.

Due to the special nature of the World Tree, only through finding its main body could the problem then be solved from the root. Otherwise, no matter how many invaders they repelled, the World Tree could still use the nutrients from the planets to transform and nurture more troops.

The main body of the World Tree was rooted within the secondary dimensions and hidden deeply. Within that era, the exploration teams mostly consisted of soldiers, and many exploration teams were spontaneously organized to search in the secondary dimensions. Harrison had also re-emerged and joined them.

Because of a series of coincidences, he was also the first to discover the secondary dimension containing the World Tree's main body. He sacrificed his life to record the coordinates, throwing it into the spatial storms of the secondary dimension.

The coordinates were like a drifting bottle floating within the vast ocean, bobbing up and down before finally falling into the hands of the three Universal Civilizations. Thus, Harrison's deeds were passed down, and the world knew of all his achievements.

All of these were Harrison's achievements in the later versions of Han Xiao's past life.

In this current era, Harrison was still a young and new explorer. His great curiosity and desire to explore had prompted him to give up the opportunity to inherit the wealth of his financial group and instead step into this industry.

As a newcomer to this exploration team, Harrison's intuition was obviously not convincing to them. His teammates had the mentality that they could not set off and come back empty-handed. Thus, Harrison's spirit of questioning the source, unfortunately, went unheeded.

Harrison himself had no choice. His curiosity outweighed his vigilance, so he pressed down the vague worry to the bottom of his heart, continuing the journey with his team.

A scavenger spaceship passed through a high-altitude sandstorm, hovering around a hundred meters above the ground before dropping a multi-functional burrowing vehicle. Its outer armor was full of colorful and wild graffiti. Very obviously, it had undergone some processing by this bunch of scavengers with limited knowledge of art.

The group boarded the burrowing vehicle and burrowed into the ground under the instructions of the detection radar, quickly approaching the underground cavity on the map.

Because such underground remains had existed for too long a time, the structure was typically unstable and stood a chance to collapse. Thus, the scavengers normally did not directly drill into the passage but chose to follow the path set.

Hu!

Very quickly, the tip of the drill penetrated the rock formation, exposing a cavity. The team members got down, switching on their flashlights to observe the surrounding environment.

This was an underground cave with traces of being made by man. It was about seven or eight meters high, and at the end of this cave was a closed metal door, which seemed to be the entrance to this underground ruin.

Their short member who served as the detector jogged over, taking out various instruments to scan the metal door. He muttered, "It's well preserved, with few traces of rust. This is a high-strength alloy material, and according to the rough detection results, the material is likely synthesized by a star system level civilization or above. However, there's no matching material record in our database..."

Hearing this, the crowd got excited. The higher the level of the lost civilization they discovered, the more valuable their discoveries would be on the black market.

However, this also represented more unknown risks.

“Any energy responses from inside?” the captain asked.

“Let me see, er... totally absent. I think the energy source has been drained dry. Even if there are traps or defensive measures, they should be frozen.”

“Then let’s go in and take a look,” the captain said. “Later on, take precautions. Without my command, no one is to remove their own protective shield.”

A group of personnel cut open the door using a laser cutting, before tiptoeing inside and fumbling their way. The route within resembled that of a large underground military base.

Harrison walked to a sign, wiping the dust off it, and let the translator read the text. However, there was no result.

“There’s no record of this kind of text in the database. We can determine that this is a relic of a civilization that has not been discovered thus far.” Harrison spoke through the channel.

“Today is really my lucky day. No wonder Ah Xiang finally responded to my daily greeting even though I’ve been sending signals to her for months,” the short detector guy replied in excitement.

“What did she say?” Harrison was curious.

“She said ok.”

“... Keep it up.”

Everyone chatted idly as they searched. They were carefully all the way but found out that there was no danger within. Searching the rooms, they only found living facilities, with no special equipment nor text documents present. Even the energy and network facilities were absent along with any sort of defense facilities. It seemed as though this base had been long abandoned and everything within emptied.

The flames of excitement in everyone’s hearts seemed to have been extinguished by a basin of cold water.

“This can’t be it, right? I found an unknown ruin, but there’s nothing valuable here. Isn’t it a wasted trip then?” the detector guy complained.

“It’s not in vain. At least we managed to discover a new language, which means an unknown civilization that once existed.” Harrison raised the translator in his hand. He had recorded all the signs on the path that they had walked down so far.

“What does this bullsh*t archaeological result mean for us? We’re not even historians!” someone among the team complained. “If it weren’t for getting valuable stuff, who would want to come to such a weird place?”

Scavengers did not have much patience, and their searching speed got faster along the way. It did not take long before only the last room was left, located at the core position at the bottom of the base.

The group cut open the door and walked in, collectively taking a gasp.

There was a triangular body about three to four meters high, embedded in the ground in the center of the room. The whole body was pitch black and as smooth as a mirror. It resembled obsidian somewhat, but the detector revealed it as a metallic material. On one side, a display screen was embedded.

Only this thing existed in the room, nothing else, as though this was an exclusive warehouse.

“Haha, there’s finally something.”

“What is that?”

Everyone surrounded it, brimming with curiosity, feeling here and there and knocking around. Although they did not know what this was, just looking at its appearance, there was no worry that it could not be sold on the black market.

The detector guy came over to the screen on the triangle and pressed a few times, but there was no response. He fumbled around and finally found that there was a movable board beside the screen, which revealed a socket seemingly for charging it.

“Uh... this is the first time I’ve seen a socket of this shape, but there should be no problem.” The guy groaned but quickly took out an energy storage device, transforming its transmission line to fit with the socket.

Just as he was about to charge the triangular block, Harrison was frowning and suddenly spoke.

“Wait a moment!”

Everyone turned to look at him.

“What’s wrong now?”

“I... I feel that it’s still better to be cautious. No one knows what this device is for. What happens if it’s a weapon that has run out of energy?”

Harrison had an expression of hesitation. The moment he set eyes on this triangle, he had felt an inexplicable palpitation, as though there was a voice in his heart warning him that this thing was dangerous. The instinct that he had been born with had never been so strong.

The short detector guy did not even look back as he explained, “Relax, I probed it just now, and this is actually a sophisticated disposable safe device that will be destroyed when opened. It’s just that the innermost layer contains a material that isolates any detection, so I don’t know what’s stored within.”

With that, he directly plugged into the socket, releasing a weak energy charge. The triangle device’s display lit up, and a password input interface popped up.

The captain scooted over for a look. “Can the code be cracked?”

The short detector guy took out another device to fiddle around, and spoke with certainty, “The code of this device changes in real time, so it has to be connected to the quantum network and then use Virtual Technology to decipher the code... The tools I currently have are not good enough, but so long as I use a deciphering device with a higher computing power, it can definitely be opened.”

“If this is the case...” The captain hesitated for a while before saying, “In that case, let’s not open it. Like you said, this thing is a one-off thing. If the items stored inside are not valuable, we’ll lose money. It’s better to just put this safe on the black market for auction and let others draw the prize. Anyway, stuff like this is very common on the black market as well...”

“Can we discuss these things later?” Harrison was feeling nervous for no reason. “Let’s get out of here now. I have a bad feeling...”

“Since when has your intuition been good?”

The captain glared at him but did not reject his proposal. He got everyone to transport the device to the rig.

This was the only valuable thing in this ruin, so this entire group took the device and left, not even bothering to look back at the ruins.

Suddenly, one of the team members noted in a thoughtful manner, “This is strange. By logic, since this planet has traces of an unknown civilization, there should be others, but the detection result only showed this one... That’s impossible. Did that unknown civilization only dig this one underground facility on this planet?”

“That’s right. I thought it was strange too,” another worker added.

At this moment, the shortie took a glance at the radar and exclaimed, “Captain, the ruins seem to have collapsed!”

Everyone turned over to look and saw that the cavity had indeed mysteriously filled up and disappeared. They could no longer return even if they wished to.

“How strange...” the captain mumbled, shaking his head. He ordered, “Forget about it, let’s just mark down the coordinates of this planet, and go to the nearest black market to reap our rewards for today.”

Hearing that, everyone immediately put away any distracting thoughts and started to move, operating their spaceship to leave the planet.

Harrison was the only one who remained standing at the porthole, looking at the shrinking planet. He suddenly felt a little chill run down his spine.

He had a hunch, as though the goal of those ruins was specifically just to store this triangular device.

The ruins had collapsed immediately after they left, as though they had only been waiting for someone to take this thing away.

Harrison could not help but turn his head back for a look.

In the corner of his eyes, the triangular device lay silently at the back, as though it was a Pandora’s box that was waiting to be opened.

...

The opening ceremony of the Black Star Cup was wonderfully opened, and its qualifiers were in full swing the next day. The army had become very lively, and hundreds of millions of members were actively participating on the field, which also improved the enthusiasm of the universe audiences.

Because there were so many events, each media group provided live broadcasts and video review functions throughout the day. Viewers could freely adjust their channels and choose to watch any event, venue, or even the players, which caused countless people to hold up their communicators and stare at them all day long.

The ratings of the Black Star Cup were maintained at a very high level throughout the universe. At present, the average ratings in each region were second only to the news broadcasts of the three Universal Civilizations.

The Black Star Cup tournament organization department, which was only established little more than two months prior, counted the programs with the highest ratings. Other than the battle events, the best were the entertainment programs. Especially in the talent audition category such as singing and dancing, there were countless galactic residents happy to see the Supers appear on alternative programs rather than just in battles.

Some of the talented people had even attracted a large number of admirers, and there were even audiences on the net arguing about the pros and cons of each person... As it turned out, no matter which age it was, such a program would also garner views.

As for the lowest ratings, it was as Han Xiao expected. They were those technological and skill-based competitions, such as the machinery maintenance that Reynold had asked for, waste modification for machinery, and even blueprint crafting competitions...

While there were people willing to look at such programs, they were few and between.

However, Han Xiao did not mind it. Such technical programs were treated more as auditions, to explore potential talents in the various fields and add more fresh blood to the army.

The way to rise in the army had always been clear, and one's rank and position were linked to meritorious service and their qualifications. The Black Star Cup was just another shortcut for its members to ascend in the rankings. Those who were more capable at their level would move toward the upper ranks. This made the members enthusiastic as this model allowed many people to obtain more opportunities within the army.

While the players had their own competition brackets, they were keener to participate in the normal competition brackets, running over to play with the NPCs.

Because the Evolution badge shone in such low-level team events, more and more players had also begun to purchase this item, causing the sales of it to soar drastically.

Using the Evolution badges in events below Grade B gave players a huge boost in strength, but this did not necessarily mean they would win. The biological aberrations were strong in close combat, but their weaknesses were also obvious; their resistance to magic and psychic attacks plummeted, and their range also decreased to melee attacks. They were extremely easy to kite. Plus, they lost HP constantly.

When facing Psychics or Mages, the aberrations usually failed quite badly.

In the Grade B and above ranks, the role of the Evolution Limit: Aberration was not so strong. Grade Bs could directly contend against the aberrations themselves.

Meanwhile, the players from the other countries could only watch with envious and reddened eyes at the festivities in full swing within the Black Star Army.

Let alone attending, they did not even have the qualifications to bet on the winning players!

If one were to split apart the characters of ‘following the crowd’ (从众), they would get five ‘people’ characters (人). The majority of people understood the meaning of ‘the more the merrier’, and seeing this group of Black Star players having fun, the sense of loss was even more intense.

Everyone is playing so happily, and all without me!

Compared to the faction war event more than half a year ago, there were more players that were being moved by the Black Star Army this time. Most likely, the army would indirectly poach a lot of players once more.

Even the Limitless Financial Group experienced a huge outflow of players, but Sorokin was acting extremely low-key, which meant he could not react.

The most painful ones were the foreign clubs in the other factions. They obviously did not do anything this time, but they still had to watch on as the ordinary players left their factions. They could no longer find any reason to stay and just felt like crying.

Why are you forcing us to join this party?

Black Star Army! You’re too much!

A man can only take so much anger. If you have the guts, you can anger me again!

If you force me again, I’ll really join your organization!

Chapter 1095 – Fifth stage of the God’s Trait Transformation and the butterfly effect

Over ten days later, in the central area of Black Star Palace, a war halberd was situated against a backdrop of the starry sky. It looked like a folded mechanical blade that was magnified countless times, painted black and gold. Its patterns and structures were also complicated, and it looked both luxurious and exquisite.

Mechanical rings were currently situated in different areas of his mechanical war halberd. Numerous flexible mechanical arms extended from the inner part of each ring, which were molded into different tools to work on parts of the halberd. These rings were manufacturing auxiliary tools that were dedicated to the manufacturing and assembly of mega machines, known as ‘Mega-Assembly Rings’. Right now, they were all connected through Mechanical Force and operated fully under its control.

On the other end of the Mechanical Force linking the assembly rings together, a black robed figure stood there. It was precisely Han Xiao, and this mega war halberd was the exclusive Universal Treasure for the Mechanical Deity’s usage, named ‘Celestial Punishment Edge’.

Han Xiao kept his Perfect Mechanical Sense active, closely watching the subtle energy flows in every place during the construction of the Celestial Punishment Edge, doing minute adjustments now and then just like a chef watching his signature dish.

As the mechanical arm of the mega assembly ring inserted the last bolt in, a notification sounded from Han Xiao's interface.

You have built a Gold Grade item (Universal Treasure).

You have benefitted from [Spirit Instrument].

You have received 1 God's Trait Transformation Point (Cannot be obtained again through the same blueprint).

One of your random attributes has been decreased by 425...

Randomizing...

Randomizing complete.

-425 CHA.

You have received 425 Free Attribute Points.

You have been awarded the third layer bonus of [Spirit Instrument]: +2.5% success rate for the manufacture of Gold Grade blueprints, +1.2% success rate for the research and development of a Gold Grade Blueprint, +0.4% chance to obtain a Space Wonder mutation.

"It's finally done..." Seeing the notification of success, Han Xiao's taut nerves finally relaxed.

This was the third Universal Treasure he had personally manufactured. Its difficulty was way higher compared to the Emperor's Cape, and it had cost him quite a tidy sum before he finally succeeded in creating it.

However, when compared to the terrifying profits brought in by the sale of the Evolutionary Totems as well as the Black Star Cup, this amount was nothing.

Han Xiao retrieved all the mega assembly rings before storing the Celestial Punishment Edge into his Dimension Factory. Opening his attribute list, he threw the God's Trait Transformation point into his main class route, so [God's Trait Transformation—Machinery] unlocked its fifth stage.

Stage 5: +3 to all skills from [Lord Mechanic] and [Divine Throne Mechanic]. You have received a 1.1x boost to Machinery Affinity, +28% boost to abilities, 1.2x boost to Attack Power Output, 1.2x boost to Shield Durability, +40% Mechanical Energy Core Power Output, and +20% to all types of Energy Power Output.

“Whoa, this wave allows me to increase my strength!” Han Xiao got excited.

In the first few stages, the God’s Trait mainly focused on improving his production and Ru0026D capabilities. For the fifth stage, it finally ushered in a wave of substantial combat strength enhancement. A boost of 1.1x to his Machinery Affinity already meant more than a 2,000% increase to his original Machinery Affinity, not to mention that there was even a boost to abilities, which was the best option to obtain. All its other effects were also biased toward combat.

Furthermore, the skills of his [Lord Mechanic] and [Divine Throne Mechanic] class were also his main combat skills, thus breaking the upper cap by three levels, which represented a great increase in his combat power, at least translating to three more Apostle Weapons.

“In this case, the focus of the fifth stage is to enhance my own efficiency with machinery... eh?” Han Xiao mumbled to himself, but he suddenly discovered that the notifications had not stopped.

[God’s Trait Transformation—Machinery] has achieved the Fifth Stage.

There are now unknown changes in your Life Hierarchy.

You have obtained a new understanding of Machinery. +15% chance of forming a new exclusive expertise. The skill [Universal Simulation] has obtained a sublimation.

You have begun to perceive part of the power of the transformation route – [Talent Unknown].

You have received 1 [The First Sanctum] Ability Fragment.

Seeing this, Han Xiao started guessing once more.

“It seems like the fifth stage of God’s Trait Transformation should be a threshold, just like how there’s a bottleneck in the Energy Rank for Beyond Grade As... If this applies to all God’s Trait Transformation skills, then what’s the upper limit? Ten? Fifteen?”

Han Xiao deeply pondered. Right now, he had an interface that allowed him to directly add points into it, but the normal Beyond Grade A’s method of increasing their number of God’s Trait Transformation stages would not be as convenient as his. In fact, it would take many years for them to even upgrade each level.

After reaching the Fifth Stage of God’s Trait Transformation—Machinery, he was also awarded an Ability Fragment of [The First Sanctum]. Han Xiao had already obtained three fragments so far, but there was still no sign of them combining together. It was also unknown how many fragments he would need to complete this thing.

As of now, Han Xiao also did not know how to obtain an exclusive expertise. If the premise to obtain one was to be immersed within a certain area, then he had already fulfilled the condition with his time spent within the Machinery field. However, there was still no prompt whatsoever.

As for [Universal Simulation], Han Xiao was not foreign to that skill. He used to constantly activate the skill in order to attempt to discover Universal Treasure blueprints, but the progress was so slow it would make one cry.

Seeing the notification on the interface at this time, Han Xiao once again activated the skill, entering the familiar horizon once more. He carefully sensed his surroundings and felt that there had been some subtle changes as compared to the past.

However, this sort of feeling was akin to grasping something in the dark. It was more like his intuition was sharper than before. Anywhere he looked, there would be a sort of 'hindsight' within his brain explaining what he saw.

"There's a sort of feeling pointing me toward the essence of the item... Oh, I guess an improvement in knowledge?"

After experiencing this, Han Xiao did not discover anything too out of the ordinary, and thus, he withdrew his skill, cleaning up the venue before proceeding back to the palace.

Back in his room, Han Xiao took a look at the Black Star Cup tournament.

With Phillip's efficient scheduling and the massive investment of resources, the qualifiers were so fast paced that nearly a third of the people had already been eliminated.

Before this, the galactic residents only knew about the existence of the players but did not pay special attention to them. This time, however, because the Black Star Cup was broadcast to the entire universe, the performance of these players fell into the eyes of the more ordinary people, which aroused their attention and interest.

For the players, who were deemed immortal lunatics, the majority of ordinary people were curious and scared of them. Their mood was like they had encountered an exhibitionist, subconsciously covering their eyes but unable to resist peeking through their fingers.

Coupled with the behavior of the players within the Flickering World, the nickname 'Cancer of the Universe' gradually spread out and received the approval of more people.

The excitement of the Black Star Cup had also attracted a large number of foreign players.

The number of players within the army had always been steadily increasing, and it finally broke through the ten million mark a few days ago. Han Xiao estimated that the final number of army players at the end of this version would be higher than his original estimate of 11.5 million.

The Cancer of the Universe represented disorder and chaos, and since it was basically impossible to recruit all players, the Black Star Army could already slightly guide the overall character of the players. In this manner, so long as he could perform some damage control to ensure that the problems caused by the players were not as serious as in his previous life, that would be enough.

"Speaking of which, my biopic seems like it's about to be released..."

Han Xiao suddenly remembered that he had not touched Feidin for a long time, and he coincidentally recalled this incident.

He searched the net and discovered that the movie had already wrapped up its filming and was slated to be released next month.

Because of the advancements made in productivity, even ordinary citizens of the galactic society could now afford the cost of planning a film, resulting in the proliferation of movies. Coupled with advanced portable equipment as well as the high penetrative rate of the quantum network, the low-profit theater operating model had almost been eliminated, giving way for a more convenient video platform system. New films were released simultaneously on the platforms of all the Star Fields and could be found online.

The movie of his life had an unpretentious name—Black Star: Origins. This movie told his story from Planet Aquamarine, from escaping the Germinal Organization up till he stepped into the galaxy. Because of the limited time frame, Director Beny Travol had cut out most of his deeds, only leaving the key factors to control the rhythm of the film.

Han Xiao had already looked through the preview and had to admit that this well-known director did have the ability to give his experience a lot of surprising twists and turns. He ended the film when Han Xiao stepped into the galactic region, leaving an opportunity to extend it with a sequel.

Within the trailer, Feidin had put on some makeup to pose as the Great Mechanic Han during his time as Black Phantom, and he moved with a face that looked as though he would kill everyone in cold blood.

Seeing this scene, one would only think of the description “Flying like a crane, soaring like a dragon”.

“So cool...” Han Xiao was very satisfied. “He has portrayed my character image very well.”

He eyed the forums and saw that the players were also very interested in the movie. They wanted to see the story of Black Star being made into a movie, while at the same time, they wished to see themselves within the movie.

The movie also portrayed the roles of the immortals, so seeing their own deeds being made into a movie by an NPC gave the players a novel feeling.

“After this movie is released, maybe it can turn into something similar to Bun-Hit-Dog’s videos, increasing the cohesion of the army’s players... If this works, maybe I can get the director to produce a few more sequels.”

Mentally taking note of this, Han Xiao continued to surf on the net before discovering another piece of news that caught his attention.

The Crimson Dynasty had announced that in ten days, the Dark Lord would publicly execute two Beyond Grade As. One of them was Traveler, while the other was an innocent person who was hired by the Super Star Cluster Alliance.

“It is finally going to begin...” Han Xiao pursed his lips.

In this manner, the conflicts between the Beyond Grade As and the Universal Civilizations would only worsen. While there was still a long way to go before it erupted, the seeds of dissatisfaction were already sown.

However, the goal of the three Universal Civilizations this time was not the Beyond Grade As but rather the Super Star Cluster Alliance. They wanted to scare off those Beyond Grade A hired by the Super Star Cluster Alliance, in order to cut off its wings. The three Universal Civilizations had already begun their future plans of suppression.

...

In the Star Arc Civilization's Flickering World territory, a group of senior officials had gathered in a remote conference room with grim expressions.

"The dynasty has captured Traveller and intends to publicly execute him. What should we do?"

"There's no way about it. We can only abandon him. We can't afford to clash with the three Universal Civilizations yet."

"It's a pity then. Traveler was truly loyal to our civilization. This is a huge loss for us."

"The question now is whether Traveler has revealed his true identity. If the dynasty discovers his background, they will have an excuse to provoke a dispute against us."

"Traveler should not betray the civilization, but such matters can't be guaranteed. We must be prepared not to recognize his identity."

Everyone chattered anxiously.

The three Universal Civilizations wished to suppress the Super Star Cluster Alliance, but it was easier said than done. Each of them was an advanced civilization in the universe, and they had to have a legitimate reason to make a move, even if it was a trivial problem. As the rulers of the explored universe, the Universal Civilizations had to maintain the moral high ground, regardless of whether the reason was true or false. They just had to provide an answer for the masses.

Thus, the Super Star Cluster Alliance was keeping a low profile and was unwilling to give the three Universal Civilizations an excuse. Its current presence in the universe was not too outstanding.

The strength of the Super Star Cluster Alliance was only below that of the Universal Civilizations, so they would not be easily suppressed. While the three Universal Civilizations were clamoring to suppress them, they also had to make sufficient preparations.

No matter the three Universal Civilizations or the Super Star Cluster Alliance, they restrained themselves for the time being. Both sides understood that this was just the calm before the storm and that they had to first complete the development of the new Star Field.

The Super Star Cluster Alliance wished to obtain a chance to rise up, and the result of this conflict will determine the future of the explored universe.

...

"40,000 Enas!"

"45,000 Enas!"

“45,000 going once, going twice... no higher bids? Okay, 45,000 going thrice. The antiques produced by the Dhogo Civilization now belong to Buyer #068!”

Within a small private space station in the Ancient Star Desert, there was a black market auction underway.

The auction site was a circular room with a booth in the center where the items were displayed. By the side, the auctioneer introduced each one of them to the virtual screens on the surrounding walls. Each screen represented a black market buyer who was remotely participating in the auction. Everyone’s identity was kept confidential this way.

Because this was a remote auction, each item would be delivered to the buyer’s designated location through the black market’s logistics channel.

The auctioneer knocked on the table before shouting, “The next auction item is a disposable safe discovered by an archaeological team on a deserted planet. This item comes from the ruins of an unknown civilization, which is suspected to be at the Star System level or above. You’ll need the quantum network to decipher the code on the device before it can be opened. Right now, it has yet to be opened, so it’s up to your luck as to what comes out. Of course, it’s also possible for you to purchase the item just for your collection. The starting bid is 4,000 Enas.”

A few workers brought up a gleaming triangular device, which was precisely the artifact that Harrison’s team had unearthed.

In the meantime, Harrison’s team was situated in a VIP room, watching the live broadcast of this auction.

“We worked our asses off, and the starting price is only 4,000 Enas. This auction house is too stingy.” The shortie detector guy was depressed.

“Black market auctions are generally like this.” The captain was experienced in this regard. “Relax, the most important thing is that the black market has no lack of rich people who wish to try their luck. I estimate that the official transaction volume will exceed 20,000 Enas.”

“20,000 is not bad,” the shortie replied, “but it’s not as good as tomb raiding for antiques...”

By the side, Harrison was a little anxious. “Is this black market safe?”

“Relax, I’m a regular here. This is one of the properties under the Beast Ancestor, and there are no bandits that dare rob this place... Wait a minute.” The captain jerked before continuing with uncertainty. “It seems like Gorutan was captured some time ago?”

“It can’t be. You forgot about such an important piece of news?” The shortie opened his eyes wide and hurriedly questioned. “There should be no problems with the transaction, right? I still want to buy a gift for my Ah Xiang!”

“There shouldn’t be...” The captain also hesitated a little at this time. “While the Beast Ancestor has fallen, this black market should now have a new backer. There should not be any problems... I think?”

Harrison facepalmed.

This bunch of people were too unreliable. He was better off working solo from now on.

At this very moment, there were a dozen battleships hidden not far away from this planet. They belonged to a group of star bandits that circulated around the Ancient Star Desert.

In the flagship, the leader of this bandit group led a group of men, looking out at the planet from the porthole.

“Captain, are we really going to rob them? I heard that this auction is the property of the Beast Ancestor, and it’s not easy to mess with him.”

“What are you scared of? The Beast Ancestor has been captured by Black Star, and his organization is in tatters, having been snatched away by the other Galactic Black Market Protectors. Others have also taken over his troops, but they have not fully integrated them as of now.”

The leader smiled, his eyes flashing with greed.

“I’ve already inquired and discovered that the Beast Ancestor’s warriors that protect their logistics carriers have been withdrawn. They are in their most vulnerable state now!”

Chapter 1096 – Disturbing one’s Fate

A couple of days later...

“The transport carrier was raided?”

Harrison’s team, who were still waiting at the hotel, suddenly stood up, furious, and stared at the remote projection of the worker that had come to inform them of the matter.

“That’s right. A group of galactic pirates discovered our secret transportation route and attacked all the disguised spaceships that we used to transport the items.” The auctioneer’s face was also ugly.

“What about your guards?” Harrison could not help asking that. “I heard that you have ties to the Beast Ancestor...”

Hearing his words, the worker’s expression turned dark. “After the Beast Ancestor got captured, we lost our backer. We could only employ mercenaries. This group of galactic pirates has long been watching us, and they bribed our mercs, launching a raid from both the inside and outside. All our newly hired guards died in that battle.”

At this point, the auctioneer could not help but release a sigh.

If Gorutan was still present, they would have had the shelter of the Beast Ancestor, which was enough to frighten most people in the Ancient Star Desert.

But now that their backer had fallen, the new upper ranks were still slowly absorbing the black market organization of the Beast Ancestor. They were most vulnerable and had turned into fat sheep surrounded by wolves.

“Then, what about our things?” The captain showed a wary expression.

This black market had maintained a good reputation in the past, so he had chosen to return to sell his things. However, with such a big chance, he was not sure if the other party would rescind their original promises. The order of the black market was fragile, and it mainly worked on the stronger eating the weak.

“We will assemble a team to search for the whereabouts of this group of galactic pirates and retrieve our items.”

“And if it cannot be retrieved...”

“Then the auction house will compensate according to the starting price.” After this sentence, the worker did not continue speaking, choosing to end the conversation immediately.

They exchanged looks.

“Our starting price was only 4,000 Enas, but the final price was 13,800!”

“Just be satisfied that they are willing to even pay compensation,” the captain replied helplessly. “The probability of obtaining compensation through a black market auction is less than ten percent. They are probably only doing so because they deem our item worthless. If it was a price of hundreds of thousands, they would have found some way to deny any responsibility and not pay up.”

Hearing this, the group collectively sighed. They already thought that their trip was quite bad this time round, but to even lose the item that they had painstakingly slogged away for, this was truly a wasted trip.

Harrison felt a little restless. His intuition was still sending out warning signals.

He had this premonition that the robbed item would still bring him quite a bit of trouble.

...

Somewhere within the Ancient Star Desert, the galactic pirate fleet dragged the logistics ship that was their loot and moved slowly within the universe.

“This is quite the fruitful harvest this time.”

Within the cabin, the leader of the pirates placed his arms on his waist as he arrogantly walked in front of the captives and the spoils piled up into a hill.

“Boss, the ammunition is all perfectly intact.” One of his subordinates was ecstatic.

There were all kinds of items within the war loot. Not only various ancient blueprints, technological creations, and antiques, but there were also various types of arms from the advanced civilizations. The auctions from the black market sold practically everything, and compared to the antiques, the galactic pirates naturally preferred the arms.

As he strolled through the loot, the eyes of the leader stopped at the triangular device.

“What is that?”

“Leader, this is a safe from an unknown civilization that an archaeological team dug up.”

“What’s inside?”

“We don’t know. It seems like it’s not worth a lot.”

“Open it.” The leader lifted up his foot, jabbing it toward the device.

Reality had proven that opening a sealed box was something that everyone loved to do. The mechanics within the pirate team took out their equipment to tinker with the device, while the pirates gathered in the surroundings to watch.

The triangular device’s socket was connected to an energy transmission line to activate the password interface. One of them then took out a deciphering device, connecting the triangle to the quantum network, and the interface of the cracking device quickly bounced with various garbled codes.

After a moment, the triangle let out a ‘ding’ sound, indicating that it had been unlocked.

Ka ka ka!

The display screen used to enter the password was then retracted, and the whole device began rotating like a Rubik’s Cube.

Everyone, including the leader, craned their necks to see what was stored inside.

In about ten seconds, the safe was finally completely unlocked. The last layer of protection was peeled off, exposing the core, which was around ten cubic centimeters in size.

The next moment, a surge of energy fluctuations burst out from within!

Boom!

Before the group could see what was inside, they were thrown away by the shock wave. Even their leader, who was at the Calamity Grade, was not exempted.

The next second, the surroundings of the triangular device turned into an empty zone, and the loot in its surroundings was all strewn around the area, turning the place into a mess.

“Ouch...”

Everyone rubbed their butt as they got up, only to find out that there were no other injuries on them.

The leader immediately turned to look at the safe but found it empty.

“Where’s the item inside? Why is there nothing?”

The leader was furious, feeling as though he had been played.

Could this just have been a prank?

Who would store a fart inside a disposable safe!

At this moment, the cabin door opened, and operators of the spaceship ran in with anxious expressions.

“Leader, what just happened? The location we were in just now became the origin of a cosmic energy surge. The energy fluctuations broke through the peak in an instant, and our detection radar burned out. There’s no matching energy model for this surge in the database at all!”

Hearing this, the pirates received a shock.

Cosmic energy surge?

What joke was this? It only caused them to fall on their asses, but this sort of power was considered a cosmic surge?

Just as this group was in confusion, in a world that the naked eyes could not see, a unique information package was duplicating wildly, centered on the galactic pirates’ fleet, spreading rapidly along the links of their quantum network.

In the face of this information signal, the firewalls of the artificial intelligences in all devices were rendered useless.

...

There was a dimly lit palace, supported by pillars that rose up to no end. Below every pillar was a fire brazier, with pale flames dancing on it as the only source of light.

A man dressed in black robes hovered in midair, the edges of his robes seemingly burning, releasing strands of black mist.

Below him, Law and Fay were bowing as they reported the result of their mission to the upper echelons of the Holy Accord. The both of them were Beyond Grade As, yet they did not dare look up at the figure above.

“... You’re saying, there’s no way to obtain the Holy Light Particle?”

A voice sounded directly in their hearts. While the tone was neither soft nor heavy, both of them trembled unconsciously.

Law gritted his teeth and said, “That’s right. We’ve already ambushed Black Star once, so he will definitely be prepared this time round. If we act rashly, the organization will be exposed to much greater risk. Black Star announcing in such a high profile that he possessed the Holy Light Particle is likely him deliberately trying to lure us out. According to the data, Black Star is extremely vengeful, and he definitely wishes to get his revenge on us...”

By the side, Fay said, “While Black Star has found a host for the Holy Light Particle, he is likely also prepared. During the attack on Hila, Black Star displayed an ability to perform an unrestricted teleportation. He has no reason not to use it for the Holy Light Particle’s host, so it is likely a decoy.”

The man in black lowered his head, looking down at the two as he fell silent. After a while, he slowly said, “I understand. Don’t act on the Holy Light Particle for the time being. The agreed date has also yet to arrive, so we still can continue to wait and see.”

Seeing that their boss did not intend to blame them, Law and Fay secretly sighed. The awe they had for the man in black robes permeated their very soul.

This guy was the leader of their Holy Accord organization. His name was unknown, and he went by the code name 'Oathkeeper'. He was the teacher of all the current Beyond Grade As in the organization.

Even during Law and Fay's childhood, Oathkeeper had been the leader of the organization. No one knew how long he had lived, and his strength was unfathomable. Even if the two had grown to the Beyond Grade A realm, they could not hope to put up a fight in the face of Oathkeeper.

At this moment, the anxious remote projection of an officer appeared next to them. "Your Excellency Oathkeeper, there's an abnormal reaction with the Destiny's Child!"

Whoosh!

The moment his words came out, Oathkeeper's figure vanished and reappeared the next moment within a secret sealed room.

Countless researchers dressed in lab coats were surrounding a cylindrical transparent container filled with dark blue liquid. A pale Primal Esper Ability Entity lay within, and its energy body maintained a human-like structure but without facial features, floating quietly within the liquid.

Oathkeeper turned to look at the scientific research team leader next to him and asked, "What happened?"

"The Destiny's Child Primal Esper Entity that was deep asleep suddenly released a state of information disturbance, breaking through the seals of the container and leaking out. We're currently calculating now how many sub-bodies have been created by its disturbance throughout the universe..." The team leader was nervously sweating.

"Sudden disturbance?" Oathkeeper paused. "You did not actively awaken it?"

"That's... that's right. We're monitoring it and recording as usual, and the disturbance suddenly occurred."

"Awaken it." Oathkeeper's voice was steely. "It must have received some stimulation that caused it to fluctuate."

The researchers could only comply, draining the liquid within the container. The Destiny's Child's humanoid shape immediately became blurry, as though it would disappear at any time.

"Increase its binding force field and the stability anchor. Don't let it completely enter the high-dimensional information state and break through containment." The scientific research personnel were sweating as they profusely worked.

Oathkeeper ignored the movement and put his hand on the outer wall of the container. His palm lit up in a cluster of flames, its color strange as it resembled a flickering starry sky. There was no temperature present, and it burned quietly, as though the world had no impact on it.

The Destiny's Child's body in the container was slowly attracted back and turned stable. It stretched out its hand curiously, pasting its palm where Oathkeeper's hand was through the transparent container wall.

At this time, Oathkeeper finally spoke.

“Tell me, what have you discovered?”

The Destiny’s Child’s tilted its head, and a wave of spiritual fluctuations bloomed. A childlike voice sounded in everyone’s mind.

“Projection of an information state... new destiny... the call of The First Sanctum...”

Oathkeeper quietly listened before asking, “Is the agreed date still the same?”

“It’s moved forward... by... ten years... twenty years...”

Oathkeeper deeply inhaled before commanding, “Inject the solution. Let it continue to sleep.”

Everyone immediately followed his command, and the dark blue solution filled the container once more. The Destiny’s Child seemed to struggle, but it quieted down in the end, falling into a deep sleep.

Glancing at the equipment, the research team leader could not help sighing. In the short amount of time that Destiny’s Child was awake, the amplitude of information state disturbance increased by another 6.4%, which meant that a batch of unknown descendants within the universe would evolve.

While the Holy Accord had already gained control of the main body of Destiny’s Child, because of its peculiarity, the Holy Accord had always used it with extreme caution.

Among the Primal Esper Ability Entities, Destiny’s Child was a special existence. When it woke up and activated its abilities, it would produce a phenomenon called ‘information state disturbance’. Random creatures in the universe would inexplicably awaken a weakened version of its abilities, which were mainly based on foresight. They were known as the children of Destiny’s Child by the Holy Accord.

The appearance of the ‘children’ was irregular and not affected by time or space.

At this time, Law and Fay also hurried over.

“What’s the situation now?”

Hearing them, Oathkeeper turned around and said, “There’s a change of plans. The agreed date is almost upon us. I’ll personally go and retrieve the Holy Light Particle.”

“You’re making a move?”

Both of them were shocked.

Law hurriedly said, “It’s too dangerous. Black Star is cunning and can fight. If anything happens to you, then we...”

Oathkeeper interrupted him in a low voice. “It’s not a must to fight. I will discuss it with him. What we need is only a part of the Holy Light Particle... Similarly, we can take out the parts of other Primal Esper Entities to trade with him.”

He patted the shoulders of the two, softly saying, “We’ve already gathered the key fragments needed to open The Third Sanctum, and only the fragment of the Primal Esper Ability Entity is left. While the ritual can be performed without the Holy Light Particle, it will bring about unknown risks. Since we’ve already

prepared for so many years, it's best to eliminate any unstable factors possible, making this plan foolproof."

Chapter 1097 – Sorry, part does whate...

Black Star Cup Competition Field Thirteen was a vast ring-shaped valley, like a naturally occurring colosseum, with rugged rocks and complex topography.

The auditorium was suspended in midair, and countless spectators looked down from the floating seats onto the battlefield. The various media groups were also broadcasting the situation in real time.

Pew!

Bang!

Suddenly, two fireballs fell from the sky, hitting the sides of the valley. Those were the airborne drop pods, and the friction between the atmosphere and its surface released such a high temperature that it caused the very air around it to warp.

Accompanied by the decompression of the sealed chambers, the doors of the two single person airborne pods opened, and two players walked out. One of them was Frenzied Sword, and the other was Hao Tian.

"All the best!"

The moment both of them appeared, the crowd went wild.

Frenzied Sword ignored the crazed spectators, unfolded a silvery white mechanical trident, and stared at Hao Tian. "I didn't expect us to meet so soon."

"It's a random draw. Anything can happen."

Hao Tian was wearing the special pugilist combat uniform that was produced by the army, warming up his hands and feet.

After more than a month of fierce battles, the Black Star Cup qualifiers had finally come to an end. Just like raising poisonous insects, more than ninety percent of the participants had been eliminated, and only the remaining elites entered the main race. However, Frenzied Sword and Hao Tian had met in the single player event of the Black Star Cup, becoming opponents.

Hao Tian was the pillar of the veteran professional players in the Long Sky club, but Frenzied Sword was the spokesperson for the up-and-coming Rivervale. As professional players, they both had a large number of fans, so today's match was highly anticipated.

Not only did the players pay attention to the competition between players, but even the NPCs were interested. The play styles of the players were often more radical and insane, making their fights enjoyable, which attracted a large number of NPC fans.

Pros such as Frenzied Sword and Hao Tian stood out among the tens of millions of players in the army, gaining a large number of NPC supporters. They were even given nicknames by the NPCs. Hao Tian had

the title of 'Boxing Master', whereas Frenzied Sword had the title of 'Machinery Dancer'... It had to be said that their nicknames truly fitted their fighting styles.

Both of them were old friends, so they skipped the trash talk, going directly to the section of physical attacks.

Dang! Dang! Dang!

One was a Pugilist, the other a Mechanical Pugilist. The two figures quickly collided with each other, creating loud impact sounds and sparks.

Their shock waves from their fight created trenches on the ground, throwing up stone and dust high into the sky.

After four versions, both of their micro-manipulation skills had only become more sophisticated. With their current Grade B combat strength, they were already considered extremely destructive humanoid monsters in the eyes of ordinary people.

Bang!

The Mechanical Pugilist had numerous skills, so the offensive of Frenzied Sword was endless. His trident pierced the sky, creating phantoms, bringing up dazzling arcs to surround all the vital points of Hao Tian.

Hao Tian was on the backfoot as he continuously dodged, but he suddenly saw a chance, stopping and raising his hands to accurately grasp the two side blades of the trident.

The phantoms in the sky disappeared, and the edge of the trident was only twenty centimeters away from his face, but it would not budge any further.

Kacha kacha!

Both their arm muscles swelled as they entered a wrestling mode. The ground under their feet cracked, with lines snaking out from below them.

"Serpent Tongue's Cannon!" Frenzied Sword twisted his hands fiercely.

From within the center of the main blade on the trident, a dazzling energy ball suddenly emerged. It shot out a plasma arc cannon, but Hao Tian tilted his head to avoid it.

This beam of light shot diagonally upward, flashing past and penetrating a rocky mountain. It left behind a blazing red line that was completely melted through, and a layer of viscous magma seeped out.

Taking advantage of Frenzied Sword's sneak attack, Hao Tian raised his elbow, hitting the spear shaft and deflecting it to the side. He then unleashed a skill. Light accumulated under his feet as he slammed into Frenzied Sword's chest with a thunderous force, pushing him into the ground.

"War Trample!"

Boom!

The moment Frenzied Sword's back touched the ground, a shock wave radiated from him. The ground sank by dozens of centimeters, forming a semi-circular pit around him. All the stones around him were crushed into powder by the heavy pressure.

The remnant shock waves swept out along the ground, and the nearby mountain of rocks collapsed. A dust storm gathered, sweeping to the very corners of the battlefield, causing a ring of sand to billow out at the edges.

As his HP and armor's durability plummeted, Frenzied Sword straightened his waist, and the back of his mechanical suit transformed into a drill bit, digging into the ground to get rid of Hao Tian's smelly feet.

His figure broke out from the ground in the distance, the weapon in his hand replaced with a huge war axe. With a slash in the air, the force field generator attached to the edge of the axe produced an arc, radiating outward.

Plop...

With his Pugilist aura covering his arms, Hao Tian raised his hand to intercept the arc directly.

The deflected shocked wave flew up, hitting the bottom of a floating auditorium with a loud bang. Amid the excitement of the spectators, an ion shield in a honeycomb structure appeared to block the attack.

And among the excited spectators, there were two special envoys from the Federation of Light that were sitting in the front-row VIP seats. They were whispering to each other while recording the scene of Hao Tian fighting Frenzied Sword.

"The strength of the Immortals has increased yet again. Compared to their last disappearance, the increment is quite obvious. Excluding those Immortals in the budding stage, the earliest batch already have a stable Grade B combat capability."

"The Immortals have already undergone three periods of disturbance, and the duration is getting longer. Their way of increasing their strength is different to regular training, seemingly dependent on the length of time they disappear. By estimation, if they disappear once more, they might actually step into the Calamity Grade."

"This is really a terrible group of creatures..."

Thinking that there might be tens of millions of such immortal Calamity Grade lunatics within the universe in the future, the two special agents could not help but shudder.

Just thinking about it, it really could be considered a scourge.

With the increase in their strength, the players were also more valued by the advanced civilizations, and they gradually started to research the rules binding the players.

The three Universal Civilizations had also thought of recruiting the Immortals to act as suicide squads in the past, but at that time, the players were pretty weak. Thus, they did not take them seriously. Furthermore, their characteristics that made them disappear from time to time and their uncertain growth limit caused the three Universal Civilizations to hesitate.

But now, the growth cycle of the players had been proven, and the advanced civilizations had to consider the possibility of the Immortals entering the Calamity Grade realm. As such, they were willing to extend an olive branch to them, giving them better treatment.

Right now, the Black Star Army was the largest 'shareholder', sitting on tens of millions of Immortals, naturally inciting fear in many of the major organizations.

In the past, they mainly feared Black Star himself, but now, there were even more reasons for them to feel fear.

To them, the army was holding onto a lot of high-quality stock. If the Immortals could reach the Calamity Grade realm, the high-level combatants within the Black Star Army would instantly overwhelm even the three Universal Civilizations.

The unique attraction of the Black Star Army to the Immortals also surprised the advanced civilizations.

If it was not for the fact that Han Xiao did not have a habit of disappearing for extended periods, they would have simply assumed Han Xiao to be a part of the Immortals.

...

At this time, Han Xiao was far away back in his Black Star Palace, not paying attention to the competition, but rather watching the public trial of the dynasty.

The video showed the surface of a barren planet, where Traveler and another Beyond Grade A who was captured were bound and made to kneel on the execution platform, in a near-death state.

The two were in an extremely poor condition. Because of Clotti's dark energy circulating within their bodies, their regenerated cells were constantly being destroyed, keeping them in a severely injured state. The two had basically lost all their combat capabilities and were unable to break free.

Beside them, a remote projection of a dynasty officer stood in front of the camera, reading the decree out loud.

The content of the decree was the crimes of the two, such as crimes against public order, war crimes, and mass killings. All sorts of crimes were smashed onto their heads, making them seem as though they were heinous criminals that were wasting the very air in the universe.

What Han Xiao was concerned about were the charges the dynasty issued against Traveler, and as expected, the dynasty then mentioned what he wanted to hear.

"... Traveler has always operated as a neutral mercenary, but it has been verified that his true identity is that of the Beyond Grade A descendant that was secretly cultivated by the Modo Civilization. He tried to stir up disputes between the dynasty, the federation and the church, disrupting the order of the explored universe. At present, it is unknown if anyone part of the Modo Civilization orchestrated this matter, and the dynasty will retain an attitude to pursue accountability."

Hearing this, Han Xiao's mouth twitched.

"Humph, retaining an attitude to pursue accountability, how like the usual style of the three gangsters. It seems like the dynasty has already talked to Sorokin..."

He hypothesized that the Modo Civilization, which was originally lying back with popcorn to watch the show, would now have a stunned expression, as though struck silly by a pot that fell from the sky out of nowhere.

As for Traveler's true host civilization, the Star Arc Civilization, they would probably feel surprised and happy.

However, Han Xiao did not intend to keep Star Arc out of the matter like this. He summoned Phillip.

"Conceal your tracks. Anonymously send out a piece of information to the upper echelons of the Modo Civilization."

"What should I send, hum?"

"Reveal that the Star Arc Civilization is the real backer of Traveler."

Han Xiao evilly snickered.

In this manner, the bewildered Modo Civilization would think that their being made a scapegoat was the act of the Star Arc Civilization or that Traveler was being a rabid dog, going around biting people out of desperation.

As for whether or not the Modo Civilization believed in this, he did not care. Since he had provided a clue, the Modo Civilization would definitely find a way to verify it. With the Star Arc Civilization being the guilty party, regardless of whether the clue was checked, both sides would develop some grievances.

This would not only weaken the relationship between the Super Star Cluster Alliance but also earn Modo a new enemy. All he had to do was send a simple message.

The cost of doing things is low, so why not do it?

Tsk, I'm truly an evil person...

Han Xiao was in a good mood as he turned his attention back to the screen.

At this moment, the sentencing had come to an end, and the dynasty officers looked upright at the camera, solemnly speaking.

"... For the above crimes, the Crimson Dynasty has decided to issue a death sentence!"

After that, the remote projection disappeared, and suddenly, a gap was exposed at the foot of the execution platform, where a fist-sized device rose up.

This looked very familiar to Han Xiao, and his eyes flashed as he slowly whistled. "The Universal Treasure of the dynasty, the Key of Destruction..."

At this moment, the surface of the Key of Destruction lit up in a matrix-like energy loop, and a circle of spatial channels suddenly appeared, unfolding in front of the two.

At the other end of the passage were the long-distance cannon rays of the dynasty's army, filling the area with a dazzling glare.

Boom!

The next moment, a world-destroying energy surged out, filling every inch of the screen!

The picture panned out rapidly, turning into a wide-area perspective which overlooked the planet from the distant starry sky.

One could only see a glimmer of bright light blooming on the surface of the planet, followed by a dazzling star-like energy cluster, which expanded rapidly and in turn wrapped the planet in it.

As the energy cluster expanded to its limit, all of a sudden, the huge ball shrank to a point, like the image when an old-fashioned television was turned off.

Within the picture, the explosion site was totally empty, with the planet having disappeared without a trace, completely annihilated.

Traveler and the other Beyond Grade A who were already at death's door had no power to resist the Key of Destruction, and not even their bones remained.

What a waste...

Han Xiao's mouth contorted slightly.

In order to pull off this huge affair, the dynasty had deliberately chosen to utilize the cannons, pulling down a planet together with both of them. It was a pity that the bodies of the two were extremely rare research materials.

They were indeed a Universal Civilization. After so many years, they probably had a sizable collection of Beyond Grade A corpses within their freezer, so they had no need for more...

While Traveler was an enemy, seeing another Beyond Grade A being executed by a Universal Civilization still left Han Xiao a little depressed. He estimated that the other Beyond Grade As would also feel the same way.

Sigh, no matter how big a universe is, it cannot exceed the size of ambition. It's difficult for the two parties to have a harmonious existence... In the face of the advanced civilizations, the Beyond Grade As are still in a weak position, and there are too few of us...

Thinking about the situation of the Beyond Grade As, Han Xiao sighed.

Just as he was about to turn off his broadcasting screen, he noticed a strange mental fluctuation through his senses.

"Who are you?"

Han Xiao narrowed his eyes, snapping his head to look at the center of the room. His eyes sparkled with Mechanical Force as he instantly entered a combat state.

Within his vision, black flames were suddenly borne out of thin air, converging into the appearance of the Holy Accord's leader, Oathkeeper.

Oathkeeper lightly stepped on the group, walking toward Han Xiao as he spoke.

“Black Star, there’s no need to be nervous. This is just a mental projection without any sort of combat capability. I came here specially to meet you. It’s good to see you. I would like to propose a deal with you.”

“You...”

Hearing this, Han Xiao furrowed his brows, sizing him up before speaking in an uncertain tone.

“... Are the Holy Accord’s leader?”

As he spoke, Oathkeeper stumbled and very nearly hit his head.

Hidden under his hood was a dumbfounded expression.

F*ck me, how do you even know this?

Chapter 1098 – there must be a traitor

How does Black Star know my identity?

Oathkeeper originally wanted to show off his Beyond Grade A strength, attracting Black Star’s attention before negotiating a deal. He did not expect that the moment he appeared, he would be exposed without any preparation. Thus, his act of being mysterious failed.

Seeing Black Star recognize him at a glance, Oathkeeper went through a storm of emotions at once.

Where did he receive intelligence about me? What has been leaked within the organization, to the point that he even knows of my name?

A series of question marks popped up in his mind, and Oathkeeper’s mood suddenly turned heavy.

The Holy Accord had always been hidden in the dark as they had too many secrets. Now that Black Star could call out his identity, how much exactly did he know about the Holy Accord? Did he also learn of their ultimate mission?

As this thought flashed through his mind, he suddenly felt killing intent, wanting to silence the other party.

However, this murderous intent was forcibly suppressed by him.

There was no other reason than the fact that Black Star was too strong.

This sort of meat-shield like pinnacle Beyond Grade A could not easily be killed. The use of force should be a final resort, and negotiations should take priority.

This was the good point in having great strength, as it would make people more reasonable toward them.

I’ll first test how much Black Star knows. If he understands the basics of the Holy Accord, then I’ll have to calculate and plan accordingly. After so many years of planning, I cannot take any risks...

Suppressing his inner shock, Oathkeeper adjusted his emotions. He did not proceed with negotiations; the most important thing to him now was to test Black Star.

Oathkeeper slowly sat down opposite Han Xiao, whispering, "Do you understand a lot about the Holy Accord?"

"Not much, just the slightest bit."

Han Xiao made a gesture, leaving the slightest gap between his thumb and forefinger, his smile full of meaning. He had on an expression that seemed to say, "I have seen through everything."

In reality, the Great Mechanic Han really only knew a little about the Holy Accord. He only knew that they resurrected a great number of the Primordial Ones in the later versions but not the inside story. It could be said that he only knew what the Holy Accord's behavior would be but not their intentions.

He only recognized Oathkeeper because Oathkeeper was still the leader of the Holy Accord even in the later versions, and he had received great attention during the World Tree Civilization War. Han Xiao did not know of his origin either.

Thus, Han Xiao only put on this posture of 'I know it in my heart' just to fool the other party, not allowing Oathkeeper to figure out his bottom line.

Seeing this, Oathkeeper was uncertain in his heart, but on the surface, he remained expressionless, softly asking, "I'm curious, but how did you recognize me? Have we met before?"

"That's right."

"Is it..." Oathkeeper got a shock, immediately racking his brains to try and remember when he had dealings with Black Star. But no matter how hard he thought, he could not discover anything.

At this moment, Han Xiao spoke with a straight face. "We met before in our dreams."

Oathkeeper did not know how to respond.

Are you talking about your mom?

Black Star was obviously making a joke, but in the eyes of Oathkeeper, his attitude meant that Black Star knew a lot more than he let on, thus his mood got more solemn, causing him to over-imagine.

"Let's not talk about this for now." Han Xiao waved his hand, squinting. "You just said you wish to make a deal with me. Let me first hear what it is."

Oathkeeper sorted out his mood, temporarily putting aside his thought of testing him. "I wish to make an exchange for a part of the Holy Light Particle."

"Oh?" Han Xiao glanced at him. "What can you offer me then?"

"It depends on what you want. We're willing to use other Primal Energy Entities to trade for your Holy Light Particle."

So, it turns out that the Holy Accord wished to obtain the Holy Light Particle through negotiations. This should be how they cooperated with the EsGod in my previous life. My plan of luring the snake out of its hole really worked, Han Xiao secretly thought.

By publicly stating that the Holy Light Particles were in his own hands, he wanted to lure the Holy Accord into making contact with him. According to his judgement, after the last sneak attack, they would either attack him again or perform a trade in exchange for the Holy Light Particle. Either way, the Holy Accord would be fished out.

If the Holy Accord remained in the dark, Han Xiao would not be able to find them, and it was detrimental to him. Now that there was an opportunity for dialogue, there would be room for manipulation.

Han Xiao pretended to ponder for a while before tapping on the table with his finger, suddenly changing the topic.

“If I remember correctly, you guys just snatched the pp... cough, I mean, a portion of the Primal Chaos Mysterious Energy from my hands a while ago.”

Indeed, Black Star knows that the people who attacked him before belonged to the Holy Accord...

Oathkeeper suddenly realized a crucial factor.

Did Black Star only learn of their organization after being attacked, or did he already know of their existence even before he was attacked?

There was a difference!

“Are you sure that the people who attacked you the last time belonged to the Holy Accord?”

Oathkeeper tested him.

“Huh, want to deny it? Did you think I wouldn’t recognize you if you only sent your peripheral members?” Han Xiao stroked his chin and spoke in a playful tone. “Dimensional Exile Bullets, Formatted Viruses, High-Level Life Form Energy Disorder Shockwave—all these are things that your Holy Accord is famed for. Did you think I was unaware?”

Under his hood, Oathkeeper’s face turned gloomy.

The facts had proven that what Black Star knew exceeded his own imagination, and he had long known of the existence of the Holy Accord!

The Holy Accord had obtained that technology as a result of researching the Primal Esper Ability Entities. They were all their killing moves that they rarely used. For Black Star to even call out the names of these techniques, there was only one possibility left...

There was a traitor in the organization!

Furthermore, it was someone in the upper echelons!

The faces of the various officers flashed through Oathkeeper’s mind in anger.

Who was it that broke through the limits of the Soul Flame, betraying their organization?

Even Black Star knew about this, so how much intelligence had been leaked? Could it be that, within the vaults of the advanced civilizations, there were already a multitude of files and folders on their Holy Accord?

If that was the case, then the Holy Accord that prided itself on keeping its secrets for so many years had basically turned into the laughingstock of the entire universe!

Oathkeeper's mentality exploded in an instant.

He was someone who remained mostly stoic and calm, but the mental stress he had suffered that day was just overwhelming, causing him to lose control of his emotions.

Feeling the unstable mental fluctuations of Oathkeeper, Han Xiao hesitated.

It seemed like he had gone overboard with his acting and scared the other party quite terribly.

Han Xiao sighed empathetically.

Alas, these brainiacs focused heavily on their intelligence, so they were naturally suspicious all the time. A little detail would cause them to constantly focus on it. It was not because he had gone overboard but rather because the other party was just too sensitive.

In fact, Han Xiao objectively viewed the Holy Accord quite neutrally. He had no good feelings or grievances toward them. In his previous life, the Holy Accord Organization was not a villainous organization that created trouble, nor did they produce any pests. The only well-known incident that involved them was the revival of the Beyond Grade As and Primordial Ones from history, which involved some unknown method during the World Tree War.

While the Holy Accord's participation in the war was mainly due to them being next in line if the Universal Civilizations fell, they contributed a lot to the World Tree War and brought about a wave of important reinforcements. Credit still had to be awarded where due.

In this regard, Han Xiao stood on the same side as them. The revival of the Beyond Grade As in history would instantly enhance the combat power of the Beyond Grade As in the explored universe, such that there would be more bargaining chips against the World Tree. He would not stop the Holy Accord from achieving its goals.

That being said, the Holy Accord attacked him without being provoked, so Han Xiao had already made a mental note of this. Let them hit him for free, how could there be such a good thing in this world? Without settling the score, he would not let them go.

As for whether or not the revival of the Primordial Ones was related to the Holy Accord, Han Xiao could not be sure, but he wholly suspected that their excuse of surviving in the life-sustaining cabins was fake news.

In fact, he could understand why the revival of the Primordial Ones would be an important fuse leading to the Calamity of the Supers. Just think about it from the perspective of the three Universal Civilizations...

F*ck me, you guys that were supposed to be dead have revived? Then, does that mean every Beyond Grade A that died will also be eligible for revival? If the number of people revived grows to the certain point that can overthrow our rule, what are we supposed to do?

The advanced civilizations had always attempted to control the ratio of individual might to collective strength. To suddenly discover that the individual might could now be resurrected and that they were no longer in control of the situation, their mentality would definitely burst.

Thus, regardless of whether the Primordial Ones were awakened from cryostasis or resurrected, they would have to say to the outside that they had been lying within the life sustaining capsules, otherwise the problem would only get worse, and there was no knowing what the three Universal Civilizations would end up doing.

As both of them were engrossed in their thoughts, it took a while before they realized they were still in a conversation.

Oathkeeper calmed himself down before solemnly speaking.

"I can provide compensation as a form of apology. I hope that you can forgive the negligence of my subordinates."

"How are you going to compensate me for my mental loss?"

"What do you want?"

"Hmm, let me think about it..." Han Xiao held his head. "With the long history of the Holy Accord, there should be a lot of things in your vaults. If you hand me eight to ten Universal Treasures or blueprints, I'll forgive them."

Why don't you go and rob... oh, no, you are indeed robbing me right now.

Oathkeeper immediately shook his head.

"That's too many. We don't have that much in stock."

"How could this be?" Han Xiao chuckled. "There are so many of your members who are descendants of Beyond Grade As, so how could their ancestors not leave behind any heirlooms?"

You even know of this?

Just how much intelligence was leaked!

Oathkeeper secretly gritted his teeth. His only thought was digging up the traitor and beating him to death.

"... In any case, we really don't have that many Universal Treasures. We only have two sets of blueprints that we've accumulated, and we can compensate you with those."

"Two sets..." Han Xiao pursed his lips. "Seems a little lacking. How about you pass me a set of your Esper Ability Technology well?"

"Not possible!" Oathkeeper spat out with a steely tone. He would not compromise at all on this matter.

Forget it, two sets then. At least I got something out of this.

Taking the pp of the Primal Chaos Mysterious Energy and exchanging it for two sets of Gold Grade blueprints, this was akin to giving up one... no, giving up nothing in exchange for a plethora of benefits.

Han Xiao then clicked his tongue as his expression got serious. Placing his hands on the desk, he slowly said, "We can proceed with this deal, but the portion of Primal Chaos Mysterious Energy that you guys stole must be included in the terms, treated as though I'm also selling it to you. This means that you have to offer me two portions of separate Primal Esper Ability Entities in exchange for a portion of the Holy Light Particle."

Since his [Primal Esper Ability Collector] mission only required another two Primal Esper Ability Entities, then he could utilize the Holy Light Particle to complete it. This would net him a milestone halo geared toward fighting Espers, as well as a skill fragment of [The Third Sanctum].

"Deal." Oathkeeper decisively nodded.

The Holy Accord organization had already amassed a large number of Primal Esper Ability Entities, and cutting a few pieces of them to put for sale was not a problem.

While such a style was quite perverted, none of them were actually good people, so there was no need to be worried about such a thing.

With the Black Star Army now dominating a part of the universe, Oathkeeper could only settle for the bare minimum. While he was not afraid of Black Star, it was still better to settle things peacefully where possible.

At this moment, Oathkeeper's eyes flashed as he probed, "Black Star, what do you think about the purpose of our Holy Accord?"

While a lot of intelligence had been leaked, Oathkeeper still held on to the last embers of hope. It might seem that Black Star knew everything about the organization, but there was still a small chance that he was unaware of their primary objective.

"Purpose? Aren't you just an organization that researches about Primal Esper Ability Technology? What, you still have other schemes in mind?" Han Xiao raised a brow.

Oathkeeper closely peered at Han Xiao's expression, but he could not read anything. He did not know if Han Xiao truly was unaware or was merely pretending.

But no matter what, he could not help but breathe a sigh of relief upon hearing this answer.

Black Star was unaware of their primary objective, which meant that the external variables were still within their scope of control. This meant that the traitor in their organization was just at the officer level, not part of the core.

"There are no conspiracies nor schemes. The purpose of our organization is to believe that Esper Abilities have infinite possibilities, which can bring about technological breakthroughs to the universe..." Oathkeeper began to spew some nonsense, which was the same information they told their peripheral members as camouflage.

After a few more idle sentences, they set a time for the transaction, before Oathkeeper left, full of thoughts of weeding out the 'traitor' in his organization.

Han Xiao leaned back with an expression of deep thought.

He did not provoke the other party's intention to revive the Beyond Grade As in history. This was because he did not know what the other party was using to do so or what their objective was. Revealing this fact too early might cause him to be targeted instead.

Thus, he pretended and fooled around for a bit, but if he went overboard, he might have no way to retreat in the end.

At least before he obtained the blueprints and the other two Primal Esper Ability Entities, he had no desire to rip off all pretenses with the Holy Accord.

Moreover, Han Xiao did not mind the revival of the Beyond Grade As. Compared to the World Tree, the impact of this on the universe was just a small matter. Every bit of extra strength was good.

In my previous life, the Holy Accord worked with EsGod, but now I have replaced EsGod as their partner and became the driving force behind the scenes. Under my influence, the plot line is changing more and more. There are even the coordinates that lead to the World Tree. The logistics department has been unsuccessful in deriving them, and I don't know how far the dynasty's research has gone...

Han Xiao was lost in thought before he recalled something.

That's right, the Holy Accord has such a long history. Maybe they have intelligence about the existence of the Sanctums. I should find a chance to ask them next time.

...

Somewhere in the Ancient Star Desert, the galactic pirates' fleet was stopped by three small battleships with the Federation of Light insignia. After a fierce battle, the pirates were captured.

On the deck of the pirates' flagship, the carbonized corpse of the leader fell on the ground, while all the other members squatted on the ground with the hands on their heads, covered in cuts and bruises. They were surrounded by a group of soldiers in brilliant Federation of Light uniforms.

The leader of the soldiers was wearing a high-tech uniform, with a badge on his chest, representing his position as a universe inspector.

This universe inspector was part of a special department set up by the advanced civilizations. They patrolled different Star Systems, and their official position was higher than that of an ordinary patrol officer, specializing in detection of abnormal conditions.

The Federation of Light Inspector paced in front of the group of pirates, slowly taking off his bloodied black gloves. He slowly said, "Five days ago, there were signs of cosmic energy surges coming from your spaceship. The energy fluctuations spread along as you travelled, alarming many advanced civilizations, including the three Universal Civilizations. This fluctuation has never been seen before, and no one knows what it is..."

Pa!

He suddenly walked up to one of the pirates, slapping him before forcing his gaze to meet his. "Can you tell me what exactly happened?"

"It... it was a disposable safe..." The pirate stammered before revealing everything.

“An ancient safe that was sold at an auction?”

The Federation of Light inspector called up the information that they had obtained from the pirates, and Harrison’s team information appeared on his screen.

“A group of scavengers. Not sure if they’re lucky or unlucky...”

Narrowing his eyes, he pushed the pirate aside before giving his command.

“Move out. Find these people!”

Chapter 1099 – Interfering with Reality, Latent Crisis

The inspectors of the three Universal Civilizations had huge backers and vast resources at their disposal. It was not difficult to uncover a low-level scavenger.

The process was quite smooth. It could be summarized as: identity record match, whereabouts position, storming the area, and asking them to line up with their hands on the wall.

This series of operations was smoothly carried out, as though they had done it hundreds of times.

In the small spaceship of the scavengers, Harrison and his party squatted on the wall and shivered. The brilliant Federation of Light insignias on the soldiers’ uniforms dispelled any desire to resist.

For people at the bottom of the Galactic Society, even a small pawn of the three Universal Civilizations was not someone they could afford to offend. Without the backing of any organization, those that dared to offend people from the three Universal Civilizations were akin to people who would turn the lights on in the latrine to look at sh*t.

“You... What are you guys trying to do? We, we are law-abiding citizens,” the shortie stammered.

The Federation of Light Inspector moved a chair, sitting in front of this group. He leaned forward, releasing an aura of oppression as he coldly said, “You don’t know what sort of crimes you’ve committed?”

What crime have we committed?

Everyone had a confused expression, squeezing their brain juices dry to try and remember what they had done in their daily lives.

The shortie suddenly shivered violently before blurting out, “I... I surrender!”

“Oh?” The inspector turned to look at him, narrowing his eyes as he said, “Say it then. What is your crime?”

“I... I anonymously hacked the paid server of an adult entertainment channel yesterday, downloading thousands of pornos... ahem, you know, those kinds of films. I’m guilty! I confess!” The shortie spat everything out.

The captain suddenly exclaimed, “No wonder you stayed in your room the whole day yesterday...”

As he spoke, he suddenly stopped. Everyone realized that the shortie was still wearing his clothes from the day before, and with a wrinkle of their noses, they shifted a few paces away from him.

“...”

The inspector’s facial expression was hard as steel, but if one looked closely, they could see the corners of his mouth twitching fiercely.

Be serious, I’m interrogating you!

“Are you trying to provoke me? Do you think I’m joking with you?”

Glaring at him, the inspector drew his gun, pressing it against the head of the shortie. However, he paused suddenly and withdrew the muzzle a distance away from the guy’s head. He did not dare stick it to the skin of the shortie for fear of contaminating his firearm.

“Don’t, don’t, don’t, don’t...” The shortie was so scared that he urinated on the spot, his entire body trembling.

Harrison was also frightened and immediately said, “Sir Inspector, we’re law abiding. We don’t pillage and kill; we only excavate ownerless ruins. We do not know what crimes we’ve committed.”

“Humph!” The inspector also did not intend to make their lives difficult. He withdrew his weapon, projecting an image of the triangular device. He solemnly said, “Not long ago, you guys dug out this artifact from an unknown civilization and put it up for auction. But it was stolen by the galactic pirates, and when they opened it up, it triggered a cosmic energy fluctuation. I’m here for this.”

Harrison’s heart almost stopped.

See, we got into trouble!

My intuition was right. This object isn’t simple, even bringing me so much trouble after it was sold!

However, he was not upset but instead felt a sense of excitement from his bones. A strong curiosity surged within him, and he could not help but ask, “What was inside?”

“It’s still unclear, and the specific fluctuations are still being thoroughly investigated.”

At this moment, the captain could not help but ask, “Wait a minute, we sold that thing, and it wasn’t us who opened it, so what crime have we committed?”

“That’s right. We’re innocent!”

“You can’t frame good people for nothing!”

The crowd immediately screamed, displaying upright indignation.

“Shut up!” the Inspector coldly barked. “The items that you dug up from the ruins carry a strong risk. Because of you guys, new disasters are likely to occur in the universe. Let’s not talk about anything else. Just the crime of endangering public safety is enough to put you in prison!”

Hearing this, everyone immediately shrank back, and they collectively lowered their heads, attentively counting the number of ants on the floor... although there was no chance of ants appearing in the spaceship.

The inspector coldly snorted. "However, if you guys are willing to assist us in our work, we can ignore your unintentional mistakes. We are going to investigate the site of the ruins now, and we need you to lead the way and show us your flight log. Are there any objections?"

"No, no, no, none at all. It is our honor to help the Federation of Light! I'm the machinery expert of this spaceship. You just need to give the command if you need something from me. There's no need to treat me like a person at all!"

Seeing that the situation was not as serious as expected, the shortie breathed a sigh of relief before hurriedly using the skills he had honed over the years to bootlick the inspector.

"This..." The captain was a little hesitant. "Is this going to leave us with a criminal record?"

The inspector seemed to take it lightly. "That's for sure, but it doesn't matter. As long as you turn in whatever you've dug up in the future to the civilization, there will be no problem."

Give it to the nation? Are we going to turn into an archaeological team?

Too much, this is simply threatening us with our weaknesses. You want us to compromise? Dream on! We absolutely will not accept such a treatment!

... Unless the Federation of Light is paying us wages.

After reaching a physical consensus, the team led the way, quickly bringing the inspector to the barren planet where they first found the triangular device, and found the initial coordinates.

Harrison pointed at the image on the screen as he explained, "This is the place. There used to be a ruin here that resembled something like a military base, but the moment we left, it collapsed. This is a recording of when we burrowed in..."

The Federation of Light inspector nodded and ordered his subordinates to descend, taking out the probes to scan the area. His expression changed slightly.

He did not expect that the results of the investigation would show that there were no abnormalities present within the rock formations. There was only mud and dirt.

This made no sense, as even if the ruins were to collapse and be buried, there should be traces. However, in the pictures of these advanced detection instruments, there were no traces in the rocks below.

The inspector frowned. "Are you sure it's here?"

"That's here alright. You've also seen the flight logs. We stopped right here." Harrison showed an expression of surprise as well.

Such a mystical scenario hooked his curiosity once again. He was unable to understand how the ruins could just disappear into thin air.

Could it be that this whole thing was a dream? But the safe they unearthed was well and truly present.

Just as he was thinking about it, the inspector from the Federation of Light seemed to have thought of something. His expression changed as he muttered to himself, "Such a phenomenon, could it be... that it's the high-dimensional information state interfering with reality itself?"

Harrison was just about to ask something, but he saw the inspector push aside everyone, running to report to his superior.

Seeing the other party's grave expression, Harrison had a hunch that the severity of this problem was beyond his own imagination.

...

Within the base of the Holy Accord Organization, Law and Fay were summoned, and once again, they arrived in the dark palace to meet up with Oathkeeper.

"All of you are here."

In midair, the figure of Oathkeeper materialized, and he lowered his head to indifferently speak, his tone laced with coldness.

There was a strong mental fluctuation within his tone, which caused Law and Fay to begin to feel anxious.

Both of them had known Oathkeeper for a long time, so they understood his behavior. Such an action meant that he was truly angered, which had not happened in a long time.

They could not help but exchange glances, communicating with their eyes.

Law (Puzzled Look): "The leader's mood doesn't seem too good."

Fay (Blinking): "Maybe he failed in the negotiations with Black Star."

Law (Frowning): "That wouldn't make him so angered. There should be another reason."

Fay (Curious Look): "Then what is it?"

Law (Rolling eyes): "Do you think I can explain such a complicated thing using just glances?"

Fay (Blinking Innocently): "That makes sense."

Both of them conversed in an instant before lowering their heads to greet Oathkeeper. "Leader, for what matter have you summoned us?"

"Black Star has inside information on us!" Oathkeeper furiously replied.

"What?!" Both of them paled.

Could it be that because of their ambush previously, Black Star had managed to uncover some clues, which lead to a leakage of their organizational intelligence?

If that was the case, then the both of them were sinners!

Did the leader specifically call us over to punish us? That's right. It's most likely that!

Having assumed their leader's attitude, both of them were in a panic and did not dare hesitate, immediately lowering their heads to plead. "It's our fault. We've committed a great sin by causing our organization's information to leak out. Please punish us!"

Glancing at the two, Oathkeeper relaxed his tone.

"Don't be mistaken. Your actions do not have anything to do with this matter. Black Star has long known of our organization's existence."

Hearing this, the two of them could not help but exchange a glance in shock.

If it's not us that revealed the intel, then who was it? It was definitely our first time in contact with Black Star. Could it be that some others had also come into contact with him in the past?

At this moment, the frosty voice of Oathkeeper answered their question.

"Stop guessing. Our organization has a traitor!"

"That's impossible!" Law shook in fright, exclaiming with an incredulous expression. "Those who leak intelligence will definitely suffer backlash from the Soul Flames. Who would survive that?"

The Soul Flame was another Primal Esper Ability Entity. As its name suggested, this ability was related toward one's soul and spirit, and currently, Oathkeeper was its host.

Its Esper Ability meant that it was an expert that toyed with the soul aspect of people, making it one of the Super High Risk Esper Abilities. One of its abilities allowed it to prohibit its target from revealing specific information, and Oathkeeper had utilized this ability to prevent anyone in the Holy Accord from leaking its secrets. If a member wished to forcibly divulge information, even if they could endure the backlash, Oathkeeper would still be notified. This was how the Holy Accord had kept its secrecy for so long.

He used his own pinnacle Beyond Grade A strength to spur the Esper Ability of the Soul Flame, so the effect exerted was terrifying. Even Law and Fay, two Beyond Grade As, would not be able to bypass its surveillance and would also suffer backlash if they leaked any information.

Thus, both of them believed that no one could betray their organization.

"Whether you believe it or not, the fact is in front of our eyes. Black Star identified me the moment he saw me, and I was still foolishly believing that no one else knew about the existence of our Holy Accord. This matter must be investigated carefully!"

Oathkeeper's tone was steely as he shouted.

"There should be someone who has come out with a special method to bypass the surveillance and backlash caused by the Soul Flame. They passed on intelligence to the outside world. The person's rank is not low either, at least an officer within the organization. For now, I still do not know if they are a core member."

Both Law and Fay's expressions turned grim. This matter was related to the survival of their organization and could not be taken lightly.

“Leader, what would you have us do?”

“Both of you are my confidantes, and I believe you in principle. However, everything depends on evidence, so I need to scan your memories. Are you willing?”

Law and Fay were suddenly placed in a difficult situation. While they were not betrayers, any Super would naturally repel others from invading their own mind deep within themselves.

However, they were aware of the increasingly unstable mental fluctuations around them. Thus, both of them swallowed hard, and in order to show that they had a clear conscience, they agreed with difficulty.

The next moment, Oathkeeper raised his hand slightly, and two streaks of flames the color of the starry sky landed on them.

Both of them noticed a unique mental fluctuation entering their brains. Looking at each other, they gritted their teeth before actively letting go of their mental barriers, allowing Oathkeeper to easily penetrate their minds.

Their memories were quickly flipped through by him. The scenes from small to large flashed in front of them. They gritted their teeth, ignoring the tingling sensation of the mental probe as it scanned through their minds.

After a long while, the mental probes were finally recalled back to Oathkeeper who seemed satisfied.

“Very good, the two of you did not let down my expectations.” Oathkeeper nodded before continuing solemnly. “I’ll leave the task of weeding out the traitor to you guys. I allow you full access to thoroughly investigate all the organization officers and report any suspicious personnel to me. I’ll personally scan their memories. Before we can uncover the traitor, we’ll temporarily stop all activities and go into hiding.”

Both of them remained silent, nodding to signify acceptance as they suffered through the throbbing pain that was a side effect from the mental probes. They could not help but sigh.

It seems like the leader is truly enraged this time. If even us confidantes are treated this way, there’s no need to talk about the other officers...

Both of them could foresee that this operation would definitely create a lot of havoc within the organization.

...

The explosion of cosmic energy could not escape the monitoring buoys that were set by the advanced civilizations. These monitoring buoys were used by each advanced civilization to monitor the situation within their jurisdictions, and they were pervasive.

It was just that the qualifications for setting up monitoring buoys were generally reserved for civilizations, and civil organizations were rarely allowed.

Within the Ancient Star Desert, the branch of the Black Star Army did not have much influence, and it naturally did not have the right to set any up. Han Xiao was also far away and could not immediately discover the cosmic energy fluctuations.

The advanced civilizations reacted quickly to investigate the source and impact of the phenomenon but found next to nothing. They did not know what sort of changes this energy surge would create.

Right at this moment, within the quantum network that was invisible to the naked eye, the information packets released from the triangular device were spreading rapidly within the Ancient Star Desert's domain.

This sort of information packet had incredible camouflage abilities, able to bypass most artificial intelligence firewalls and infect one quantum network node after another. It spread like a virus, but for the time being, it did not show any abnormal reaction, simply lurking beneath the surface.

Only a small number of artificial intelligences, such as the master artificial intelligences from the advanced civilizations, were able to detect and stop it. However, as soon as it was discovered, the information packet would immediately activate a self-destruction program, shattering and deleting its own data, at the same time marking the firewall that it could not break through so other information packets would not take the same risk. It was as though there was a program within that commanded it to avoid those that were overly strong.

As the scope of infection expanded, the efficiency of transmission also increased proportionally. Within the quantum network, transmission was not affected by distance, so without anyone knowing, massive numbers of quantum network nodes in the Ancient Star Desert domain were infected.

At some point, an information packet was transmitted to another quantum node, but this time, it ran into the strongest artificial intelligence firewall it had ever encountered. The moment it entered the peripheral surroundings of the node, it was scanned, and the information packet immediately blew itself up.

However, a surging data stream gushed out from this node to envelop the information packet. When it had self-destructed about sixty-five percent of itself, the remaining fragmented information was forcibly intercepted.

The next moment, the data streams converged into a human shape.

Manison's Virtual Soul gazed at the remains of the information packet floating in front of him with a curious expression.

Eh, a never-before-seen data structure... what's this thing, attempting to infiltrate my sub-base?

Chapter 1100 Prematurely Triggered Disaster Even

In the Central Galaxy was the Abyss of Stars, the home of the Federation of Light's headquarters. The duty of an inspector was different from that of a secret intelligence department. The former acted as a pan-universal intelligence agency and did not involve itself in the political battles of the advanced civilizations. Most of the time, the intelligence agencies of the three Universal Civilizations would cooperate to deal with various special phenomena, including monitoring and tracking to prevent possible disasters.

At this very moment, in a conference room within this particular agency, a group of high-level executives sat around a round table, discussing the emergency reported from the Ancient Star Desert branch inspector.

The explosion of cosmic energy was considered a red alert at any time and required a meeting to be convened to discuss the strategy taken.

“The content of the report is quite detailed, and the cause and effect were quite clearly outlined. A scavenger team dug up a safe of an unknown civilization, releasing the source of this incident. This belongs to the second category of accidents. However, the traces of the ruins excavated completely disappeared before the inspector’s team’s field survey began, and they suspect it has something to do with a projection of a high-dimensional information state interfering with reality... The most important questions now are, what exactly did it release, why was there a cosmic energy burst, and what impact would this have?”

A humanoid creature who looked sickly at first glance was speaking. When he spoke, he stood up tall and thin, resembling a bamboo stick. His skin color was pale purple, with white lines, and his eyes were long and narrow, with yellow pupils.

This was Sidreun ‘Purple Fire’ Korna, the highest officer from the inspectorate from the Federation of Light’s side, a Beyond Grade A seed. He was a hybrid of races, but his main bloodline came from the Deweine tribe, a racial species with superior racial talents.

The Federation of Light employed a multi-racial living system, and hybrids were an important part of their nation.

Due to the difference in beliefs, preferences, appearances, and other factors delineating each race, racial issues had always been a deeply rooted disease in the federation, but everyone was already used to it.

“These archaeological teams never learn their lesson,” a member grumbled. “Of the various universal disasters in history, be it an organic extinct virus, mutated monsters, or anything else, how many of them were caused by digging up ancient relics?”

“You can’t put it that way. Many of our technology in the early years was also derived from the reverse engineering of ancient civilizations. Besides, compared to the triggering of disasters due to advanced technology going out of control or the invasion of foreign enemies, the severity caused by archaeology pales in comparison.” Sidreun shook his head weakly.

At this time, one of the executives glanced through the past records and muttered, “By the way, it’s quite rare for high-dimensional information states to interfere with reality itself in the past, but with the increase in the exploration of the universe, this phenomenon seems to have become more frequent.

“According to the statistics provided by our predecessors, during the exploration era, the average number of information state interferences was around 467 times a year, which only counts those events that were discovered and recorded. In the past century though, this number has risen to 2,150 per year, almost five times the number. Although this could be attributed to the improvement in our detection methods, it can also be seen as an increase in the frequency of interferences as well.”

“Information states have always been an important research direction of the advanced civilizations. We are only responsible for the submission of reports. Regardless of the result, that is a problem for our scientists, not us.” Sidreun waved his hand tiredly with an obvious lack of interest.

It was understandable that he was mentally weary after sitting in his position. This inspectorate department was responsible for wiping the backsides of people all over the universe, akin to watching a group of crazy kids making trouble everywhere for him to clean up afterward.

No matter how he tried to remedy things, countless more would still appear the next day. If he had a bad temper, he would have exploded in fury at least once a day in this department.

Thus, with the passing of time, a man would turn into Buddha, whereas fish would also become salted and preserved[1].

Everybody here did not come from a research background, so they had a limited understanding of the causes of information state projection and interference. To them, this phenomenon was akin to a special mirage, and the difference was that this was not limited by time and space and could really interfere with the real world.

Another of the executives said, "After comparison, the unknown text that the scavengers submitted does not have a match in our database to any civilization. If this is an information state projection, then the source is either from an extremely ancient civilization, or it's from unexplored civilizations that exist somewhere in the universe."

While the three Universal Civilizations were the undisputed universe hegemony today, they were not omniscient nor omnipotent. They did not know what had existed in the past, nor did they know how many civilizations there were in the unexplored universe. Thus, they had not stopped their pace of exploration and research.

"Did anyone discover any negative effects?" Sidreun questioned.

"For the time being, no. The specific details are still under thorough investigation. At present, it is impossible to predict what sort of disaster this is. Maybe it's not even a disaster."

Everyone shook their head.

At this moment, a voice sounded.

"This is a disaster within the Virtual Domain."

The hologram in the center of the round table suddenly transformed into the face of Manison.

Seeing this, everyone went into an uproar.

"Mechanic Emperor Manison!" Sidreun's expression sank, and he shouted, "How dare you infiltrate the network of an official institution!"

Everyone on scene had an ugly expression as Manison had just too many criminal convictions. Even his ally, the Federation of Light, guarded their official networks against Manison, for fear that all their confidential information would be stolen by this neighbor of theirs.

There was a saying in the universe—One cannot expect a Virtual Mechanic to have morals.

They were like the bosses behind the scenes in the casino, and it was in their nature to peek at the cards of others.

“It’s not the first time. Why are you all so surprised?” Manison was perfectly calm. “This time, however, I’m here to deliver some intelligence.”

“I don’t believe you!” Sidreun gritted his teeth. You obviously could knock on the door, but you chose to come in through the window instead. Would it kill you to send out an official notice?

“This method is faster. I don’t like to wait.” Manison continued as though he heard nothing. “Furthermore, this disaster is currently fermenting. Every second wasted means increased damage.”

Hearing this, Sidreun temporarily suppressed his anger, frowning as he asked, “So, what have you spotted?”

Manison showed the scattered information packet that he had intercepted as he explained, “Not too long ago, a special information package attempted to infiltrate my sub-base, and after it failed, it tried to self-detonate itself. I managed to salvage a portion of it, and from there, I gleaned its general structure. This may be a new form of quantum network virus, where every information package is a source of infection. It will constantly replicate itself and has strong camouflage, permeability, and infection abilities.

“I tracked it down, and this virus is spreading rapidly in the quantum network of the Ancient Star Desert. Countless nodes have been compromised. Working backward, I concluded that this virus might be related to the cosmic energy explosion some time ago, so I came over to notify you.”

Looking at the material that Manison presented, the expressions of the executives gradually turned grave.

“Turns out, it’s a new type of quantum network virus.” Sidreun felt a headache coming. “The quantum network is one of the cornerstones of our galactic society, and this sort of highly contagious virus is the most troublesome. If left untreated, communications might be paralyzed, data lost, and intelligence stolen... What exactly does it do?”

“This virus is still in its incubation period. Once it breaks out, it will rewrite the underlying logic of the infected artificial intelligence and activate a kill order against all living bodies, setting off a mechanical rebellion,” Manison answered calmly as though he was giving a lecture.

At the current stage of the galactic society, every household possessed some form of artificial intelligence or machinery. Once a rebellion occurred within the Star Field or even within the universe, the consequences could be imagined.

Sidreun shivered involuntarily. If Manison had not invaded to pass on the message, the longer they delayed, the more serious this situation would have become. It might even shake the ruling foundation of the three Universal Civilizations.

Thinking of this, Sidreun’s expression toward Manison softened a lot more.

When he’s not up to mischief, this ally was actually quite the reliable person.

He suddenly stood up, throwing away his ‘salted fish’ halo, and solemnly declared, “This matter is too huge. I’ll report it to the President immediately!”

...

A few hours later, the three Universal Civilizations had all received the news, calling an emergency joint meeting.

“... The situation is as such. Right now, the Ancient Star Desert has become the epicenter for this new quantum virus. With every second, the number of nodes being infected by the virus, which has been named ‘Intelligent Plague’, is rapidly increasing. We need to take immediate measures.”

Bader summarized the situation, expressing his position.

The Pope of the Arcane Church narrowed his eyes, saying in a deep tone, “Isolate the entire Ancient Star Desert. Until the virus is completely eliminated, the entire Ancient Star Desert is forbidden from interacting with the external universe’s quantum network. Stargates are all to be closed, and fleets are to be sent to the periphery of the Ancient Star Desert to prevent the source of infection from leaking out in any form.”

“Hmm.” Urranrell nodded in agreement.

This was like treating a normal biological plague, where only isolation would allow it to be completely eliminated.

To barricade all communications within a Star Field, only the three Universal Civilizations had the qualifications and capabilities for such a huge project. If the trio could arrive at a common intention, they would be able to enforce the decree. This was the highest power the three Universal Civilizations had given themselves in the Civilization Conference.

“We also need to inform the local civilizations within the Ancient Star Desert, getting them on side. This problem must be dealt as soon as possible.”

At this time, in order to reassure others, the three could not take the opportunity to attack the Super Star Cluster Civilizations of the Ancient Star Desert. Otherwise, no one would cooperate the next time a similar disaster occurred. The disadvantages far outweighed the potential gains.

If they missed the optimum timing due to infighting, this virus would shake the very foundation of order in the Galactic Civilization, causing a major blow to the dominance of the three Universal Civilizations. There were countless examples in history, so the three of them would never repeat the same mistake.

In the face of such disasters, the three Universal Civilizations would put aside their struggle for interests and temporarily work together to overcome the shared difficulty.

“I recommend that we recruit mechanics from all over the Universe, especially the Beyond Grade A Virtual Mechanics that specialize in this area,” Urranrell suggested. “We should also call the Mechanic Emperor and Black Star to come over and cooperate sincerely to solve the problem.”

“Agreed.”

“Agreed.”

The others all nodded.

Since it was a disaster in the Virtual Domain, they had to have experts in a related field to check it out. Mechanic Emperor and Black Star were the leaders in the Virtual Domain, so they would naturally be employed by the three Universal Civilizations.

As for the origin, cause, and principles behind the disaster, there would be plenty of time to look for clues after this problem was solved.

Furthermore, the three Universal Civilizations were extremely interested in this Virtual Virus Technology.

If this virus had happened in the past, it would likely cause the direct order of the galactic civilization to collapse, turning it into a troubled time. However, with years of development, the three Universal Civilizations could keep the risks under control so long as such disasters were discovered early. There was no need to panic like before.

The only hidden danger that the three Universal Civilizations were worried about would be the unstable civil organizations, such as the Galactic Black Market, wanted criminals, and rebels. If one of them kept the virus secretly, that would be problematic.

Maybe there was even someone that was behind the scenes. The three leaders exchanged glances, sharing the same worries.

...

The Black Star Cup had been in full swing for around two of three months, and Han Xiao had been spending that downtime within his workshop.

He initially wished to keep a low profile for the next year and a half, waiting for the three Universal Civilizations to take action against the Super Star Cluster Alliances, but he did not expect the dynasty to suddenly send him an invitation to a mission one day, asking him to run over to the Ancient Star Desert to tackle a virtual virus.

“To actually block the entire Ancient Star Desert, is that virus so powerful?”

After reading the news from the dynasty, Han Xiao had a weird expression on his face.

In his previous life, this incident did not happen during Version 4.0.

To be precise, the players did not experience the ‘Intelligent Plague’. This event happened during the version update leading up to the Silver Revolutionary Army. For the players, it was just a background story.

Han Xiao recalled the brief introduction to the ‘Intelligent Plague’, even though he had not experienced the incident personally.

In his previous life, the process of resolving this disaster was difficult. The three Universal Civilizations wanted to clear out the virus entirely, but something went wrong, causing the virus to leak and infect multiple Star Fields. The communications in a large number of areas were paralyzed, and the order of their civilization was hit hard.

The three Universal Civilizations sacrificed a lot of resources to resolve the disaster, but due to their attention focused over there, coupled with bad public opinion, it was exploited by the Silver Revolutionary Army of his previous life to develop and grow. This was also an important factor in the success of the Silver Revolutionary Army.

But now, the Intelligent Plague had broken out many years in advance, yet the Silver Revolutionary Army had not said a word, probably missing this opportunity forever.

“It’s the butterfly effect caused by my actions again...” Han Xiao stroked his chin.

The dynasty’s brief contained the cause of the incident, and Han Xiao realized the moment he went through it.

Because he had gotten rid of Gorutan, the black market had entered a short period of time where there was a vacuum in the positions, leading to them being raided by galactic pirates. The original buyer was also investigated by the three Universal Civilizations and seemed like he just wished to collect an antique of an unknown civilization, so Han Xiao had indirectly caused the opening of the safe many years in advance.

Not sure if this is a blessing or a curse...

Han Xiao pursed his lips. The Intelligent Plague was a timed bomb, and it was definitely better for it to erupt during this version rather than during the World Tree Civilization War arc. However, with the conflicts between the three Universal Civilizations and the Super Star Cluster Alliance, this might turn into a bargaining chip for the Super Star Clusters.

If the Super Star Clusters obtained a respite and managed to find a way to rise up as a Universal Civilization, the situation of the universe would take a completely different path compared to his previous life.

I don’t know the general trend of the times, as well as which side will eventually fall...

Shaking his head, Han Xiao suppressed the worries in his heart. At least there was something positive from this incident.

What a coincidence, to think that I would meet with a famous person from the later versions...

Harrison and his team were the excavators, so they were also recorded. Han Xiao was glad to have come across such a famed protagonist and was already thinking how to transplant this unowned leek into his own vegetable plot.

At the bare minimum, he could serve as a mascot, increasing the luck of his Black Star Army.

“Phillip, reply to the dynasty. Tell them that I’m accepting the invite and will rush over immediately.”

He was naturally willing to make a contribution, as he did not wish for the Intelligent Plague to consume a lot of energy of the current explored universe.

Don’t ask, I’m definitely not going there to obtain and research this virus technology! I have absolutely no interest in it at all! Fighting!

Ding!

At this moment, Han Xiao's interface popped up with a notification informing him of a mission.