

## **Mechanic 1171**

### **Chapter 1171: This Cannot Be Called a Betrayal**

Without the information lockdown, two days later, the video footage of the battle over Planet Earth Ring exploded on the internet extremely quickly, shocking and attracting the attention of the galactic residents.

The Black Star Army's search notice was quite famous lately, the entire galactic society thought Black Star was just looking for someone. Quite a number of them even took part in it. However, they never expected something so shocking to happen while they were not paying close attention.

Was Black Star not looking for someone? Why did he suddenly fight the Mechanic Emperor?

Most importantly, he even won!

Due to the Mechanic Emperor's stand being exposed in the Intelligent Plague incident, his reputation had plummeted. However, his strength position was hardly shaken at all. Although the three Universal Civilizations had been promoting the tie, since there was not enough firm evidence, the promotion was not very effective.

However, with Black Star's strength, at least people would not laugh at it, although they knew it was probably not completely through. Everyone only supported it because Black Star had made a tremendous contribution to the universe, so no one would step out to object it.

This time, however, the video footage recorded the entire process without anything missing. Black Star basically emerged victorious in a duel, proving the authenticity of his achievement and shocking everyone.

The powerful image that the Mechanic Emperor had built in countless galactic residents started to fade, while Black Star's image became taller, gradually snatching away the Mechanic Emperor's reputation.

In the many decades in the past, the Mechanic Emperor had given the impression that he never seemed to incur a loss anywhere at all. However, in less than a year, the Mechanic Emperor lost twice, both against Black Star!

Black Star had risen out of nowhere. In a few short decades, he had achieved legendary things one after another, becoming the publicly recognized most eye-catching Beyond Grade A of the century. The influence of this achievement was even greater than the one before. Through this incident, the majority of the galactic society could feel that times were changing. It seemed like a new round of the new taking over the old was taking place right in front of their eyes.

Of course, being shocked was one thing. Most galactic residents were more confused as to the cause of this incident. They were curious why Black Star had fought the Mechanic Emperor.

The whole galactic society knew that these two were the president and the vice president of the Beyond Grade A Association, and the purpose the association claimed to have was to defuse physical conflict between Beyond Grade As. However, now the president and the vice president had taken the lead to break that rule. In the eyes of some, they wondered if this meant that the development union was just a facade and that these individuals with great power would never settle down.

Quite a number of the galactic residents had stereotypes about Beyond Grade As that were embedded deep in their bones—they both respected and feared them, yearned to be like them but also hated them. However, Black Star was one of the extremely few exceptions.

About this incident, one version of the conspiracy theories was the most widely spread, claiming that the Mechanic Emperor was definitely plotting something evil in secret, and Black Star stopped him once again. After what happened with the Intelligent Plague, the Mechanic Emperor's good reputation had gone completely bad. As soon as he did anything that was a little over the line, the public would subconsciously assume that he was planning some conspiracy that would hurt the entire universe again.

This kind of image did not come out of nowhere. The recordings clearly showed that the reason the Mechanic Emperor locked down the planet was to search a fugitive. It was tough not to associate the identity of the fugitive with Aesop, for whom Black Star Army had been searching.

This way, many people suddenly 'figured it out' and felt that everything connected.

The Mechanic Emperor discovered that Aesop had gone missing, so he wanted to secretly kidnap Aesop to threaten the Dragon Emperor and Black Star!

This guy is such an \*sshole. This was clearly an internal affair of the Black Star Army, yet he wanted to kidnap their family, despicable!

This conspiracy theory seemed very logical. More and more people started to agree with it. On the network, it seemed like the Mechanic Emperor became a notorious public enemy overnight.

Of course, for a rumor to spread this fast, there were undoubtedly people behind it, from more than one party in this case too. Those organizations who had beef with the Mechanic Emperor or did not like the Mechanic Emperor were all secretly helping to spread the news. Judging from the Mechanic Emperor's reputation in the industry, it was not difficult to guess who these people were.

A few days after the rumor had fermented, the Black Star Army finally publicized a short announcement, which pushed the incident to a new height.

The Black Star Army claimed that they had already found Aesop and discovered that Aesop did not go missing on his own will but was kidnapped. They had already found that the Mechanic Emperor was one of the culprits who assisted in the kidnapping, and the mastermind behind this was the Modo Civilization. The army stated that the possibility of further action was not ruled out.

Of course, the wording of the official announcement was subtle, but the galactic society could all clearly see what Black Star was saying between the lines.

You piece of sh\*t, playing dirty behind my back? Just you wait!

...

"It's confirmed. The Soul Swapper has fallen into Black Star's hands..."

Inside the secure conference room of the Modo Civilization, the atmosphere was so tense that everyone present found it difficult breathing.

They knew that the real reason Black Star and the Mechanic Emperor fought was the Soul Swapper, and the Mechanic Emperor had confirmed personally that Black Star had obtained the Soul Swapper.

Initially, Modo did not know Manison's goal was the Soul Swapper. They thought that they had kept the secret well, so finding out now was too late.

Even though the Mechanic Emperor's motive was not pure, the one who got the Soul Swapper in the end was Black Star, so there was no point holding the Mechanic Emperor responsible for anything. The partnership they had might even end because of it.

Comparatively, Modo would have preferred for the Mechanic Emperor to get the Soul Swapper, but it landed in the hands of Black Star. To them, this was the worst possible result.

"The Soul Swapper is way too perfect for sending spies. If Black Star infiltrates the upper echelons of the expedition army, that place will become a black hole that will devour all the manpower and resources we send," the army upper echelon said with a grave expression.

"He'll do that for sure. The Black Star Army's announcement is his declaration of war. We will be receiving even stronger attacks. Black Star might even participate personally."

"All we can do is think of ways to eliminate the Soul Swap Twins so that Black Star can't use the Soul Swapper," one of the Modo Three Kings said with a deep voice.

Since there was no source of information, they did not know that the Soul Swap Twins were already dead. The Modo upper echelons' speculation was that Black Star would also be using the Soul Swapper through the Soul Swap Twins, so the plan of eliminating the Soul Swap Twins was brought up once again.

Hearing this, the others nodded and expressed their approval. They felt that this was one of the very few plans that could be carried out right now.

Of course, if the plan failed, they had to suffer the consequences. The Modo Civilization knew the risks involved. They could only blame themselves for not being lucky enough to win the bet. The most important topic to discuss at the moment was how to deal with Black Star's counterattack. Black Star gave them way too much pressure, and everyone was worried sick.

If they had known these chain reactions would happen, they would not have tricked the Kunde Race into attacking the Crimson Dynasty. They had lost much more than they gained, and the upper echelons present were filled with regret.

Their Super Star Cluster allies were completely unreliable. They were reluctant to deal with this mess Modo had made and wanted Modo to deal with Black Star alone. They did not want them to cause any more problems that would affect their overall strategy. However, this was clearly impossible. No one would be willing to give without returns. Modo would not just rot in this horrible situation. They would certainly come up with plans for themselves.

Due to the difference in stands, what the Modo Civilization did was completely dreadful to the other Super Star Cluster civilizations. Not only did they not hold Black Star back, but they might have even caused him to take part personally. Therefore, the unhappiness of the Super Star Cluster allies was imaginable.

An upper echelon hesitated before cautiously saying, "There's no point in discussing this anymore. Judging from our current situation, if things go even worse, maybe we will have no choice but to exit the Flickering World competition..."

"No way!" The Modo Three Kings' voices were firm. "As long as there is even a tiny chance, we will give everything we've got and never exit the Flickering World competition!"

As soon as he said that, the rest hastily agreed to express their political correctness.

However, in their hearts, not every upper echelon really agreed with it. Of course, fighting for the civilization's future was important, and none of them minded working hard for it. However, if the price of that was that their initial position would be affected, indirectly damaging the power and position in the universe of these people, the attitude of many upper echelons would become rather ambiguous.

The members in the leading level had changed time after time since the exploration era. Although the spirit of fighting till the end was still somewhat there, their philosophy still leaned more toward being conservative. This was unavoidable.

Compared to those upper echelons who grew in blood and fire, not all the upper echelons now had such an admirable sense of responsibility. No system could restrain selfishness... What happened to the civilization later was just a matter for the future; people who lived in the moment cared more about the present or the power and position they could enjoy while they were alive.

To some people, if there was nothing that could be done, maintaining the current state of the Super Star Cluster civilization was not a bad choice. After all, those who were willing to take one path and walk to the end of it were not the majority.

...

In a certain temporary base of the Machinery Faith in the Ancient Star Desert, Zax changed into his best formal clothing, looked into the mirror, folded his mechanical-oil stained sleeves, and stuffed a few hard paper plates into his collar to straighten them. After a whole five minutes, he finally pushed the door open and walked in the direction of the Holy Mountain Temple at the heart of the city. On the way, he saw batches of well-dressed Machinery Faith believers who were walking in the same direction, smiling and nodding at each other.

The Machinery Faith continuously migrated around the universe. Every Grand Priest would manage one migration team. Every once in a while, the Grand Priests would host a festival at the same time. All the believers from various places would wear their best clothes to attend. This was one of the cultural practices of the Machinery Faith.

Zax was an ordinary believer. His position was a heavy mining armor operator. He originally worshipped Manison, but after the Intelligent Plague incident, he had changed and started to worship Black Star.

Because of that, he received quite a lot of rejections from his neighbors, as believers worshipping the same person would choose to live in the same area most of the time.

Although the Machinery Faith supported complete freedom in beliefs, ordinary believers who were completely unaffected were still the minority. Therefore, Zax, who publicly changed his belief, was the

most conspicuous where he lived. Although the neighbors would not do anything, they would definitely not be friendly to him.

This was especially clear when it came to his good friend Modir, who was a loyal believer of the Mechanic Emperor. After Zax changed to worship Black Star, Modir came to persuade him many times, which always ended in intense debates. The topic of the debate was the authenticity of that tied battle, which Zax felt was reliable while Modir insisted it was fake and just a method to make the Mechanic Emperor look bad.

They could not convince each other, and gradually, they stopped seeing each other. It had been many days since they spoke.

While pondering, Zax followed the crowd to the temple square while maintaining a faithful mindset. He took the festival items from the priest and then walked to the Black Star Temple. Every Mechanical Deity had their own sub-temple.

While on the way, Zax noticed the difference. In the past, there were hardly any Black Star believers. Although the numbers did increase after the Intelligent Plague incident, there were still very few, at most one-tenth of the number of believers the Mechanic Emperor had. The other sub-temples were always quiet, far from the festivity of the Mechanic Emperor Temple.

This time, however, he was pleasantly surprised to realize that there were many times more believers who were heading toward the Black Star Temple.

“More and more people are agreeing with me. I knew my choice was right. Black Star is more worth worshipping than the Mechanic Emperor.”

He walked into the Black Star Temple filled with happiness. The inside was extremely boisterous. Many times more believers gathered compared to before, so much so that people might mistake this for the Mechanic Emperor Temple.

Very soon, Zax completed a full set of festival procedures. As he was just about to step aside for the person behind him, he suddenly caught a glance of someone familiar.

“Hmm? Modir? Why are you here?”

Hearing someone call him, Modir turned around. When he realized that it was Zax, his expression turned unnatural. He quickly covered his face with his hand and walked away.

Seeing this, Zax instantly caught up to him, grabbed his arm, and refused to let him get away.

“What a coincidence, I didn’t expect to see you here.” Zax’s expression was filled with mockery.

“Hehe, it’s coincidental indeed. I wanted to go to the Mechanic Emperor Temple initially, but silly me, I got lost.” Modir’s smile was stiff.

“The Mechanic Emperor Temple is in the opposite direction. How did you get lost? Did you just follow the crowd, and because there are many people here, you went the wrong way?” Zax said mockingly.

“Yes, yes, that’s right.” Modir quickly agreed.

"Then... what's this!" Zax suddenly reached into Modir's pocket and took out a mechanical item. It was a statue of Black Star that was made to be placed inside homes for worshipping. He looked at the distressed Modir and chuckled. "Don't tell me you bought the wrong one. You'd have to be blind to do so. Tell me the truth, did you also betray the Mechanic Emperor and change to worship Black Star?"

"Nonsense! Betray what?" Modir's face was blushing fully as he tried his best to justify himself. "Can this really be considered a betrayal when it comes to believers?"

Zax chuckled with derision and did not speak.

Being stared at by an old friend, Modir quickly became less confident. He softly murmured, "Don't laugh, alright. I admit it. I've started to worship Black Star."

"Yo, now you admit. Why were you still quibbling earlier?"

"Misunderstanding... It's all a misunderstanding..." Modir's face was burning red.

The two of them had debated the topic dozens of times. He had insisted that Black Star was inferior to the Mechanic Emperor. However, the recordings of Black Star cutting the Mechanic Emperor's avatar into pieces a few days ago slapped his face so hard it was swollen. Hence, he secretly scolded the Mechanic Emperor and changed his belief. He was afraid of getting laughed at, so he hid the fact that he had changed his beliefs, which was why he was avoiding his old friend.

Seeing him like this, Zax shook his head with dissatisfaction. "You have clearly only just started worshipping Black Star. A complete newbie, you don't understand the essence of it at all."

"The essence?" Modir was very interested but was too embarrassed to ask further.

Zax placed his hands on his waist and said confidently, "Humph, look at you, getting awkward and embarrassed in the face of something so trivial. Shameful, what part of that looks like us Black Star believers? As believers of Black Star, you cannot have other things, but your skin must be thick!"

"That's a saying?" Modir's eyes opened wide.

"Of course! This is the attitude to life that Black Star has taught us. Often, you feel like you've embarrassed yourself, you feel awkward, but... who cares about how you feel? Don't be so narcissistic!"

"Huh?" Modir opened his mouth wide, wanting to say something but stopping himself.

"Shut up. Don't ask so many questions and let me tell you the doctrine." Zax stared at him.

"... But I haven't asked anything?"

"Ahem, anyway, as believers, we have to learn the incredible parts of our idol. Black Star's thick skin is known throughout the universe. Look at me. I didn't even move house. I don't care what they say. If they dare come and debate with me, I'll take it as teaching them a lesson. Look at you, you're already worshipping Black Star, yet you're afraid of letting others know. Unqualified!"

"Sounds sensible... Is there anything else I should be aware of?" Modir humbly asked.

"Of course. Black Star told us that a qualified Mechanic should train his body every day and get a strong physique!" Zax folded his sleeves and showed his large biceps.

Doctrines and rules were all set by people. The believers would pick out the specialties of their idols and see them as the creed of their religion. As for the specialties of Black Star, they showed a new world to quite a number of believers and broke the old concepts.

It turned out that a real Mechanic should measure himself with the standard of a Pugilist.

As long as you have a strong physique, you can make up for your weakness, use yourself as a trap, and lure the enemy to get close!

Black Star had already proved through actual battles that this was a more advanced combat strategy!

The news of Manison being defeated by Black Star for the first time caused the Mechanic Emperor to lose a ton of believers. Many changed to worship Black Star instead. Suddenly, the popularity of bodybuilding swept through the Machinery Faith. Bodybuilding equipment was always sold out. The same thing was happening in many different residential areas of the Machinery Faith.

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“Black Star is becoming stronger and stronger...”

In the Limitless Financial Group subdivision, Sorokin looked at the news with a grave expression.

Even with his harsh standards, the Mechanic Emperor was very powerful. Black Star had gotten quite a beating from Manison just a decade prior, yet now he could make Manison lose head-on, twice even.

As someone who might know who Sorokin really was, Black Star being this strong was not good news for him.

“With Black Star’s current strength, if I want to eliminate him, I’ll have to take back all the Soul Seeds and regain my full strength. But if I do that, this body won’t be able to hold it and will basically be destroyed. I’ll have to change my identity again...”

Sorokin walked back and forth, annoyed.

Among the many Beyond Grade As, some wanted fame, some wanted power, some wanted strength, some had no desire... while he just wanted to make money.

Throughout the years, in order to achieve all kinds of plans, Sorokin had changed his identity time after time. This time, however, he could not let go of the identity of the leader of the Limitless Financial Group. He had spent way too much effort to obtain this large sum of money.

...

Meanwhile, in the returning fleet of the Black Star Army, after Han Xiao had finished dealing with the chores and had the free time, he finally remembered about testing the Soul Swapper. Hence, he called Feidin over and temporarily took back the Soul Swapper.

His fingers caressed the mirror and tried to press in but could not at all. No matter how much strength he used, the Soul Swapper did not give in. It was the complete opposite of how it actively tried to suck Feidin in.

“Since only some are qualified to use you, let me see what on earth you are...”

Han Xiao activated [Bold Explorer].

### **Chapter 1172: Origin of the Soul Swapper**

Images in his sights quickly changed. When Han Xiao regained focus, he was already hovering above an enormous planet.

Looking down from outer space, this planet was vast and emerald green in general. Bright cities spread across the surface of the planet. It looked like a rather prosperous civilization.

Through the satellite technology, Han Xiao could roughly judge that this civilization was still at the surface civilization stage with both technology and magic systems, attempting to develop toward becoming a galactic civilization.

The lights on the surface flickered quickly like it was fast forwarded. Countless days seemed to have passed in seconds. At this time, the fast forwarding suddenly stopped and returned to normal as if a certain destination was reached.

The next moment, a sudden change occurred on the planet below him. He saw that in a city area on the surface, the ground suddenly started trembling violently. Then, an enormous seven-fingered palm appeared from the ground.

An enormous titan-like giant used its wide back to break through the ground covering its head and stood up like a colossal pillar, bringing up large portions of the ground. It was like someone had grabbed a tablecloth at the middle; the buildings on the ground fell and shattered like the plates on a table.

Crawling out of the ground, the thousands-of-meters-tall body of this gray giant finally appeared. Just the aftershock of it breaking out of the ground destroyed more than half of this city.

He walked toward the mountains, causing chain earthquakes with every step. As if absorbed by some kind of power, countless stones crawled up his body from his feet, condensing and forming layers of black protective carapaces like armor.

Very soon, the combat jets of this civilization arrived at the scene and fired nonstop at this giant. Countless explosions erupted on its body, causing close to no damage at all. This giant casually swung his arm, creating massive shockwaves, crushing the fighter jets into pieces of waste metal that turned into fireworks.

At the same time, Han Xiao saw that similar situations occurred the same time at more than a dozen other locations. Lives walked out one after another from underground, all with different appearances. There were giants, gigantic beasts, and some that were difficult to describe. Some appeared deep in the mountains, some in the desert, and some in the sea. It was like they had all awakened simultaneously.

An Ancient God awakening-type disaster? Han Xiao thought.

This was a rare kind of disaster. The term 'Ancient God' was a general name for powerful individual beings. It did not have to be a life form. Even mechanical life forms were counted. Simply put, this type of disaster was when a certain powerful individual that had been sleeping in a planet for countless years suddenly awakened due to some reason, causing destruction to the civilization that had developed.



There were mainly two causes for this. One was that the 'Ancient Gods' landed on this planet many years ago and entered a sleeping state. They were aliens. Another was that the 'Ancient Gods' were the native lives of this planet. The latter would usually have some connections to the religions on the planet.

If Han Xiao was to plant Apostle Weapons the size of Giant King Kong on a planet and set for it to awaken millions of years later, should a civilization develop on this planet, it would also be considered an 'Ancient God awakening'.

The footage did not stop while Han Xiao was pondering. The time sped up once again for a while, showing that the civilization used all kinds of modern weapons but did not have any effects at all. Even mushroom clouds could not kill these Ancient Gods.

They seemed to have different supernatural powers. Other than fighting back, they would not attack the civilizations' troops deliberately. Instead, they would continuously use their powers to trigger changes to the planet's environment, causing disasters such as volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, plate drifts, magnetic field shifts, global temperature increase, and so on, seemingly attempting to build a planet that was suitable for themselves. However, such drastic environmental changes were fatal to this civilization. Hence, there was no chance of coexistence. They had no choice but to keep attacking these 'Ancient Gods', hoping to stop them.

During which, more 'Ancient Gods' awakened. They seemed to be the true ancient masters of this planet. The population of this civilization plummeted. They gave up one city after another, shifting toward the land with the fewest 'Ancient Gods'. They called it the 'Final Land'.

This time, however, an opportunity suddenly appeared.

As they knew 'Ancient Gods' were awakening from underground, this civilization went all out to dig into the ground, hoping to capture an individual that had yet to awaken. In the end, they actually really found one close to ten thousand meters below the Final Land. However, this individual had died. It was just that its body did not rot or shrink.

This civilization was overjoyed. They formed research teams hoping to find the weakness of 'Ancient Gods'. However, the more they studied and researched, the more hopeless they got. All evidence proved that with their current weapons, there was absolutely no chance of killing the Ancient Gods.

In Han Xiao's eyes, these Ancient Gods were at the Calamity Grade. They seemed to be of a rare race. Due to their extraordinary Racial Talent and enormous body, they were stronger than usual Calamity Grades, mainly tougher and tankier. It would not be difficult for a Calamity Grade to wipe out a surface civilization, and to this civilization, this many special Calamity Grade lives far exceeded what they could deal with.

In despair, someone had a flash of insight and made a suggestion—since their current weapons were ineffective, they could find a way to modify this Ancient God corpse and make it into a weapon to fight the other Ancient Gods.

Left with no other choice, hardly anyone in the civilization objected to this idea; they could only give it a try. However, their opinions split on the topic of controlling method. Ordinary remote control would not suit high-intensity battles. The tremendous load of nervous connection required at least thousands of

pilots, which would undoubtedly reduce its mobility, and their artificial intelligence technology was not advanced enough.

In the end, this civilization decided to carry out multiple plans at the same time, one of which was to invent a device to swap souls, allowing their souls to exit their weak bodies and enter the corpse of this Ancient God to control it. This way, they would be able to use the abilities of this Ancient God to its fullest with a chance of obtaining its supernatural power.

“This is... Ultraman?”

Han Xiao’s mouth contorted slightly.

At this time, his sights suddenly zoomed in. He came to an enormous lab. The corpse of the Ancient God was hung up. Layers of scaffolding covered its body to modify it and plant all kinds of mechanical weapons.

On the ground were teams of soldiers wearing white clothes. A mechanical plug was planted in the backs of their heads. Cables extended from them and connected them to an enormous device hovering midair.

This enormous device hovered in front of the Ancient God corpse’s head. Its launch port was a black crystal mirror that was pointed at between the brows of the corpse.

Ka-cha!

Han Xiao saw the lab personnel push the handle on the control table. The next moment, he heard people falling to the ground. All the white-clothed soldiers fell down to the floor. Dim clusters of light entered the device through the cables. Right after that, an eerie black light shot out from the crystal mirror and entered the Ancient God from between its brows.

Time passed minute by minute, but the Ancient God corpse did not show any response. Disappointment and frustration appeared on many researchers’ faces.

Suddenly, the entire underground lab trembled. Cracks appeared on the walls. More than a dozen enormous tentacles shattered the walls, and between the rolling soil, a gigantic silhouette approached. It was one of the Ancient Gods that had a semi-plant body. It looked like a combination of Venus Flytrap and an octopus, swimming through the ground like it was a swimming pool.

However, at this instant, the Ancient God corpse suddenly opened its eyes.

Han Xiao’s sights flashed and returned to the office on the spaceship. The illusion from [Bold Explorer] stopped abruptly.

He processed what he had seen.

“There’s quite a lot of information...”

If he had seen correctly, that enormous device was the initial form of the Soul Swapper, and the crystal mirror was the Soul Swapper that was in his hands. God only knew what mutation it had undergone in the long years for it to become a Space Wonder.

Han Xiao recalled the appearance of the race of that civilization and searched in the database, but he did not find any matches. Even the Spacetime Research Council, which focused on collecting information on lost civilizations, had no records.

“Looks like this is a civilization and race that has yet to be discovered. It might be in the unexplored universe, or it could be an even more ancient lost civilization. Could it have existed in the same era as the civilization that created the Domino Virus? I wonder what happened to this civilization next.”

Han Xiao was quite curious. Sadly, the cooldown for [Bold Explorer] was fourteen days.

According to the illusion shown, the plan to use the Soul Swapper to control the Ancient God corpse seemed to have worked. The souls of these soldiers should have merged into one. The corpse did not rot, but the soul had disappeared long ago, so there was not much resistance. The shell successfully accepted the new soul...

“Hmm?”

At this instant, a flash of insight exploded in Han Xiao’s mind like a lightning bolt.

After Hila’s interrogation of the Soul Swap Twins and the tests Feidin had been carrying out, he had a brief understanding of the functions of the Soul Swapper. He knew that this thing could swap souls and ignore the body’s rejection to a very large extent. This meant that if the target was a shell that had no soul, he could easily ‘revive’ it.

This meant that...

Han Xiao took out the Spacetime Amber, his eyes glowing.

He suddenly realized that the functions of these two things seemed to fit perfectly!

He could use the Soul Swapper in a very special way!

“Black Star, what are you laughing about? Why is your laughter so...” Feidin stopped and did not say the word ‘perverted’.

“Ahem!” Han Xiao quickly coughed. “I’ve thought of something good.”

“What?”

“It’s nothing, none of your business.” Han Xiao lifted the Soul Swapper in his hands. “I’ll be taking this to do some experiments. I’ll return it to you afterward.”

“No problem.” Feidin hesitated for a moment before saying, “Actually, there’s one thing I’d like to ask you to help with. As you know, although Psychics can shift their souls, the risk is extremely high, which is why Chen Xing has been living in my body. Now that there’s this Universal Treasure, there won’t be any risks anymore, so I plan to get her out.”

“For what? Doesn’t mental reproduction feel great?”

“You say it as if you’ve tried.” Feidin was speechless.

Han Xiao scratched his nose, shifted the topic, and said, “So, you want me to find a body for Chen Xing?”

“Not just that...” Feidin said a little bit awkwardly. “She said she doesn’t want to use a second hand good someone else has already used, so she hopes to custom-make a body for which she can choose the shape and looks.”

“I can’t do that.” Han Xiao waved and rejected the request. “I’m just an ordinary Mechanic. Building machinery isn’t a problem, but creating humans isn’t my thing. Do you think I’m a god?”

“Can’t you use biological muscles, nanotechnology nerves, and so on to create a bionic human?”

“I can indeed, but that’ll require a chip. The consciousness staffed in it is in Virtual Soul format. It’s not compatible with the soul of a Psychic.”

“What about imitating the structure of a brain without using a chip?”

“Sure, I can do that, but I can’t say what side effects it’ll have.”

“What then?” Feidin felt a little defeated. “It’s not like we can kill a young and pretty female just to find her a body.”

“From the way I see it, you can find a pet first and transfer your wife into that temporarily. Isn’t that nice...”

“She said you’re becoming more and more perverted.” Feidin narrowed his eyes. “And I agree.”

“What are you guys thinking about?” Han Xiao rolled his eyes. You’re one to talk.

Feidin shook his head and said seriously, “I’ve already split off the parasite soul inside Aesop’s body. He’s recovered.”

“Oh ho, tell him to come and see me then. Let me see how he’s doing.”

“He’s already outside the door.”

Feidin signaled. The door was pushed open, and Aesop walked in. When he saw Han Xiao, he smiled bitterly.

Han Xiao sized Aesop up and said, “Old man, any side effects?”

“Nope, I feel normal now.”

Aesop sat down. He had a complicated expression on his face as he sighed and said, “Black Star, thank you for this. If not for you, Ames would definitely have been heavily affected.”

“Don’t say that. You wouldn’t have been targeted if it wasn’t for me.” Han Xiao shook his head.

“Alas, I’ve lived long enough. It doesn’t matter if I die or not. I just don’t want my death to affect Ames. I know her temper, she’d definitely do something she’ll regret under a fit of rage.”

Well, you got that right... Han Xiao thought.

“What are you planning to do now? Although you didn’t plan for this, Ames will be more cautious now. Even if you want to leave, you won’t be able to easily.”

“What else can I do but stay?” Aesop smiled bitterly. Originally, he had come to an agreement with Black Star that he would be leaving to travel around after this mission was complete, but clearly, that was not going to happen.

If Black Star did not notify Ames, he would not have been in such a troubling situation. But Black Star had saved him, so he, of course, had no reason to blame him.

Han Xiao caressed his chin and suddenly said, “Actually, I have an idea that’ll satisfy both sides.”

“Oh?” Aesop’s eyes gleamed as he said with anticipation, “Tell me about it.”

“It’s simple really. The Soul Swapper is in my hands now. I can swap your soul into someone strong, and then you’ll be able to follow others around for adventures. Although you can’t control the body, it’s better than rotting at home. Plus, your safety will be guaranteed.”

Aesop’s eyes gleamed. He was tempted.

“This is a good idea... then what about my body?”

“Easy, I can use the Spacetime Amber to store it... but I suggest you temporarily lend it to someone else, and I happen to have a candidate for that.

“Who?” Han Xiao pointed at Feidin, chuckled, and said, “You enter Feidin’s body, and Chen Xing will borrow your body. Isn’t that a perfect plan?”

Hearing this, the both of them felt a chill down their spine.

Thinking of his adorable wife becoming an old man, Feidin wanted to vomit.

Thinking of the fact that Feidin had a habit of fornicating in the mind, Aesop subconsciously tightened his legs.

“I’d rather die!” the two of them said simultaneously.

...

It was the day for another plenary meeting at the Beyond Grade A Association headquarters. The remote projections of various Beyond Grade As arrived at the venue outside the conference room, gathered in groups, chattered, and waited for the meeting to begin.

“Have you heard? Black Star fought the Mechanic Emperor again not long ago. He even won this time,” Sun Hunter said, floating in midair.

“We’re not living in a cave. Of course we’ve heard.” Kant tutted with his arm crossed. “Remember the fight we watched a few months ago? Black Star could only fight on par with the Mechanic Emperor at most back then. So little time has passed, and now he can already defeat Manison head-on, scary.”

“Hehe, Manison lost big time. Feels good.” A neutral Mechanic was laughing joyfully.

Kasuyi shook his head. “I know the Mechanic Emperor’s strength very well. To think that he still lost after using so many trump cards. It’s really unbelievable. I’ve seen the recording. Black Star seems to have learned some kind of new ability that happens to severely counter the Mechanic Emperor.”

Sierron snorted. "He just got lucky."

"I personally object to your evaluation of his luck. You're questioning my expertise," Secret Master said with an expressionless face.

Sierron did not know how to respond to that.

"Speaking of which, I don't know if I'm wrong, but the last Beyond Grade A weapons that the Mechanic Emperor took out at the end, aren't they the three guys we know?" Milizaus asked hesitantly.

Once he said that, the entire place became silent for a moment. Everyone had a strange expression on their face.

To these senior Beyond Grade As, they knew who the Mechanic Emperor had defeated before, and some even knew them personally.

Seeing someone they were close to in the past getting modified by the Mechanic Emperor, they did not feel happy.

Although modifying living individuals was not forbidden, it was improper in the Beyond Grade A circle. Everyone had great powers. Once anyone was found to use something like this, all the Beyond Grade As would become cautious around that person due to fear of becoming their prey.

"I saw that Black Star captured two of them in the recordings. When he's here later, we can ask him." Kant shrugged.

At this time, another remote projection appeared not far away, and everyone looked over.

"Yo, speak of the devil."

### **Chapter 1173: Triple Provocation**

As soon as Han Xiao's remote projection arrived, he could feel the surprise, respect, and all kinds of looks from everywhere.

"Black Star!"

Hearing someone calling him, Han Xiao turned and saw Kasuyi and the others approaching. They were all people he knew in the peak Beyond Grade A circle.

"What is it?"

"Hehe, good fight." Kant smiled.

"You should say that to Manison. He needs the comforting." Han Xiao raised his brows.

"Hahaha, you've become worse since the last time we met." The others laughed.

In the circle, Han Xiao was not distant like the Mechanic Emperor, so he was more popular. More people were willing to befriend him.

Kasuyi smiled and said, "Black Star, it's said you seized the Mechanic Emperor's troops. Those two Beyond Grade As, have you found out who they are?"

Han Xiao shook his head. He casually exposed Manison's trump cards and roughly explained the Felon technology. He then said, "Their brains got stirred up by Manison. They barely remember anything at all."

"Sigh, the two people you captured should be Sollett and Cain. I was quite close to Cain in the past, very long ago..." Milizaus sighed.

As a big baby who was talented, gifted, and of a rare species, he disliked experiments that involved living things the most. Before he became a Beyond Grade A, baby dragons had gone missing every once in a while, hunted by galactic hunters and sold for money. Most of the time, they were sold to research institutes to study their special traits. Hence, he was quite sensitive to this.

They introduced the backgrounds of Sollett and Cain. The former was Two, and the latter was Four. They were both once quite strong Beyond Grade As. They had beef with the Mechanic Emperor for different reasons and were both defeated before going missing. The people present did not expect to see their old friends become puppets when they met again.

"By the way, not long ago, you were still no match... ahem, or on par with the Mechanic Emperor at most. Why is it that this time the Mechanic Emperor used his trump cards but you still won? Do you have some kind of secret tricks?" Sun Hunter asked.

"Nothing much. I was just lucky."

Han Xiao subconsciously gave a humble reply. However, as soon as he said that, he realized the people around him all had strange looks on their faces.

Everyone gave Secret Master a look that said, "It's your showtime."

However, Secret Master was not affected at all as if he did not hear what Han Xiao said.

Sierron could not take it anymore. He walked to Secret Master and whispered, "Why aren't you rebutting him like you did earlier? Aren't you an expert?"

Secret Master glanced at him. "I'm giving him face."

"I see..." Sierron nodded and then suddenly it occurred to him. "Wait a minute, then why didn't you give me face just now?"

"That isn't necessary."

Veins popped up on Sierron's forehead.

We're all peak Beyond Grade As. How dare you so openly treat us differently!

"So, you're saying you're afraid of offending Black Star but not of offending me. Is that it?"

"Yes." Secret Master looked confused. "Where did you get the confidence to ask this question?"

He was confused. Black Star could not be unluckier, so I can't reduce his luck anymore, but don't you know how extremely lucky you are?

Sierron pointed at Secret Master and was at a loss for words.

Can't you just comfort me even for the sake of it?

The few of them chatted a while. Very soon, it was time for the meeting to start. The people swarmed in and sat down.

Manison's remote projection arrived right on time. He did not look at anyone after he arrived. He ignored everyone's strange looks and walked right into the venue.

He arrived right on time because he did not want to meet Han Xiao before that—he could guess with his feet just how boastful Han Xiao would be in front of him.

When passing by Han Xiao's seat, Manison purposely ignored him. He thought Han Xiao would insult him, but to his surprise, Black Star did not say anything at all as if he was someone else.

Already mentally prepared, Manison felt somewhat uncomfortable, so much so he almost spoke to Han Xiao first.

Noticing Manison's vision, Han Xiao did not even look at him... You thought I was going to insult you, but I'm going to deliberately ignore you, and that's an insult too.

Suppressing his impulse to talk to Han Xiao, Manison coughed and said, "Let's begin the plenary, everyone..."

Before he finished, Han Xiao stood up and slowly said, "I have something to tell all of you."

Everyone looked over.

Han Xiao leaned forward, pressed his hands on the table, and said, "About my experience some time ago, some of you here might not know the full story, so let me explain. I have personal beef with the Modo Civilization. The origin of that is the Kunde Race incident in the second exploration phase. Modo tricked a native civilization into attacking the Crimson Dynasty, causing unnecessary losses. My Black Star Army took part in the war, and I lost some men. After that, the Kunde Race joined my command for protection, so I took over the responsibility to find out the one who's behind this.

"Originally, this war could be completely avoided, but Modo's plots caused us to lose the chance of coexisting peacefully. One reason for the beef between Modo and I is the damages my forces suffered, and another is out of morals.

"Modo and I are enemies, so it's understandable for us to attack each other, and I accept the damages Modo has caused to my troops in the frontlines. However, Modo used conspiracies... never mind that they used conspiracies. After all, it's one way of attack in wars. But what they shouldn't have done is drag an unrelated Beyond Grade A into this."

Then, Han Xiao pointed at Ames. Seeing that everyone was listening quietly, he said, "Dragon Emperor originally had nothing to do with this, but Modo wanted to threaten me through kidnapping her adoptive father. Someone here even assisted Modo in that..."

Then, Han Xiao glanced at Manison. He quickly continued before Manison said anything.

"This is very contemptible and despicable, so the Dragon Emperor decided to join the battle and teach Modo a lesson. I've also decided to take part personally..."



Han Xiao paused, looked around, and said with a deep voice, "I've finished speaking. Who approves? Who objects?"

The entire place was silent. People exchanged looks with strange expressions.

Before the Flickering War, the agreement everyone made in this very room was that Beyond Grade As had to stay out of the war. Their subordinates could join, nor could they take revenge except in some exceptions, but not participating in it personally was clearly stated. Black Star's request now, however, clearly showed that he was going to be the first one to break this rule.

Manison narrowed his eyes. He deliberately objected and said, "I don't think that's good. You're the vice president. If you take the lead on disobeying the agreement we made, won't the principles of the shared battlefield lose its restraint? If you make an excuse to personally participate and we approve it, will you have to approve it if tomorrow I find a reason to fight you too? If everyone can do whatever they want as long as there's a reason, what's the point of the association existing?"

"Tsk, older people are indeed inflexible." Han Xiao tutted. "How long has it been since our association was formed, and the system is already showing signs of rigidity? That sure suits your style as the leader."

Manison's brows twitched, but he was secretly relieved.

Familiar recipe, familiar taste. Black Star is still that Black Star, classic double faced.

Han Xiao then looked around and said, "I made this suggestion not just because of personal reasons but more for the principles and prestige of the association and the shared battlefield."

"What do you mean by that?" Kant continued the topic.

"What Manison said sure makes some sense, but in order to see this problem in detail, we first have to understand the nature of this incident. In order to cause problems for me, Modo plotted against an unrelated Beyond Grade A, who is also a member of the Beyond Grade A Association... What does that mean? Let me state an example. Hmm, let's take the Limitless Financial Group as the example. Let's say I want to take over the Limitless Financial Group's assets, and I know Manison is one of the big shareholders. I kidnap Manison, torture him in all ways possible, and use that to threaten Sorokin to sign unfair agreements. How will you react, Sorokin?"

Being suddenly named, Sorokin was a little stunned.

You guys can chat all you want. Why bring me in it?

If that really happened, I'd probably be overjoyed to have one fewer person to share my profits with...

"Ahem, I'd be furious."

Han Xiao then looked at Manison and said, "And if you escape... I mean if, since everyone knows if you end up in my hands, you'll undoubtedly have no way of escaping... anyhow, if you escape, you'll definitely take revenge afterward, right?"

"...Right." Manison's lips twitched slightly.

“See, this is completely understandable and very similar to what happened to me.” Han Xiao clapped and said with a deep voice, “But why is the association going against it and forbidding this kind of action? Wasn’t the purpose of founding the association to provide the Beyond Grade As a better future and higher positions? Why are we putting shackles on our own feet?”

Then, Han Xiao walked to behind Manison, pressed on his shoulders, and said, “The principle of the shared battlefield is, of course, when one member gets in trouble, everyone else helps. The Modo Civilization targeted an unrelated Beyond Grade A and broke the rules first. If we don’t deal with it, what will the others think? They’ll think that the association is preventing the Beyond Grade As from taking revenge, so they’ll be more daring and target Beyond Grade As. What the hell is that?”

“We want higher positions. Other than following rules ourselves so that galactic society will feel safer, we must make others maintain respect and fear for the Beyond Grade As even more. The latter is the way to obtain higher positions, not the other way around.

“Therefore, although the purpose of the association is mainly to defuse conflicts, when facing this kind of provocative action, we must punish them! Otherwise, the prestige of the entire Beyond Grade A society will be damaged. This is the true purpose of the shared battlefield!”

“We’re now a collective, a group. If the others don’t want to be affected out of nowhere like the Dragon Emperor, not only should they approve this, but they should even provide assistance and target Modo together. Don’t forget how the Tragedy of the Pinnacles began. Having unity is crucial, the association should give Modo a serious announcement and retaliate with thunderous forces. This way, the entire universe will know that the Beyond Grade A society is now different. We’re united.”

Although something felt off, most could not deny it. Black Star said what they truly felt in their hearts; it really did make a lot of sense.

“Of course, our association has to have freedom. I won’t force anyone to fight Modo, but I’ll certainly help Ames because I’ve never forgotten where I started. Now, let me ask what I asked earlier one more time...”

Han Xiao looked around and said word by word,

“Who approves? Who objects?”

The venue was silent for two seconds. Then Beyoni raised his hand and broke the silence.

“I approve!”

“Me too.” Kohler followed.

With someone taking the lead, the people of the Crimson Dynasty all voted to approve other than Heber, who was still putting on a cold front. Some of the neutral Beyond Grade As in the association who stood on Black Star’s side also voted to approve.

Ames looked at this with eyes filled with joy—she loved seeing Han Xiao confidently talk in front of everyone.

The people on the side of the Mechanic Emperor looked at Manison. As Manison remained silent, they did not object. Seeing this, the directors such as Kasuyi also cast their votes.

“Black Star is right,” Milizaus added. “His personal beef with the Modo Civilization isn’t our concern, but even wars have rules. Methods that are too dirty can’t be used without any restrictions. Modo’s action of plotting against the family of another Beyond Grade A who’s not a part of this matter has crossed the line.”

“That’s right. I totally agree with the true purpose of the shared battlefield as Black Star said. If I get captured by the Mechanic Emperor one day, you guys had better come and save me,” Sun Hunter joked.

Manison glanced at him. “Don’t worry, you’re too weak. I’m not interested.”

The people messed around for a while. At this time, a neutral Beyond Grade A who had been silent all this time suddenly said, “Black Star said he wants to attack Modo, but the Mechanic Emperor is an accomplice too. Why aren’t you taking revenge against him? I think you should be fair.”

Hearing this, the room went silent again. Many people had a strange expression on their face.

This is definitely deliberately starting a fire! Damn kid, you got balls!

Han Xiao glanced at him and thought it was quite funny.

Yo, I remember that this guy was one of the ‘mercenaries’ of the Super Star Cluster Alliance in my previous life. He might actually be a direct member of a Super Star Cluster civilization like Traveler.

Attempting to shift the hatred and mix things up here, could this guy be the secret direct member of Modo?

This thought flashed past. Seeing that everyone was looking at him, Han Xiao waved generously, purposely sighed, and said, “Well, after all, one of the purposes of our association is to resolve conflicts between Beyond Grade As. Although Manison was unethical, I can’t be immoral. I’ll take it as I made a small loss and won’t chase after him for it.”

As soon as he said that, Manison’s entire body shook. His mental state that had finally calmed down almost exploded once again.

What the f\*ck are you talking about?

You took the Soul Swapper and my two Felons, and you call that making a loss?

I’ll make ‘losses’ like that any day!

Seeing Manison’s twitching face, many people hastily rubbed their whiskers to cover their mouths and hold back their laughter.

Manison closed his eyes, took a few seconds to suppress his rage, and said with an expressionless face, “Black Star, even if you took my samples, you won’t be able to grasp my technology.”

He was this confident. Be it the Felon technology or the Indestructible Mechanical Troops technology, he had fused his own unique technology within both of them. This was the essence of what he had mastered after secretly making innovative breakthroughs in Virtual Technology.

Without making any innovation in the Virtual Technology area, he was completely certain that even if Black Star was able to learn something from it, he would at the very most only be able to imitate it but never completely master all of its details.

“Don’t worry, I won’t stop you from comforting yourself.” Han Xiao giggled.

“Humph, nonsense. If I’ve guessed correctly, you’ve already met obstacles you can’t break through at the start of the research, haven’t you?”

Han Xiao hesitated for a moment and did not reply.

Seeing this, Manison smiled slightly. Thinking he had guessed right, he was finally in a better mood. He slowly said, “I guessed right, so you’re not going to respond?”

Han Xiao shook his head and hesitantly said, “I just feel that you’re old. You don’t have many good years left, and I’m worried that if I tell you the truth, you’ll have a heart attack right here. If that happens, the merit of getting rid of you won’t be from me. Wouldn’t that be a huge waste?”

“F\*ck off...”

## **Chapter 1174 Arriving at the Frontlines**

The day after the meeting, the Beyond Grade A Association made an announcement.

The announcement claimed that the Modo Civilization had conspired against Black Star through targeting the family of other Beyond Grade As, and this kind of action violated the association’s rules. In order to protect its members’ interests, the association strongly condemned Modo’s actions and approved of Black Star’s retaliation. Furthermore, the association did not deny the possibility of stepping in to protect its members.

As soon as the announcement was made, it attracted strong responses in the Flickering World. The various organizations in the frontlines of the Flickering World reacted to it the strongest. They were all shocked.

Ever since the start of the war, most of the Beyond Grade As had just been watching and observing it without interfering. Was this a sign of them personally participating in the war?

Although the association claimed to target only the Modo Civilization, the armed forces on the side of the three Universal Civilizations did not feel happy about it at all.

Everyone knew that Beyond Grade As were undoubtedly the ceiling of single unit war weapons. Once the Beyond Grade As participated, they would certainly become the main forces in the war. It seemed like once that happened, the others would not even have a chance to gain any merit at all.

The Super Star Cluster Alliance was the most furious—if not because the Modo Civilization was their ally, they would even have turned around to attack the Modo Civilization.

The Super Star Cluster Alliance only wanted Modo to hold off the Black Star Army's invasion and not do anything extra. However, due to different stands, Modo had to plan for themselves, which led to this situation.

Unlike in the past, the Beyond Grade As had founded a collective association, becoming a barely operational group with extraordinary influence. If not because the association was not on the side of the three Universal Civilizations, the Super Star Cluster Alliance would probably have no chance in this war.

Aesop being someone completely unrelated was not fully true. He had helped the Black Star Army find the secret transportation routes of the Modo Civilization time after time, but this part was deliberately not mentioned by the association. They only emphasized his relationship with the Dragon Emperor and the fact that Dragon Emperor did not take part in this matter. From the perspective of sensible standards, the Modo Civilization did not cross the line. Aesop had clearly helped Black Star against them first. However, using this to argue with the association would only lead to them embarrassing themselves. At the root of it, Black Star's power was what caused this. In order to overcome someone with power, the only way was through using even higher power. Arguing based on what was reasonable and what was not reasonable would not work.

The current Super Star Cluster Alliance did not have the power to overcome the Beyond Grade A Association. Throughout the entire universe, the three Universal Civilizations were the only ones who could for the time being, but this matter was beneficial for them, so there was no way they would step up to interrupt it. Hence, they gave their silent approval. The situation seemed to be heading in a direction that was beneficial for the three Universal Civilizations. However, other than being content, the three Universal Civilizations' upper echelons were also feeling somewhat complicated. "Black Star... his power is growing even stronger."

On the Federation of Light's mother planet, President Bader let out a long exhale while looking at the report. The direct Beyond Grade As had given him the details of the meeting. Although the main focus was Ames, based on this woman's personality, she would not seek help from outsiders. The attitude change of the association this time was single-handedly led by Black Star.

Right after the Black Star Army made an announcement, Black Star influenced the association to make a response too. Using his identity and position, he deployed his resources in a direction that benefitted himself. Most of the time, the materialization of one's power was presented in one's ability to influence and deploy others. If he could make many people act based on his will, he would be considered as powerful.

The advanced civilizations did this kind of thing often too. As long as the method was effective, no one cared if it was immoral or not.

Before the founding of the Beyond Grade A Association, if Black Star wanted to use his power, the only method would probably be to complain to the Crimson Dynasty.

Now, however, he aided the founding of the Beyond Grade A Association, created a new shield for himself, and gained a new source of power he could utilize. He had more resources and platforms at his disposal, so he was becoming more powerful in the galactic society. Comparatively, although Manison was the president, which meant his position was higher than Han Xiao's on paper, Han Xiao had been gradually taking away his power. The three Universal Civilizations aiding Han Xiao was part of the

reason, but the Mechanic Emperor was still the Federation of Light's ally on paper, so Bader was not very happy about it.

What troubled him the most was the sense of unity the association had shown this time. In Bader's eyes, these Beyond Grade As were not making an announcement to the entire universe; they wanted to tell the three Universal Civilizations that they were no longer scattered and divided. It was an indirect act of intimidation.

Although some Beyond Grade As still had their own goals and motives that might go against the association's overall goal, they also had common goals. If left alone, the three Universal Civilizations' control over the Beyond Grade As getting gradually weaker was a foreseeable future.

"Sigh..." Bader rubbed his temple.

As the leader of an advanced civilization, there were too many things he had to consider for just one matter. Even though there were specialized medical personnel taking care of his body to make sure he stayed energetic, the long time he had spent as the leader had cost him way too much energy and caused damage to his mind.

However, the day of the changing of leaders was close, and his term was about to end.

Not only the federation, he counted the days, and Urranrell would probably retire soon.

There was no choice but to leave these difficult problems for their successors.

Countless Black Star Army battleships gathered around a temporary space station in the Emerald Star Cluster. Almost eighty percent of all the fleets the Black Star Army sent to the frontlines were there. There were countless normal army warriors and players. Usually, gathering so many forces would mean a huge military operation was about to be carried out. Today, however, was only to welcome a few people.

Inside one battleship, many players squeezed around the porthole and stared closely at the battleship stargate just built near the base.

"The announcement said Black Star will arrive today. Why isn't he here yet?" "Is there a traffic jam in the stargate?"

The people chattered softly.

They were supposed to fight in the frontlines originally and continue to clash with the hostile guild alliance. However, not long ago, Phillip had given the majority of members a new order to pull back and wait for Black Star's arrival in the base.

The focus of the players was mainly the national war at this point. Although there were also discussions about the conflict between Black Star and the Mechanic Emperor, it did not receive as much attention as their own national war.

The reactions of the army players after finding out about it were all about the same. They basically yelled about how incredible their army commander was and then went back to fighting the players of the hostile alliance.

Some newly-joined foreign players were excited and surprised to hear that Black Star was about to participate in the war personally. They looked forward to fighting alongside Han Xiao.

However, the more experienced Chinese players were in overwhelming despair. Their thoughts were shockingly similar.

Don't come! We don't want to just watch cutscenes again!

Buzz!

At this time, a black cone-shaped tip of a ship extended out of the blue vortex of the stargate, followed by the black body of the ship that was covered in armor. An enormous flagship rode out from the stargate, along with teams of battleships, swarming out of the stargate. Inside the command room in the frontmost bridge of the flagship, the scenery windows switched to being transparent. The players present could all clearly see Han Xiao and Ames standing behind the porthole of the flagship.

"They're here! They're here!"

"Black Star! Dragon Emperor!"

"Ah! I have seen those long legs with my own eyes. I have no more regrets in life!"

"Sigh, looking at him again now after seeing the main character Feidin in the Black Star documentary movie, I've realized this is the difference between imagination and reality."

"To think that b\*stard Black Star can play with this pair of legs any way he wants. I'm heartbroken..."

"They're a perfect pair. Who are you to object it?"

Quite a number of people had not seen Han Xiao in a very long time and were all very excited. However, in terms of popularity, Ames was overwhelmingly superior.

Inside the command room, Ames looked at the fleet outside and asked, "Are these people enough?"

"Including the two of us, yes, of course." Han Xiao nodded.

After making the announcement, the two of them headed to the frontlines right away to fulfil their promise, personally joining the battle against Modo.

At this time, a remote projection appeared beside the two of them. It was the current chief commander of the frontline fleets, Herlous.

"Your Excellencies, the troops have gathered accordingly. What should we do next?"

Han Xiao narrowed his eyes, smirked, and said, "Give the Modo Civilization a present, of course."

Hearing this, Ames looked excited.

This was a plan they had already discussed on the way. Based on what they had found out from the captives, the plan to plot against Aesop was first proposed by the commanding level of the Modo expedition army. Hence, the two of them made a decision-once they arrived at the frontlines, they would charge in right away and kill them!

“But before we have a good time with Modo, we’ll first have to chase away those in the way. Have all the organizations following behind the Black Star Army in the Ferdinand Battle Zone been identified?”

“Yes.” Herlous nodded.

The Black Star Army’s target had always been just the Modo Civilization. However, some subsidiary organizations of the three Universal Civilizations used the opportunity of the Black Star Army penetrating the line of defenses and followed behind to attack together, continuously taking over Modo’s territory, wanting to use this place as the breakthrough point for the war.

“Okay. Contact all the commanders of these forces and drag them into the communication channel.”

After that, Han Xiao closed his eyes and waited for a while. In less than ten minutes, the commanders of all those organizations entered the channel.

Contacting them was too easy. Hearing that Black Star was looking for them, none of them rejected the communication request.

Inside the channel, voices sounded one after another. Not long after, everyone had arrived.

Only then, Han Xiao opened his eyes and said, “Hi, I’m Black Star.”

“Greetings, Your Excellency Black Star!”

“Hi, Lord Black Star.”

“Have you eaten?”

The channel went silent for an instant, followed by the greetings of everyone. Their terrified expressions could be clearly imagined from their tone.

Han Xiao nodded, cut to the chase, and said, “Guys, do me a favor. Please retreat from the Ferdinand Battle Zone. Stop wasting time here.”

Everyone was stunned, not knowing how to reply.

The channel became silent.

Some people were displeased, thinking that Black Star wanted to take all the benefits for himself by making them quit with just one sentence.

“Erm, Your Excellency Black Star, I’m not sure that’s suitable. Plus, we can provide help. With us helping you to deal with the troops that have escaped, your troops will suffer less damage. Furthermore, us being around the exteriors of the battlefield prevents the possibility of the Black Star Army being surrounded by the Modo Civilization or other enemies,” someone argued.

“Yes, yes. We all know you’re eager to take revenge, but with our help, you can get rid of the Modo Civilization expedition even faster.” Quite a number of people agreed and added their thoughts.

You don’t say... That’s exactly why I’m doing this. If you people defeat Modo too fast, they’ll give up... I can only torture them as much as possible if they don’t surrender.



“I don’t want to repeat myself. I hope you guys can leave the Ferdinand Battle Zone within five days,” Han Xiao said in a deeper voice and a slower tone. “I’m taking over this entire battlefield!”

### **Chapter 1175 Overwhelming Army**

Han Xiao considered himself reasonable. With his explanation, these armed forces following behind the Black Star Army willingly exited the battle zone and changed their target. A few days later, the Black Star Army was the only attacking force at the Modo Civilization line of defense in the Ferdinand Battle Zone.

Black Star did not hide his arrival at the frontline. The Modo expedition army had already received the news, and they were all on edge. Although the Black Star Army’s allies had left, Black Star’s arrival made the Modo expedition army even more on edge than before-Black Star alone was stronger than millions of soldiers.

After two days, the Modo expedition noticed the movements of the Black Star Army. The Black Star Army had temporarily pulled the troops at other locations back and gathered them at one area of the lines of defense, as if they were about to carry out an all-out attack. The one leading the charge was Black Star himself.

The Modo expedition army responded by moving tons of troops to this area to strengthen its defense.

A large fleet crossed the galaxy. After a while, the line of defense set up by the Modo expedition army entered their sights. It was like a wall made of battleships, armed fortresses, and enormous machines that extended beyond sight.

Five planets were moved there to form a defense formation. Two enormous armies stood against each other in space.

Inside the command room of the flagship of the Black Star Army, Ames observed the battlefield, shook her head, and said, “They want to fight us head-on without any Beyond Grade As. Is Modo planning to sacrifice all of its fleets?”

“They don’t have a choice. If they don’t use this dumb method, they can only watch us charge right in.” Han Xiao smiled.

Currently, the Beyond Grade As participating in the battle were only him and Ames. Although Modo also had Beyond Grade As, they did not want to expose who they were, and they could not find an excuse to participate with the association’s restraint. In order for Modo to stop the charge of two Beyond Grade As, they could only use fleets to fight them head-on. In battlefields like this, the existence of Beyond Grade As was crucial. The only thing the side without Beyond Grade As could do was use countless fleets to fight the Beyond Grade As. But even if that could hold the Beyond Grade As back for a while, the fleets could never threaten the Beyond Grade As’ lives.

No matter how quickly they could build fleets, the speed of it would never match up with the speed the Beyond Grade As recovered their energy. After repeating the process a few times, the damage would be catastrophic. It was a bottomless pit. This was why the advanced civilizations all fought over Beyond Grade As.

In extremely intense battles, the importance of Beyond Grade As would be lower. However, those extremely destructive strategic weapons would not be used in every war. In the usual Flickering Wars, the Beyond Grade As were more than enough to decide the result of a battle.

At this time, the commander of the fleet, Herlous, said, "Army Commander, the troops have arrived at the destination. Please give the next order."

Han Xiao waved and said, "No need to have a stare down with them. Just start the fight."

The order was passed down layer by layer and quickly spread across the entire army.

The next moment, the Black Star Army struck. Billions of lights appeared in the dark universe, all from psionic cannons.

Extremely bright beams landed on the base protective shields and spaceship shields of the Modo Civilization like a thunderstorm, creating tons of electric sparks like ripples. The linked shield formed by the Modo expedition flickered, the shield energy storage of tons of spaceships in the formation fell below the warning line, and alarms rang everywhere.

The Modo expedition army instantly counterattacked. The charge fleets and assault fleets of both sides charged at each other and quickly clashed, instantly forming a bloody battlefield.

The two sides were absolute enemies; words were no longer necessary, and they attacked as soon as they met. The war erupted in an instant!

Ames turned around and glanced at Han Xiao. Seeing Han Xiao nod, she walked right out of the hatch, turned into a shooting star, and charged into the battlefield.

Enormous force fields formed into countless dragons, rolling, restraining, pulling, and tearing the enemy fleets apart. Hostile ships were torn into bent metal plates tons at a time by her force field, breaking their formation completely. Her Esper Ability was known to be comprehensive. She was incredible at large-area AOE attacks, and her ability was extremely practical in galactic battlefields like this.

Han Xiao was not doing nothing either. He snapped his fingers, and teams of mechanical troops swarmed out of the secondary dimensional army box and entered the battlefield.

The tons of mechanical soldiers instantly gained an overwhelming upper hand in the battleship. A team of just ten soldiers could easily tear a heavy battleship apart, and there were at least three million mechanical soldiers present that were still increasing in number.

The Mechanical Deity was excellent in duels, but when fighting more enemies, the mechanical army was still more efficient.

As a peak Beyond Grade A Mechanic who was also a combat expert, taking part in a battle of this level personally was a total piece of cake. Usually, Han Xiao might hold back, but against Modo, he had no intention of doing so.

The two sides fought fiercely. Modo was incurring tragic losses, and their troops fell legion by legion. Agent organizations were attempting to escape the battlefield frequently, but most were hunted by the mechanical army and blown to pieces. On the battlefield, the members of the Galactic Business Alliance, Northern Battlefront, 5C Alliance, Plateaus Eagle, and other guilds that were on the side of the Super

Star Cluster Alliance were doing everything to hide. Not a tiny bit of the confidence they once had could still be found; they just wanted to hide and minimize their losses. "Luckily, we didn't bring all of our things here this time." The leader of the Northern Battlefront, Fire of Northern Sea, was scared.

"If I had known about this, I would've ignored the order and not come." The leader of the Plateaus Eagle's face was filled with heartache.

"It's not the time to be relieved. The Modo expedition army won't be able to guard this line of defense. We should think of how to save the forces we have. Though not large, it'll still hurt," the Galactic Business Alliance president said with resignation. Due to the Black Star Army's attack, the national war between the players was mainly focused around the Ferdinand Battle Zone. The player alliances of the Super Star Civilization side were temporarily under the Modo Civilization's command.

When they heard that the Black Star Army was about to carry out what might be an all-out attack, these important Immortals allies also received orders from Modo to guard this line of defense.

These guild alliances were not stupid. They had heard of Black Star's arrival on the forums, so they played it safe and brought very few of their forces to take part in this battle.

As it turned out, this was a wise choice. The opposite side had two Beyond Grade As, while Modo had none. The odds of winning were less than one percent. If these guild alliances brought all of their forces, they would have lost everything

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Although the main participants of the national war were the players, fleets and equipment were just as important. The guild alliances of the Super Star Cluster Alliance had accumulated quite a lot of resources, but if they all got killed multiple times here, they would have no chance in the national war afterward. They would be thrashed by the Black Star Army players without a doubt.

Speaking of which, these guild alliances were quite speechless about this. We were just having a proper national war, and now your Black Star Army suddenly sent its boss. That's bullying!

If Black Star likes to personally participate so much, how are we going to fight the army player?

This feels like two kids were fighting, and one side's parents suddenly stepped in. It's unfair!

No NPC organizations that these guild alliances met while fighting in the free competition zone were unafraid of the Cancer of the Universe. However, the guild alliances were very clear-headed. They knew that in the face of a super boss like Black Star, even they, the Cancer of the Universe, were the weaker side. They would be slaughtered no matter how many times they could revive.

With the assistance of two Beyond Grade As, the battle was one-sided. Very soon, a hole was cracked open in the line of defense, no reinforcements could make up for it. The Modo soldiers of this line of defense started to show signs of retreating.

Han Xiao observed the battlefield, looked at the gap opened in the line of defense, and said, "It's about time."

Then, he turned to Herlous.

“I’ll leave one Lord’s Avatar to be stationed on the fleet, as well as some mechanical troops. You’ll lead the army. Don’t charge too deep into Modo’s base. Continue to attack the exterior line of defense. Focus on damaging their forces.”

“Understood.” Herlous nodded with a serious expression. The many years he had spent as a commander made him look quite respectable when his card addiction did not kick in. He said, “When you and Her Excellency Dragon Emperor kill your way into the headquarters of the Modo expedition, be careful.”

“I’m not the one who should be careful.” Han Xiao smiled, flew out of the battlefield, dragged Ames along, and quickly penetrated the battlefield surrounded by the mechanical army.

The Modo expedition army lost bit by bit, unable to form an effective blockade. The battleships at the front were destroyed by the mechanical army in an instant. The two of them penetrated the line of defense and headed right into Modo’s headquarters. The duo’s plan mainly involved the two of them; the rest of the forces would be staying in the exterior line of defense to restrain the rest of the Modo forces. This was because once they entered Modo’s headquarters, the Modo expedition army would certainly set up an encirclement, and Beyond Grade As were smaller targets and more mobile.

“What? They’re heading this way alone?”

Inside the Modo expedition army’s headquarters, the chief commander’s expression changed as he heard the report from the frontline.

He had thought Black Star would charge in with his army and take over their base, but Han Xiao and Ames coming in this deep alone was quite surprising. “What is Black Star trying to do? Why did he leave his troops outside? From the way it looks, it doesn’t seem like he wants to take over our territory,” someone wondered.

“He’s coming in to kill people, and we’re the targets.” Lagos knew the situation very well. He sighed and said, “The plan targeted at Aesop came from us first, and Black Star probably found that out somehow, so we’ve all become his target.” Hearing this, fear and panic appeared on the faces of the people present.

At the same time, they were strangely flattered. They had never thought they would become must-kill targets of a peak Beyond Grade A one day.

“Maybe we guessed wrong. What if Black Star has other goals?” someone said with disbelief.

“Stop lying to yourself! He’s coming right for us!” Roddick roared.

“Then let’s quickly move the command center away and take refuge somewhere else!” another said hastily. “It’s no use. Black Star is a Virtual Mechanic. We won’t be able to fool him no matter where we go.” Roddick walked back and forth with a grave expression.

He did not regret Lagos proposing the plan against Aesop. He only regretted the fact that it did not work, and now the price of failing had arrived. This was karma.

“Let’s ask for help from the upper echelons. Since Black Star is so confident, if we make Beyond Grade As fight alongside our expedition army, maybe we can surround and kill Black Star?” someone suggested cautiously.

Hearing this, Roddick and Lagos exchanged looks and saw a tint of sorrow in each other's eyes.

As the ones with the highest positions in the expedition, they knew very well what the Modo Civilization would decide in this kind of situation.

Black Star was already slaughtering his way into the headquarters. There was not enough time for anything. Plus, Modo would not want to expose their Beyond Grade As and take the risk of having them come here to save them. In other words, even if the Modo upper echelons knew about Black Star's goal, there was nothing they could do to help—they were forced to be abandoned.

Actually, the moment Black Star announced his participation in the war, Roddick knew this was it. He had asked for help from the Modo upper echelons many times, hoping that they could send Beyond Grade As there. However, the Modo upper echelons never gave him a response but instead kept asking them to hold on, while only providing the usual resources and ordinary fleets... How could that ever stop Black Star?

That's the same as giving me 100 Enas and asking me to buy something that costs 100,000. How am I supposed to do it?

Why are the upper echelons hesitating? Is it necessary to still hide the identity of the direct Beyond Grade A? If not now, when?

Roddick roared in his heart. But no matter how he felt, he could not make the decisions for the upper echelons.

"There's only one option left—seek help from the Super Star Cluster Alliance," Lagos said with a deep voice.

Roddick nodded with a grave expression, took out the communicator, entered the communication channel of the Super Star Cluster Alliance expedition army upper echelons, and said, "I need help. Black Star has charged in..."

He explained what had happened. The channel remained silent for a while, then the commander of the expedition army of another Super Star Cluster civilization asked, "What do you want us to do?"

"We can't stop Black Star. I hope you guys can send reinforcements and help us to force Black Star to retreat. We also hope to temporarily move the command center to any one of your territories. This way, Black Star won't be able to come right for our heads..."

"Impossible!" another commander said furiously. "Modo brought this upon itself. Settle it on your own!"

"We agreed to help each other," Roddick said with an angry tone. "Are you guys going to violate our agreement just like this?"

"The agreement states we're going to stand together against the three Universal Civilizations' attacks, not pay all of your debts!" someone yelled with rage. "Honestly, I've already been putting up with Modo's actions for a very long time!"

The Super Star Cluster civilizations formed an alliance to fight for territory from the three Universal Civilizations and help each other. They had already let go of a huge portion of their selfish interests and would not continue to have internal conflicts at this time.

However, when the matter affected the overall strategy, the other Super Star Clusters would not put up with it. If there was no Beyond Grade A Association and Black Star had struck on behalf of the three Universal Civilizations, they would have provided assistance without hesitation.

However, the Beyond Grade As had already formed an association and made their stand outside the three Universal Civilizations, causing the three Universal Civilizations to lose their top tier combatants, which was their advantage over the Super Star Cluster Alliance. This was supposed to be an amazing thing, but Modo messed with Black Star themselves. If the others interfered too, who knew what attitude the Beyond Grade A Association would have? Would Black Star turn around to attack them too? They were barely holding on themselves in the war; no one wanted to be dragged down by Modo's bullsh\*t. Therefore, the other Super Star Cluster civilizations did not want to help Modo fight Black Star at all, or their overall strategy would be heavily affected. Instead of that, they would rather sacrifice their ally. Roddick hung up the communicator with a heavy expression.

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Everyone there had heard the conversation. The atmosphere was low.

"Looks like we can only rely on ourselves..." Lagos said that but was bitter inside. He knew there was no hope left, unless a miracle happened.

Thinking of his confidence when he got this position, compared to the hopeless situation he was in now, Lagos' heart was filled with complicated emotions.

If not because of the Modo Civilization's conspiracy against the Kunde Race, they would not have been forced to deal with this mess. Modo would not be in such a dire situation and would be just like the other Super Star Cluster civilizations.

Although Lagos did not like finding someone to blame, at this point, he still uncontrollably hated that guy who originally proposed conspiring against the Kunde Race.

What a complete moron he was!

### **Chapter 1176 This Is the Technology You Have Missed**

As Han Xiao and Ames entered the Modo expeditionary army's territory, like adding water to a boiling pot, the stationed Modo troops instantly started moving, searching for the whereabouts of the two of them. Part of the fleets at the frontline were also called back to provide support.

If this was really a Super Star Cluster civilization's headquarters, any Beyond Grade A would find it difficult trying to break through it. However, this was the Flickering World, so the Modo expeditionary army's control over their territory was clearly not as strong as their home. The construction of many planets was not even complete yet.

Not just Modo, all the members of the Super Star Cluster Alliance only had limited control over their territory in the free competition zone. The military forces of expeditionary armies were not the strongest to begin with. Only a few years had passed since the start of the fourth exploration phase, and most of the time was spent on exploring, so there was not much time left for operations. Therefore, due to many factors, Han Xiao and Ames could go practically anywhere they wanted in the Modo expeditionary army's territory. The Modo fleets could only chase after them.

An asteroid belt slowly floated in space. On one of the asteroids, two people were sitting with their legs crossed. It was Han Xiao and Ames.

“... Their location still hasn’t changed. The leaders of the Modo expeditionary army are still in the command center. Tsk, if this was a less developed civilization, they might be fleeing right now, thinking they might get lucky and escape.” Streams of data flashed past Han Xiao’s eyes. As he retracted the data needle he planted into the Modo expeditionary army’s network, his eyes returned to their original black color.

Ames casually played with two pieces of highly condensed metal she scraped from the asteroid, raised her brows slightly, and said, “We’ve been here for more than half a month. Everyone in Modo knows we’re here. Yet, they’re not running but have been staying in the command center. Are they waiting for us to go there?”

“Maybe they know that there’s no use in running and have accepted their fate. Only advanced civilizations can see things this clearly.” Han Xiao shrugged and was not concerned at all.

While speaking, he opened the secondary dimensional army box, released batches of mechanical soldiers, and nodded slightly. These soldiers turned into streams of light and left in different directions.

Ames watched this from the side. She then sighed and said, “Black Star, we could directly head toward the Modo expeditionary army’s command center, which will save a lot of time, but you had to take a detour. Otherwise, we would’ve completed our goal long ago.”

Han Xiao sighed, looked like he was about to stand up, and said, “So, you don’t like me spending more time with you. Alright then, we’ll go there and get this done with...”

“Who said so? Sit down!” Ames changed the topic instantly. “You said you were going to plant plenty of secret sentries in the Modo expeditionary army’s territory. The plan is already more than half done. How can we give it up now?” Black Star was a busy man. The next time they went to the secondary dimensions would be at least a decade later. But since he had squeezed out some time now to accompany her, of course she was not willing to let it end this early.

Han Xiao chuckled in his mind and sat down again.

Other than killing the leaders of the expeditionary army, he also had another goal

– plant tons of wards in Modo’s territory. Otherwise, he would not have taken a detour that delayed them by over two weeks after rushing into the enemy’s territory.

He had already sent out god knew how many batches of mechanical troops during this time and hidden them inside the Modo expeditionary army’s territory.

These mechanical troops could all be remotely controlled, of course. One reason for this was to deal more damage to Modo, another was to confuse Modo’s fleets, and a third was to obtain intelligence and monitor Modo’s movements, hoping to find out the final destination of the various transportation routes of the Modo Civilization. At the same time, he also planted some Thrones so that he could infiltrate anytime without anyone knowing in the future.

The Modo Civilization certainly knew he had left these mechanical soldiers. They would have no choice but to deploy large amounts of manpower to search for them. Also, Han Xiao had another reason to take a detour.

“I purposely gave Modo so much time to prepare. I wonder if any Beyond Grade As rushed here to protect the command center...” Han Xiao scratched his chin.

Without the protection of any Beyond Grade As, killing the commander in a split second was easy, so Han Xiao wanted to lure the snake out of its nest. He deliberately took his time to give the Modo upper echelons more time to consider their options, as well as to pressure them. After all, the longer he spent so casually loitering around in their territory, the more face Modo would lose.

If the Modo upper echelons could not take it anymore and sent Beyond Grade As over as guards, he would have an opportunity to deal even more damage to Modo and really make them hurt. This was his biggest goal of this trip.

It looked like he was only targeting the commanders of the Modo expeditionary army, but he was actually fighting the Modo Civilization’s upper echelons strategically.

While thinking, he opened the forums and took a look at it. Herlous was still attacking the exterior line of defenses of the Modo expeditionary army, but only attacking and not advancing. Even when they penetrated their defenses, they were not stepping over but instead returned to rest. They then continued to attack the next location.

If those armed forces following behind were still in the Ferdinand Battle Zone, they would definitely not have given up on this opportunity and would have advanced all the way in. This was the reason the Modo expeditionary army’s exterior line of defense kept shrinking. Now, however, Han Xiao had chased away all those armed forces, so Modo had time to fill up the gaps. However, they felt even worse.

The Black Star Army’s actions were driving the commanders of the Modo expeditionary army at the various fronts crazy. They kept rubbing on the outside but refused to thrust in. It was torture. However, this was where their duty lay. They were not allowed to give up; they had to keep resisting despite it being meaningless.

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Without Han Xiao at the frontlines, the guild alliances on the Super Star Cluster Alliance side felt confident again and continued to fight the national war against the army players. It was a battle, but both sides were enjoying it. One side was glad the enemy’s boss had left, and the other side was glad they did not have to watch cutscenes from the side.

On a planet occupied by a certain Beyond Grade A elsewhere in the Flickering World, a tall being walked back and forth in the palace, holding a communicator. He looked rather anxious. It seemed like he was waiting for someone to call.

Beep beep!

The communicator rang. This tall being instantly picked up and hastily said, “How’d my request go? Did the people above approve



it?”

On the secret channel, an emissary with a blurry face said with a serious tone, “No, the upper echelons won’t allow you to help the Modo expeditionary army. Don’t act on your own!”

“Black Star has been loitering around Modo’s territory for almost a month. We’ve had so much time to prepare, yet we still haven’t sent any Beyond Grade As over to help. It doesn’t make sense! How will other organizations view us? How will our allies in the expeditionary army feel?” The tall being was furious.

If Han Xiao was there, he would have recognized that this was the kid who started the fire during the Beyond Grade A Association plenary. He was indeed a secret direct member of the Modo Civilization. However, although he was a direct member, he had his temper too and was quite daring. Otherwise, he would not have dared speak in front of two peak Beyond Grade As, Black Star and the Mechanic Emperor back then.

Almost all the organizations in the Flickering World were watching Black Star’s movements. They all knew it had been almost a month since he entered the Modo expeditionary army’s territory. If Modo did not take any actions in this kind of situation and let Black Star do whatever he wanted, the entire civilization would lose face. It was understandable for this Beyond Grade A to get angry.

“What’s the point of going? Can you beat Black Star? You’ll be going there to die! Even if all of our hidden Beyond Grade As go there, you guys still won’t be a match for Black Star!” the emissary said angrily. “Stay rational. You can’t expose yourself here! This is all for the future!”

The tall being was filled with frustration, but he had to admit that Black Star was terrifyingly strong. He would only be giving up his life by going.

If they sent Beyond Grade As over, Black Star would eat them up. If they did not send Beyond Grade As over, the reputation and image of the Modo Civilization would be damaged. Not only would they bring shame to themselves, they would also make people feel they were cold-blooded. The morale of the expeditionary army would undoubtedly plummet.

Black Star was able to achieve this just by deliberately walking slower.

This was an honest conspiracy! Thinking of how Black Star spoke so confidently during the plenary, this Beyond Grade A felt both furious and horrified.

What did Modo ever do to deserve such a terrifying enemy!

Another half a month passed in the blink of an eye. Although Han Xiao and Ames took their time, they eventually arrived at the destination.

Countless Modo fleets surrounded the command center of the Modo expeditionary army. All the crews were on edge with grave expressions. Although they were the side with the numerical advantage, they were the side that was extremely nervous.

“These two \*sshholes are finally here!”

Inside the command center, Roddick clenched his teeth. His eyes were extremely red, and his hair was excessively messy. He looked severely exhausted, but his face was still filled with rage.

“They’re finally here...” Lagos, who was on the side, was not in a better state too, but he looked relieved.

The two of them knew clearly that Black Star and the Dragon Emperor were coming for them. However, the two of them had taken way too long. At the start, the two of them were immensely nervous, and then they entered desperation, before gradually becoming restless. In the end, they were almost going mad from waiting. Black Star and the Dragon Emperor were like two blades slowly moving toward their neck. Days felt like years.

This feeling of waiting for a certain death was complete mental torture for the two of them.

Originally, Roddick and Lagos did not wish for them to come quickly. However, as time passed, their mindset went from ‘please come slower’ to ‘why the f\*ck are they still not here’. They almost wanted to rush Black Star and the Dragon Emperor to come quicker.

Plus, the Modo Civilization had never sent any Beyond Grade As in the past one and a half months, so Roddick and Lagos were more certain they had been abandoned. Filled with sorrow and hopelessness, they had accepted their fate. They would die one way or another, so they rather die sooner.

Roddick turned on the public channel and said with a ferocious tone, “Black Star! Aren’t you here to kill us? Do it!”

Hearing the roar in the channel, the many Modo soldiers there felt somewhat betrayed.

They all knew that Modo did not send any help and had abandoned them. To say they did not feel betrayed would be a lie. However, as soldiers, they would still obey their orders even if they knew they were headed for death.

Han Xiao looked around, turned up his senses to the maximum, and laughed with a shake of his head.

“Yoho, Modo is quite patient. I’ve given them more than enough time, but they still haven’t sent a single Beyond Grade A. Are they that afraid of me?”

Ames smiled and said, “Who isn’t afraid of you in the entire universe?”

“Never mind, this proves that Modo has learned their lesson.”

Han Xiao shook his head. Although he was unable to lure the snake out of its nest, he did not mind. After all, he would still be able to damage Modo’s image.

He looked around. His eyes stopped at one location in the Modo expeditionary army’s base. That was where the command center was located, and the targets he was going to kill were inside.

Han Xiao turned and asked, “So, are you going to personally slice the targets up, or should I do it?”

At the start, Ames wanted to kill Lagos and Roddick with her own hands. However, thinking of the experience she shared with Han Xiao in the past few days, she shook her head carelessly.

“Whether you or I do it doesn’t make a difference.”

“I’ll do it then. It’ll be more efficient. You’re too slow.”

As Ames rolled her eyes, Han Xiao coughed and ordered the mechanical soldiers behind him to advance. He knew that the Modo Civilization would certainly set up tons of spacetime stabilization devices near its base, so he had summoned a mechanical army long before he arrived.

Seeing this, the Modo fleet instantly responded. The crews suppressed their complicated emotions and became firm, staring at the renowned Black Star far away, ready for the battle to begin.

Han Xiao glanced at them and snapped his fingers. These mechanical soldiers suddenly stood still. Dense white noise appeared, and space bent slightly around them.

The next moment, this batch of mechanical soldiers disappeared. When they reappeared, they had already moved a long distance forward but were still in a stationary state, like a painting

Boom!

In the face of this strange scene, the Modo fleet did not hesitate and fired instantly, shattering these mechanical soldiers. However, something shocking happened next. This batch of mechanical soldiers reappeared again. Not only were they completely undamaged, but their location had moved forward a long distance once again, closer to the command center.

This strange scene made the Modo fleet perplexed.

Han Xiao narrowed his eyes. "Using the Kunde Race's technology against you people is considered using it in the right place."

This scene that looked like a screen lagging was indeed the technology Han Xiao had obtained from the Kunde Race—the Spacetime Splicing Technology!

With his research and improvement over so many years, the Spacetime Splicing Technology he had now was far from its original version. It was way more enhanced and upgraded. This technology was now rather matured. It would no longer be easily countered by all kinds of spacetime devices like the original version. The difficulty and time required to break this technology using the same methods as before would be at least seven to eight times higher. This meant that it could stay operational for a longer period of time.

Although the Crimson Dynasty did not allow him to casually use this in front of others, Han Xiao had a flash of insight just now and intuitively felt that if he used the Kunde Race's trump card to fight Modo, it might be beneficial for the mission. He trusted his intuition quite a lot, so he did it.

In the face of this unknown technology, the Modo army panicked and used all kinds of attacks. However, no matter what attacks they used, they could not stop this army of mechanical soldiers blinking forward. Part of their fleet had no choice but to attack Han Xiao himself, but the attacks were all easily guarded by Han Xiao and Ames. Furthermore, their battleships were getting hacked frequently.

"Impossible!"

Roddick's eyes opened wide with shock. As he stared at the approaching mechanical troops, his eyes filled with deep desperation.

In order to fight Black Star, he had brought tons of fleets, thinking he would at least be able to put up a fight. However, to his absolute dismay, Black Star simply used one ability he had never seen before and easily penetrated the line of defenses of the fleet, threatening his life.

“What the hell is this technology?” Lagos was stunned too.

Hearing the shocking tone of the two of them in the public channel, Han Xiao suddenly smiled and said with a mocking tone, “Fate really has a bad taste... To tell you the truth, this is the technology the Modo Civilization missed. You guys were so close to obtaining it in the past. It’s a shame.”

The Modo Civilization’s stowaways were the first ones to discover the Kunde Race. If not because they wanted to trick them in order to plot against the Crimson Dynasty, they would not have missed the Spacetime Splicing Technology

“The technology we missed?” Lagos murmured. His intuition told him that what Black Star said might be true.

He was filled with complicated emotions. Finally, under the raging focus fire of the Modo fleets, the mechanical army appeared outside the porthole of the command center, completely unharmed.

Roddick and Lagos opened their eyes wide and stared at this mechanical army as the energy furnace on the mechanical soldiers’ chests lit up, flickering with a burning bright white light. The next moment, their consciousness went blank.

Boom!

An intense explosion occurred, and a pale blue psionic shockwave expanded.

The command center was annihilated; not even debris was left behind. A huge part of the entire base went missing.

Roddick and Lagos, as well as most of the leaders of the Modo expeditionary army, died in this explosion, leaving not a single trace behind.

“This is just taking a little bit of interest. Let’s hope Modo doesn’t get discouraged. We have more than enough time to have some fun.” Looking at the raging Modo fleets, Han Xiao chuckled and placed his hands around Ames’ waist. The King extended and shrouded them.

Whoosh!

In a flash of light, before the Modo fleets surrounded them, the two of them disappeared without a trace. The spacetime stabilizers placed in this area could not stop them even a little bit.

## **Chapter 1177 Infiltration**

Han Xiao felt the mechanical suit shake. When it opened again, he had already returned to the Black Star Army fleet that was attacking the Modo expeditionary army’s exterior line of defense, appearing inside the command room of the flagship. Hearing the sounds, the many officers who were originally staring at the battlefield all turned around. First, they looked at Han Xiao’s face. They then uncontrollably moved down to his hand that was wrapped around Ames’ waist and Ames’ calm expression. The room suddenly became silent.

“What you looking at? Never seen this before?” Han Xiao glared at everyone and moved his hand away. Herlous coughed and said, “Boss, is the goal complete?”

“The Modo Civilization didn’t even send any Beyond Grade As, how could I not succeed?”

Herlous was about to ask why it took so long, but when he saw Ames’ refreshed and energetic appearance, he hesitated for a second and smartly did not ask.

Han Xiao looked up at the battlefield outside the porthole. The battle was at its most bloody stage. The fleets of the two sides were fighting fiercely. The army had already broken through the exterior protective shield of two planets and deployed tons of army players who were fighting the players of the guild alliance. There were no signs of losing on either side in their battle.

Ames turned around, patted Han Xiao’s chest, and said, “Alright, the root’s been eliminated. I’ll be going back to the Shattered Star Ring.”

“Hmm? You’re leaving so soon?” Han Xiao was surprised. “Didn’t you say you wanted to fight the masterminds together?”

He thought that Ames wanted to stay and participate in the coming battles against Modo to vent her anger. He did not expect her to leave now.

“My anger is already vented by killing the initiators of the plan. Plus, you being here is enough.” Ames smiled. She was in a very good mood.

Her original plan was to help Han Xiao while taking revenge, which she had already done to a very large extent. Without her, Manison would have lost one less Felon. Han Xiao had convinced her during this time, so Ames decided to listen to Han Xiao’s suggestion and return to Floating Dragon.

Ding!

The moment she said that, Han Xiao’s interface responded. The (Ames’ Rage] mission became ‘completed’.

That’s it? Luckily, it didn’t require me to turn over the entire Modo Civilization. Her anger has probably already passed, which is why she gave up such an excessive thought. Looks like my convincing has been quite effective, Han Xiao thought. “I’ll be taking Aesop back and strengthening the monitoring. I’ll never let him escape so easily again.” Ames brushed her hair behind her ear.

Han Xiao mourned for Aesop for a third of a second before nodding.

“Do whatever you want with him. You don’t have to give me face.”

Ames extended her long and white fingers, poked Han Xiao’s chest with a smile, and said, “I’ll go back now then. Come find me when you have the time. Anyway, I won’t say thanks again. There’s no need for us to be formal, and you don’t like to hear it...”

“Alright, alright, quickly go then.” Han Xiao waved carelessly.

“By the way, before I leave, I have a gift for you.” Ames seemed to have suddenly recalled something. The runes on the back of her hand flickered, and a book appeared in her hands.

“What’s this?” Han Xiao looked at it curiously.

“I concluded my energy training experience some time ago and created a new energy training technique. It should be inclusive for all. You should be able to use it too,” Ames said with a smile.

Han Xiao accepted the book and read through it. It was surprisingly handwritten. The content was an energy training technique called ‘Dragon Emperor Star Energy Extraction Technique’. The details were unknown, but it looked quite advanced, not inferior compared to ‘Heber Stellar Furnace Cultivation’ from way back.

“Why did you write it by hand? Isn’t it more convenient to write an electrical copy and send it to me?”

“It helps you to train patience.” Ames was still smiling

Her thoughts were simple. It could only be a gift given by hand if it was hand-written. It could also be something that would remind Black Star of her.

Of course, Han Xiao was not going to reject this surprise. He nodded and said, “Okay, I’ll use it when I have the time.”

“I’ll be going then.”

Ames smiled and told Han Xiao to send her back in another King suit.

After she disappeared, Han Xiao opened the interface and looked at his rewards.

The Mission Rating was ‘Excellent’. The 250 million base EXP reward increased to one billion; the Contribution Points of the Floating Dragon faction increased by a few dozen thousand; Ames’ Favorability was at maximum to begin with, so it did not increase, but Aesop’s Favorability increased by quite a bit. The Random Reward doubled from two to four, as did the Character Summon Card reward; he got two of them instead of one, both from Ames.

The first Character Summon Card’s ability was called ‘Force Field-Star Grab’, which used the force field Esper Ability to grab the target. It was a decent controlling ability. The other Character Summon Card’s ability was ‘War Whip-Dragon Arc’, also a force field ability. It had both AOE damage and controlling functions. It was quite a good ability too. Both had five uses.

To Han Xiao, this common mission was a cherry on top to begin with, so he did not have too high hopes for it. Nonetheless, these rewards were not bad. His focus had always been the Kunde Race’s mission.

He opened (Kunde Race Leader’s Last Wish) in the mission list and looked at it. The first requirement was still the same, as was the second mission requirement. As this was a Grade S mission, there was no progress bar. However, his intuition told him that this successful attack meant huge progress in this mission.

After doing some thinking, Han Xiao thought to himself, Judging from the current situation, the day when the Modo Civilization gives up competing in the Flickering World because of my torture should probably be the day the second requirement of this mission is fulfilled.

He had always wanted to obtain the three rewards for the second requirement. They were [The Enemy], [Proof of Leadership], and [Kunde Rage), all outstanding abilities, especially the semi-Molding Talent (Proof of Leadership) that had growth potential.

Thinking of this, Han Xiao summoned Phillip in the quantum network and said, "Send the recording of me using the Spacetime Splicing Technology to defeat the Modo expeditionary army to the garrison of the Kunde Race. Tell them to repeat it in all their residential areas, making sure every prawn... ahem, everyone in the Kunde Race sees."

"Roger, hum!"

Han Xiao's battle against the Modo expeditionary army was very short. Phillip recorded everything. He was never one to quietly finish what he had to do. Since he had helped Kunde get their revenge, he was certainly going to make use of the recording to enhance his reputation in the Kunde Race. He had to make sure their entire race knew about what he had done for them. This would help with the progress of the mission too. After dealing with this, Han Xiao summoned Feidin, pulled him aside away from everyone else, and whispered, "Have you done what I asked you to do?"

Feidin nodded. "In the past one and a half months, I've already swapped the souls of fifteen thousand Modo soldiers and middle-level officers. They will be our spies in the Modo expeditionary army."

He received a secret order from Han Xiao. When the Black Star Army fleet was attacking Modo's line of defense, he had been using the Soul Swapper to swap some of the enemy soldiers, infiltrating the Modo expeditionary army and planting spies. The Modo Civilization had once used the Soul Swapper against the army, so Han Xiao had Feidin give them a taste of their own medicine. Given how special the Soul Swapper was, even if Modo prepared for it, they could not avoid it.

"Well done." Han Xiao nodded with satisfaction. He had already planted multiple chess pieces in the Modo expeditionary army's territory. This way, he would have more sources of their internal intelligence. Not only would he be able to control the whereabouts of the Modo Civilization's army, but he could also try to find the location of the secret transport route. He could take his time torturing them.

"Give my order. Retreat temporarily. Let's go back to the base and rest for some time," Han Xiao said loudly. The officers present were all surprised.

We have the upper hand now. Why are we retreating all of a sudden? Even if we're not going to enter their line of defense, we should at least finish this battle.

What they did not know was that Han Xiao was not doing this to give the Black Star Army time to rest but instead give the enemy time to rest. He had just killed the commanders of the Modo expeditionary army. He knew that they now had no leaders and would definitely be disorganized.

He wanted to give Modo a little bit of hope so that he could crush that hope time after time in the future. This way, making Modo give up due to despair would be easier.

Though confused, none of the officers would question the army commander's order.

Very soon, the majority of the army's forces backed away out of the bloody battlefield and then retreated systematically.

Seeing this, the Modo garrison of this line of defense were all confused.

Aren't we getting beaten up? Why did they suddenly stop half-way?

"Weird. We have to report this to the command center immediately." The fleet commander of this line of defense hastily went to report to the upper echelons.

However, what he got was a long silence-no one picked up.

After quite some time, he finally received the nightmarish news published on the internal network. Only then was he appalled to find out what had happened—the entire command center had been annihilated by Black Star!

After adapting and modifying for about two decades, the new generations of the Kunde Race gradually got used to being in captivity, accepting the culture injected by the Crimson Dynasty and the Black Star Army. As the older prawns passed away naturally, the effects of the cultural modification operation on the entire race started to show. All the residential planets were singled out and could not contact the other planets. They had regained basic productivity, the streets were crowded, and the heavy and depressing atmosphere had become much better. The young generation had given the Kunde Race the vitality it needed.

On this day, a huge event happened on this residential planet. Every screen on the planet was playing a video. The content of it was the recording of Han Xiao destroying the command center of the Modo expeditionary army. Phillip even kindly added some narration to explain what happened to help the Kunde Race understand what Han Xiao had done for them.

Every member of the Kunde Race who saw the recording realized that Black Star was still living up to his promise, continuously avenging their race. Furthermore, Black Star even used their technology.

Seeing the moment when the mechanical soldiers used the Spacetime Splicing Technology to destroy the command center, every member of the Kunde Race's face lit up with excitement. They were filled with pride.

Look, those who used us are no match for our strongest technology!

This made them feel that they were not just watching Black Star avenge them but were actually helping.

Along with pride was a strong sense of appreciation for Black Star.

Throughout the years, not only did he protect them, but he never forgot his promise to them and brought them the justice they deserved... This incredible and kind man was their one and only god of protection. They felt blessed amid all the unfortunate things they had experienced

The same thing was happening on every planet of the Kunde Race. Countless members of the Kunde Race gained more and more admiration for Black Star.

### **Chapter 1178 Objectors**

Inside a small private guest room, a few officers at the top level sat on the sofa and complained.



“Sigh, the commanders of the expeditionary army got killed, but Black Star stopped attacking. He clearly wants to devour our armies again and again. The Three Kings are not giving up on the Flickering World no matter what, but what’s the point of sending in more forces? This is pure suicide if no Beyond Grade As are sent. Black Star has already proved that he has the ability to kill the commanders any time he wants.”

The news of the expeditionary army’s commanders being killed had reached Modo. The Modo Three Kings summoned the upper echelons and hosted a meeting. Other than showing their rage, they quickly promoted new commanders from the expeditionary army and ordered the military to send more aid.

At that time, the many officials did not display any objections on the surface, but many of them developed a stronger sense of objection inside. Hence, after the meeting ended, a few officials who were unhappy met privately.

In the room, Marco had the highest position. He was the third in command of a mainstream political faction in Modo, so his words carried the most weight. He slowly said, “We can’t carry on like this. Modo has almost no chance in the Flickering World with Black Star standing in the way. Giving up as soon as possible is the rational choice. The longer this drags on, the more pressure Modo will face, collapsing in the end.”

Someone sighed and said, “Exactly. Things are not stable inside the nation these days too... Many unofficial organizations of the three Universal Civilizations have started so-called ‘peaceful movements’ on various colonial planets. They’re using armed demonstrations, organized strikes, and so on to trigger the anti-war emotions of the society, forcing us to exit the war. Many industries have been severely affected. Some with ulterior motives are even spreading ideas of splitting the race up, bashing the policies, and promoting hatred, which actually turned around the way of living peacefully with other races we have been teaching for all these years and successfully worsened racism. Rebellious armies will certainly appear one day. Plus, important people are being assassinated by mysterious forces everywhere.”

Marco shook his head. “Modo has made tremendous investments in the Flickering World for decades. It’s understandable that the Three Kings are not willing to give up easily. However, the situation has now changed. Adjusting our strategy is the top priority. Since we can’t deal with Black Star, continuing to spend resources in the Flickering World will just be a meaningless waste. It’s time to make the decision to minimize losses.”

“That’s right. The Three Kings are just thinking about holding on till the Super Star Cluster Alliance succeeds, and at that time, we can benefit from it too. But the chances of us being able to hold on till the day the Super Star Cluster Alliance gets the upper hand... are too thin. Black Star won’t watch that happen too. He might be stalling with us now, but if we don’t keep sending in troops to keep him full, he’ll certainly launch an all-out attack and chase us out,” another person said.

Marco took a sip of the dark ember colored wine and softly said, “Actually, since the beginning, I’ve never felt the Super Star Cluster Alliance will be able to invade the Flickering World successfully. There’s an eighty percent chance they’ll fail. This is just a desperate collective attempt by the other Super Star Cluster civilizations. Since that’s the case, getting out earlier, being free from the pressure from the

three Universal Civilizations and the Black Star Army, and beginning our recovery earlier is a wiser choice for Modo instead.”

“That’s right.”

The others in the room agreed completely.

Marco narrowed his eyes. “The more losses Modo suffers, the more people will object. Maybe it’s time for us to prepare for the impeachment operation...” Hearing this, the others were shocked. They were just complaining; they did not expect Marco to have plans for actually taking action.

However, thinking about it, they felt this might not be a bad idea.

Modo was a government formed by three civilizations, and each of the Three Kings represented one race. However, political stands and philosophies crossed the boundaries of races, so the political environment of the Modo Civilization was very complicated.

Due to the unique political structure, Modo, of course, had to make sure it was balanced. The Three Kings could not do whatever they wanted; there were also structures similar to congress that restrained their power. If the path they chose during their term did not fit the interests of the majority or one of them was involved in a scandal, their term could be ended by impeachment.

However, this kind of situation rarely happened. As long as the Three Kings did not do things that were hated by almost everyone during their terms, they would peacefully retire.

“If the Three Kings insist on their choice, Modo will be gradually sucked dry. The future is dark. If they are really going to be stubborn, impeachment will be the only choice left,” Marco said.

The people exchanged looks. Some were firm, and some were hesitant. They all lowered their voices and softly discussed how exactly they could execute the plan.

At this moment, the objectors of the war started to plan on how to backstab the Three Kings. The root of it was that Black Star’s strength made some of the Modo upper echelons hopeless; they did not see how they could turn things around.

Inside the Modo Civilization’s territory, a silver stealth-type high warp speed spaceship hovered in a cluster of nebulas, slowly moving. There was no symbol on its exterior armor.

Inside the cabin, Lothaire and a few other officers of the Assassin’s Society sat around a virtual screen, browsing the information on it. Rows of portraits were displayed on the screen, all influential people from various industries of the Modo Civilization. Some already had a red cross above their head, meaning the assassination was complete.

“Internally, Modo is a mess. The leaders of some industries being assassinated caused the local management system of some colonial planets to almost collapse. Our work is very effective,” an officer said coldly.

“Hmm.”

Lothaire was staring at the screen, seemingly looking for their next prey.

The Assassin's Society had been doing work for many months in Modo. They had already caused quite a lot of chaos. While being chased, wanted, and hunted by the officials, they were still continuing their work and hiding at the same time.

"Our actions over the past few days have been too aggressive. We've lost some men too. It's time to lie low for a while," an officer suggested. Lothaire nodded. He then shook his head and said, "We'll hide temporarily, then do a big one."

Then, he extended his finger and pointed at one of the portraits on the screen.

The officers present followed his finger. Their expressions all turned stiff as horror and disbelief appeared in their eyes.

The target Lothaire had chosen was one of the Modo Three Kings!

"You want to assassinate the highest leader of a Super Star Cluster civilization?" An officer opened his eyes wide. "Are you insane!"

"They have three leaders. Losing one is nothing." Lothaire's tone was calm. "I'll do it myself."

"Do you know the nature of this action? If you succeed, the Modo Civilization will become our eternal enemy. Furthermore, there's absolutely no chance of succeeding. The Modo Three Kings are heavily guarded. There's no chance of getting close at all. Plus, there's no way of assassinating them if they don't leave their mother planet," someone said with a hasty tone.

For once in a blue moon, Lothaire actually explained himself. "Firstly, we're Modo's eternal enemies to begin with. Secondly, the Modo Three Kings have many guards, but no Beyond Grade A guards are present on the surface, Calamity Grades at most, which isn't beyond my abilities. Thirdly, the Modo mother planet doesn't have the Psionic Seal Ring like the three Universal Civilizations' mother planets have, so infiltration is totally possible."

At a glance, assassinating one of the Modo Three Kings was an impossible mission. However, after doing some analysis, he realized that it was not completely impossible. After all, although the Three Kings were leaders, they were not individuals with great strength. Furthermore, he had (Deity Assassinator) in his hands. Even if the Three Kings had magical defense runes, this weapon would be able to penetrate them. The main problem was, whether the assassination was successful or not, getting away afterward would be extremely difficult.

The others were in dismay like this was the first time they had met Lothaire. Even though they were all assassins who had killed many important people, this was still an extremely daring plan in their eyes.

"Easy to say, but executing it is complete suicide!"

"Everything is possible. Sometimes, all you need is a little bit of luck." Lothaire narrowed his eyes. The people there did not know what he was thinking, nor did he plan to explain further.

Due to Rossellin and the three Universal Civilizations' operations, the internal racial issues and racist philosophies were gradually becoming more severe. If he could assassinate one of the Three Kings at this time and find a way to blame it on the extremists of the other two races, it might further stimulate the conflict and make these philosophies explode. The results were not difficult to imagine.

Sure, the method was a little bit dirty, but as an assassin, Lothaire did not care if the method was ethical or not. He was only concerned if it was effective and could achieve his goal. It could be said that he would do anything necessary to achieve his goals.

He had been operating in the outside world for decades; he was no longer just a pure assassin. He had gradually learned to analyze the big picture. Although Black Star did not specifically instruct him on what to do, Lothaire was very clear of Black Star's goal. He was more than happy to use swifter methods to deal greater damage to Modo that was more powerful than just an assassination.

Of course, assassinating Modo's highest leader and pinning it on racism was just an idea. It was extremely difficult and impossible to complete with just the Assassin's Society.

However, the three Universal Civilizations' forces in Modo's territory were a natural help. Lothaire planned to create a fuse so that they could operate around it, just like how the philosophy tide they created gave him the idea of assassinating one of the Modo Three Kings.

Boom!

A red silhouette fell onto a desolate planet like a meteor, crashing a crater on the planet surface.

Blood flowed out from the tip of Hila's lips. Her body was embedded into the ground. As she pulled herself out, Han Xiao suddenly appeared right above him, and a powerful kick swept onto her abdomen.

Boom!

The little bit of death energy she had just gathered got scattered by one kick. A shockwave erupted with a loud explosion noise.

Having been heavily hit in the abdomen, Hila's body bent like a shrimp as she shot out like a rocket for dozens of miles, leaving a long fissure behind.

"Are we going to continue? I've already been beating you for eleven hours. If I remember correctly, you've already been close to death three times and fainted five times."

Han Xiao stood with his arms crossed and sighed.

"Humph, are you going to praise me for being energetic? Never mind, let's call it a day. But don't forget, this is just the third time." Hila wiped away the blood on her lips, rubbed her stomach, and stood up.

Hearing this, Han Xiao's eyelids twitched uncontrollably.

He was now fulfilling the agreement he made back then to spar with Hila thirty times. Now there were twenty-seven times left. As Han Xiao thought of this number, he could almost feel his waist hurting.

This was a certain location near Black Star Palace. He had returned from the free competition zone long ago.

Modo did not send any Beyond Grade As for what he did, so they most likely would not in the future either. Furthermore, Han Xiao had already left enough mechanical troops and Lord's Avatars there, so he did not continue to stay in the frontlines and directly returned to the headquarters using the King suit.

Han Xiao originally wanted to stay indoors and focus on studying the Felon and the Indestructible Mechanical Troops technology, but Hila was insatiable and had to spar with him.

Due to their agreement, he could not reject her and had no choice but to hit Hila every day for a few days. Although Hila was a tough sandbag, using her so often was excessive even for Han Xiao.

With the Exclusive Talent (Virtual Technology Innovation-Manison), the progress of studying the Felon and the Indestructible Mechanical Troops was going quite smoothly. However, there were still a number of key factors he had to overcome till completely mastering them, which required time. Hence, Han Xiao did not use Awakening Points to quicken the progress. He would be able to derive the blueprint with the bonuses from his abilities and talents.

This time, Hila flew over from afar and asked, "How do you think I'm progressing?" "Not bad," Han Xiao said casually.

"Tsk, such a perfunctory response. You're so patient when accompanying Ames but so whatever to me. Do you not want to accompany me that much?" Hila raised her brows.

"What do you think?" Han Xiao gazed at her. You masochist, don't you understand that forcing me to beat you up every day is tiring for me too?

Due to her passion for battle, Hila became stronger rather quickly, and with the Underworld, her growth potential was even higher.

When Aurora reached Beyond Grade A, the Underworld would be able to revive the Hero Spirits. Only then would Hila reach her peak strength.

Han Xiao had also found out from Onicelu that if Aurora's Vital Energy Esper Ability reached Beyond Grade A, its qualities would change. She would be able to create living bodies with no soul that could be used for the Hero Spirits to live in.

It just so happened that this ability could work with the Soul Swapper. Han Xiao had told Feidin this and promised him that he would ask Aurora to build a body for Chen Xing.

Hila snorted softly, changed the topic, and said, "There are twenty-seven more spars. I want one the day after tomorrow. Remember to make time."

"Aren't you too hard to satisfy? Can the interval be longer?" Han Xiao was speechless.

"No! I finally snatched you back from my teacher. I want you to accompany me as much as possible."

A tint of happiness flashed across Hila's eyes. She then went into the spaceship and headed back herself.

Han Xiao sighed and shook his head. He was more certain that Hila was a complete masochist.

The purpose of sparring is to test one's strength, but she clearly knows how big the difference in our strength is. Still, she keeps wanting to fight me. Isn't this simply asking to be beaten up?

Sigh, Hadavy is much better. They're both looking to be beaten up, but this guy is much more understanding, still smiling after getting beat up, unlike Hila, who always has that cold expression like I owe her money...

Speaking of which, it's been some time since I've heard Hadavy's flattery. I actually miss it.

Han Xiao was in no hurry of going back. He made the mechanical army retrieve some of the shattered mechanical soldiers. While the battlefield was being cleaned up, he opened the forums. He was about to look at the players' jokes and relax.

However, as soon as he opened the Flickering World panel, his eyes were drawn to a pinned post.

World Server War Invitation Letter!

### **Chapter 1179 Impeachment**

"The World Server War... what's bound to come will come in the end."

Han Xiao opened the post and browsed through. Seeing that the content was the same as he expected, he sighed.

The post was jointly announced by Galactic Business Alliance, September Conference, Northern Tropic of Cancer Light, Southeast Asia War Alliance, and multiple guild alliances. In simple terms, it was an ordeal challenge letter targeted at all player alliances. It stated a time and location, aiming to start an enormous battle.

The players of the various alliances usually moved according to their faction's orders, but this did not have much to do with factions. It was just an event between the players.

The same thing had happened in his previous life. The various guild alliances announced the war, and it turned into a battle between millions of players that lasted for many days. It was then recorded in the 'Galaxy Chronicles', given the name of 'Planet Tabor Battle'.

The Great Mechanic Han was also active for some time in this battle in his previous life, mainly to loot the equipment and items the players dropped. He had made a big fortune from it. This time, although the war still happened, due to the butterfly effect he had caused, the time and location had changed slightly.

From his perspective, these guild alliances announcing this challenge was not sudden. It was already the final stage of Version 4.0. If they did not create some big news, they would not have a chance to do so anytime soon. One reason was to justify killing those in the hostile alliances, and another was to strengthen the unity of the big guild alliances by having the normal players take part in it too.

"... Basically, they're bored, so they want to start a fight."

Han Xiao shook his head. The internal affairs of the players had nothing to do with him. He did not plan to interfere.

The location was not in the Ferdinand Battle Zone. It was on a planet in the frontlines called Marrison. When the players headed there to participate, it would affect the army's battle in the frontlines to a certain extent. Although the army could use orders to restrain the players and not let them participate in the big battle all players could take part in, it would not have a positive impact, nor did Han Xiao plan to do so.

After all, players were not really his employees. If he restrained them too much, it would only achieve the opposite effect.

Of course, not only him, but all the organizations who had players would be affected to different extents. If these forces forcefully stopped their players, it would instead benefit the army and make recruiting players easier in the future.

“The army players will stick together in this war. They’ll be the largest group, so they’ll probably be targeted by many other alliances... but that’s not bad for me.”

Han Xiao’s eyes sparkled.

The Pro League during the final stage of a version was an excellent way to boost sales. Many players would be willing to spend a lot of their savings to make themselves stronger. When that happened, the army’s sales would rocket, and Han Xiao would harvest a lot of EXP.

However, the Pro League had already been hosted three times. Most normal players were now very aware that they had no chances. A lot of them preferred saving their EXP to use in the next version.

Large scale wars were different; the players would not miss it. It was also a natural opportunity to boost sales, which was very beneficial for him. He would be able to harvest even more EXP near the end of Version 4.0 that would become his inventory during the version update.

“If I remember correctly, the interval between Version 4.0 to Version 5.0 should be about half a century, even longer than the last one...”

The next version was the Calamity of the Supers. The conflict between the Beyond Grade As would break out, and some of the Primordial Ones would return. However, since he had changed a large portion of the storyline, the events in Version 5.0 would certainly be completely different because of the butterfly effect.

This was not a big deal. Han Xiao knew those people who were important, so he was not afraid of changing the original storyline. The biggest version of the next version was actually the players.

In Version 5.0, the maximum level of the players would become level 180, which meant they would become Calamity Grades. The version name ‘Calamity of the Supers’ was a subtle hint to the players that their impact on the universe in the next version would be tremendous. “This is good news for me.”

By then, the middle level combatants of the explored universe would skyrocket. Although the players would bring chaos, they would also become a crucial force in fighting the World Tree Civilization. In the World Tree War in his previous life, the importance of the players was absolutely irreplicable. If not for the millions of Calamity Grade players, the explored universe would have suffered even heavier damage.

Also, the army would become excessively stronger. All this planning throughout these past versions was for when the players evolved.

There were decades till the next version, so he had more than enough time to prepare. Plus, some of old Manison’s words made a lot of sense; foundation was crucial for Mechanics. He planned to spend decades focusing on improving his Mechanic skills while waiting for the effects of (Key of Adeptus Mechanicus] to become stronger.

The effects of this talent would increase once every few days, continuously making him stronger. This meant that more and more of Manison's believers were running into his arms. He could imagine the shift in the Machinery Faith.

All kinds of thoughts flashed through his mind. Han Xiao continued to browse through the forums till the battlefield was cleaned up. He then boarded the spaceship back to Black Star Palace. He had made up his mind on finishing the remaining twenty-seven spars within two months.

In a secret Crimson Dynasty military training base, Gaud strolled through the training base, wearing a high-level dynasty officer uniform. He was not in a good mood. Just now, Gaud had received a message from the dynasty's upper echelons, telling him to postpone the plan indefinitely. The plan referred to using his Esper Ability to try to figure out the core energy of the Evolution Cube.

Back when they came up with this plan, it was totally achievable. However, times were changing too quickly, disrupting the tempo of many hawk faction dynasty upper echelons. At this point, Black Star's position and strength had reached a new height, so this plan became more and more risky. Hence, the upper echelons had no choice but to pause this plan temporarily with resignation, both because they did not want to mess with Black Star as well as to keep Gaud hidden as a trump card.

At the root of it, this was because of Black Star's extremely quick growth that kept changing the situation repeatedly, so often that people could not react fast enough.

This was the source of Gaud's bad mood. Black Star's growth speed was even faster than his even though this was his new account. He could not even see Black Star's taillights. It was tough for him not to feel frustrated.

"Black Star... Black Star..." Gaud mumbled as he walked to a public training facility without realizing

The sound of intense battles entered his ears. He looked at the source of the sound and saw a low-grade elite class fighting in pairs under the supervision of the drill sergeant. They looked like a group of novices.

At this time, two Grade C Pugilists were fighting in the venue, one having the upper hand and the other barely hanging on. It looked like the latter losing was just a matter of time.

Unsurprisingly, only a few seconds later, this spar ended. The one who was barely holding out got kicked out by a leg swing of his opponent. He slid on the floor and just so happened to stop in front of Gaud. "Karlott, you lost again." The drill sergeant frowned at the loser. "You're at zero wins and nine losses. It's embarrassing." "Sorry." Karlott rubbed his chest, stood up, and smiled with resignation.

The drill sergeant looked unhappy as he yelled, "All of your test scores are at the bottom. I really don't know why the people above have put you into my elite class to drag down the entire class' scores. I've allowed you to stay in this class because I can see you're hardworking enough, but if your scores are still at the bottom the next test, I won't give you another chance and will make you leave!"

After he said that, the classmates all looked at Karlott coldly, not hiding their dissatisfaction.

Although these people were students, they were talents the dynasty had selected from the various departments who were being trained in this secret base. Furthermore, this was an elite class. Everyone in it was a talented dynasty soldier, and they were all renowned in their own divisions.



The opportunity to receive this type of training was very rare, so these students treasured it very much. This was exactly why they disliked Karlot—he was too ordinary and not like an elite at all. Logically, he was not qualified to receive such training.

Due to how difficult it was to get this opportunity, these elites all felt it unfair. From their perspectives, the first thing they thought of was the word ‘bribe’ when they saw a mediocre soldier training with them, making them unavoidably reject Karlot.

Furthermore, as soldiers, they respected the strong above all. Karlot’s ability was too low, so they looked down on him from the bottom of their heart. Naturally, they were not going to treat him well.

Noticing the cold eyes of everyone, Karlot sighed in his mind.

He had accepted the fact that he was mediocre long ago. He knew that these people were elites who were much more talented than him from the beginning, so he was not discouraged.

He had gained this opportunity to undergo such advanced training thanks to Black Star. Although he was carefree, he was not someone who would give up an amazing opportunity. However, he was already doing the very best within his capabilities, yet he still could not match up to the growth speed of these elites. There was nothing else he could do.

Gaud quietly observed from the side.

Some time ago, he had heard people say that someone who Black Star once heeded had entered this training base, and that person’s name was Karlot. As it was related to Black Star, Gaud kept it in mind. This was the first time he had seen this person.

He sized Karlot up. All he could see from Karlot was the word ‘mediocre’.

Gaud considered himself to have sharp eyes, but even he did not find anything special about Karlot. He was confused.

Why was Black Star interested in this guy? He’s known for having accurate and sharp eyes. He shouldn’t have made a poor judgement...

Gaud could not figure it out at all. He thought about it for a second before waving at the drill sergeant.

The drill sergeant had noticed Gaud long ago. He instantly put on a smile and walked over. Almost everyone in this base knew that Gaud was the person with the highest chances of becoming a Beyond Grade A and had received a lot of resources and training. Gaud’s position was quite high.

“What is it, Gaud?”

“That novice called Karlot, whether he passes the tests or not, let him stay in the base,” Gaud whispered.

Hearing this, the drill sergeant was puzzled.

Based on his test scores, Karlot was bound to be disqualified and leave the training base. He did not expect Gaud to speak for him.

“I’m not sure. This guy doesn’t have much value. Keeping him here is a waste of resources.”

“Do what you can then.”

Gaud could not see what was special about Karlot either, but because of Black Star, he wanted to keep Karlot and observe him longer.

Han Xiao had stayed in Black Star Palace and did not go to the frontlines. One and half a month passed quickly.

On this day, a shocking piece of news suddenly erupted in the Modo Civilization!

The Tri-Race Senate announced the beginning of the impeachment process for the current Modo Three Kings. Throughout history, the impeachment of the highest leaders had occurred very few times, so this instantly shocked the whole society.

As the name suggested, this assembly was formed by the congressmen from all three races. It had extremely high power, including the impeachment right of the highest leaders. The initiators of this impeachment were thirty-three congressmen who proposed the impeachment together. The Tri-Race Senate approved it by voting. The preparations started quickly; it was clearly planned.

Being shocked was one thing, but the Modo citizens supported it to quite a large extent. The chaos in the civilization had already severely affected the daily operations of their society. Although this was caused by enemies, the citizens did not care much and blamed it on the highest leaders, which was much easier.

Marco had gathered more and more supporters, and he found the logical excuse of regaining order and objecting to the war. He used a long and formal report to analyze that Modo's chances of winning this war were extremely low. Using this as evidence, he objected to the Modo Three Kings' decision to continue supporting the expeditionary army, calling it a meaningless sacrifice.

His stand received recognition from quite a number of officials and citizens. Not everyone was willing to sacrifice their present interests for the so-called future potential.

The Modo Three Kings did not expect those who objected to their decisions to suddenly backstab them at such a crucial moment. Their plans were heavily disrupted.

### **Chapter 1180 Assassination**

As soon as the impeachment proceedings started, the political world of the Modo Civilization became boisterous. All the factions were dragged in and forced to pick sides. Modo had no choice but to shift their focus back to within the nation and deal with the impeachment. The three kings were forced to deploy their men to take part in a political war. Luckily, after so many years, their positions were firm and strong; they would not be overthrown easily.

There were extremely few advanced civilizations that were in a dictatorship. Being in the position as the highest leader did not mean instantly obtaining the highest power. Politics was an art of compromise; power came from obedience. Even as leaders of civilizations, in order to firm their position, they still had to fight for the support of various factions and train loyal followers. Only then would their power be materialized.

Otherwise, no matter what orders they gave, they would be obstructed by their political enemies. Becoming the highest leader did not mean the others would unconditionally obey them. There were many people who had their eyes on the position too.

In the following days, the citizens witnessed the changes in the political world. The Modo Three Kings and the opposing party pulled out one trick after another. The day before yesterday, someone resigned; yesterday, someone got summoned; today, someone was caught in a scandal. God only knew what would happen tomorrow. The citizens had plenty of new stories to follow.

Hearings of the Tri-Race Senate were hosted one after another. The objecting faction brought up a lot of evidence, and even some secrets that the citizens were not supposed to know were displayed, causing uproars among the public.

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The Kunde Race incident was one of them. The objecting faction summoned key witnesses and had them provide the signatures of the Modo Three Kings that approved this operation. They then used this as evidence to prove that the Kunde Race incident was the reason Black Star was targeting Modo. Thus, they came to the conclusion that the Modo Three Kings had brought Black Star's hatred to the civilization; they were the culprits that caused Modo to be in this horrible situation. The objecting faction claimed that the Modo Three Kings had made an awful decision and that the Modo Three Kings were not capable enough of remaining as the leaders of the civilization.

There were some more similar pieces of evidence. The objecting faction blamed all the sinful things on the Modo Three Kings, emphasizing to the Tri-Race Senate that the Three Kings were not capable, and suggested changing them.

This was not framing the Modo Three Kings. As the highest leaders, even though some plans were not proposed by the Three Kings, they would only be carried out with the signatures of the three of them, so they could only take the blame.

Endless testimonies caused the situation to gradually worsen for the Modo Three Kings. However, their position would not be shaken so easily. Their connections were very comprehensive. Including the military, many factions were their firm supporters. These factions all had members in the Tri-Race Senate. They worked together to obstruct the impeachment, which was highly effective.

The military was firmly on the side of supporting the war, which brought the support of more important upper echelons. Compared to the supporters of the Modo Three Kings, the objecting faction led by Marco was no match. The investigations hit a wall very soon, so the objecting faction turned their focus to the next batch of Modo Three Kings candidates, hoping to gain their support, which also failed without much suspense.

With the impeachment fermenting, the matter led to political strife. The Modo Three Kings had wasted too much time. They did not want to waste more energy on this matter, so they did not hold back at all.

Therefore, this nonsense did not last too long. In the end, the Tri-Race Senate rejected the objecting faction's impeachment request. The result was basically a loss for both sides.

As the political opposition was dealt with, in order to regain their reputation, the Modo Three Kings decided to give a public speech to give a conclusive response on the impeachment matter.

Benid Square was one of the landmarks of the Modo Civilization's capital, a tourist destination with tons of visitors every day. On this day, it was used by the government as the venue for the Modo Three Kings to give a speech. The venue was already set up.

Due to their negative image to the public, the Modo Three Kings did not speak in the political building this time but instead chose to give the speech in front of the public to build an image that they were close to their citizens. The filtered audience filled the square.

A cordon had been set up around the square. Tons of security personnel were stationed around, protecting the perimeter with expressionless faces. At this time, an audience that extended beyond one's sights had gathered outside.

Many people held up banners with words like 'Overthrow the Three Kings'. They were all protestors... Although the objecting faction had lost, they still dealt irreversible damage to the Modo Three Kings' reputation.

The seats of the officials were around the podium, and the objecting faction's seats were all at the edge, clearly arranged deliberately. The others were not willing to even look in their general direction, not wanting to have any connections with the objecting faction that had lost.

"I didn't expect the Three Kings to invite us," a member of the objecting faction mumbled. "They want to humiliate us in front of the public to enhance the effectiveness of the speech."

Marco was not in a good mood.

He knew full well that at this point, there was absolutely no way the Modo Three Kings had invited them to attend the speech to repair their relationship. They were certainly going to condemn their actions as victors.

Of course, the objecting faction only stepped out to try to impeach the Modo Three Kings because they were confident that they could win. However, they were defeated in the end. The trump cards they had pulled out were resolved one after another, and some witnesses had changed their testimonies. Marco could only admit his loss. There were actually some others who had the same mindset as him but did not stand out this time because they did not dare take the risk. In order to change the path of the civilization, Marco was willing to take the risk. On the other hand, the people who hid to protect their positions did not take any actions despite the fact they objected to the Modo Three Kings' decisions and watched the armies being sacrificed meaninglessly. Although he had lost, he still despised these cowards.

After a while, the Modo Three Kings approached the podium. The spotlight focused on the three of them.

A loud round of applause instantly started on the square like it was rehearsed, silencing the furious yelling and cussing of countless spectators outside the square. The three of them waved at the same time, looked around at the audience inside the square, and smiled.

While the three of them looked around, their eyes deliberately paused for a moment when looking in the direction of Marco and the objecting faction before turning away. The camera then jumped to focus on the objecting faction, showing their forced smiles or expressionless faces.

“Humph...” Marco snorted softly while clapping with just enough force to make a noticeable sound.

He obviously understood the look the Modo Three Kings gave them. It was a look of winners, a look that said, “Revenge is a dish best served cold.”

As the applause gradually stopped, one of the Modo Three Kings then spoke. “My people, Modo is a great civilization. We have stayed united since the exploration era, and generations of Three Kings have led us to create one miracle after another...”

The three of them followed the script they had memorized. They cut to the chase and mentioned the social unrest and the impeachment incident. They admitted that this was because of their decisions, but they emphasized that it was the enemy’s conspiracy. They claimed, “Modo is walking on the right path. The enemies want us to back away, so they’ve used all kinds of plots and conspiracies, hoping to make us afraid.”

The three of them also explained why they kept sending soldiers to the Flickering World, saying that it was for the civilization’s future. During the long speech, the Three Kings explained and rebutted the matters the objecting faction had brought up during the impeachment, trying to save their reputation and the government’s reputation as much as possible.

The Modo Three Kings’ words sounded sensible. The people in the square clapped from time to time. The audience outside was gradually convinced too, and the number of protesters gradually decreased. Other than the reporters, countless spectators were also recording the speech.

In the crowd outside the podium, a tall male held up a multifunctional commutation terminal and recorded the speech. He looked just like an ordinary spectator, but he was actually one of the spies of the Federation of Light responsible for obtaining intelligence. He was sent there to record first-hand footage.

While doing his job, this spy thought, The objecting faction has lost, but the Modo Three Kings have also been heavily hurt. It’s good news...

The dust had settled. There was no more shocking news, only the speech from the winners. This spy did not think he would find anything valuable; he was only here because of his duty.

However, at this moment, a flash of light suddenly went past the corners of his eyes. The spy subconsciously turned around.

His eyes penetrated the crowd, and he saw a dim light on the back of a hooded man’s hand, as if a mark was lighting up.

The next moment, a sharp golden light abruptly crossed his sights and shot out like a bolt of lightning. The spy instantly turned and saw this flash of light arrive before the Modo Three Kings, who were giving a speech.

Clank!

An azure magic shield suddenly opened and stopped this flash of light. The Beyond Grade A defense enchantment on the Modo Three Kings activated instantly. It could guard against many kinds of attacks.

The speech suddenly stopped. Only then did the Modo Three Kings realize that the item that had attacked them was shockingly a golden spear. It was indeed Lothaire's weapon, the Deity Assassinator.

"Assassin!" The security personnel around were appalled. Multiple Calamity Grade bodyguards who had been standing behind the Three Kings were shocked. They hastily activated their abilities to protect the Three Kings.

Although their reactions were quick, it was not quick enough. The outstandingly strong Beyond Grade A defense enchantment only stopped the Deity Assassinator for a moment before it was penetrated. The spear pinned one of the Modo Three Kings right on the ground. Shock and indignation lingered on his face.

The sudden change stunned everyone present. Someone attempted to assassinate the Three Kings?

As their minds fully digested what this information meant, horror appeared on countless faces.

"Run!"

"Murder!"

"Call a doctor!"

"Lock down the square immediately... No, lock down the planet!"

The next moment, the entire place went haywire. All the spectators, be it in or outside the square, were panicking and fleeing. While yelling, the security personnel escorted the remaining two kings out of the scene while searching the entire place. The officials were terrified and hastily fled under the protection of their bodyguards. The boisterous venue instantly became a chaotic mess. "Who sent this killer? This is insane!"

Marco fled as fast as he could, his face filled with horror.

Assassinating the highest leader of a Super Star Cluster civilization right on its mother planet was tantamount to suicide!

God only knew how many years it had been since something like this last happened. Even the three Universal Civilizations would not do this. Nobody could have expected it. The Modo Three Kings were usually in the central political building, but today, they hosted a rare public speech, and it became an opportunity for the assassin.

The most unbelievable part was that the assassin actually succeeded. The Beyond Grade A level defense enchantment on the Three Kings was like a piece of paper.

In the panicking crowd, the spy from the Federation of Light opened his eyes wide, turned, and tried to find the hooded man, but he had disappeared without a trace.

"Who the hell was that guy? This is a completely suicidal attack! There's absolutely no way he can escape the Modo mother planet!"

The spy's face twitched. His eyes were filled with disbelief.

He had never expected to witness something this big today with his own eyes.

In almost an instant, his professional knowledge made him sensitively realize the opportunity to make use of this.