

Mechanic 1231

Chapter 1231 Werewolf Detective

"I wonder what the reward is." Han Xiao was curious.

The mission requirement was to catch the 'culprit', not the 'true culprit'. He wondered if the mission was based on the truth or the dynasty's perspective.

If it was the latter, did this mean that as long as he could prove someone was the culprit to the dynasty, the mission would be considered complete?

If that was the case, he would have a chance to complete it.

No way was he going to turn himself in, not in this life. A werewolf would not kill himself, only frame others. That was the only way to live.

Han Xiao shook his head. He did not have the compulsion to clear out every mission. From the way he looked at it, it would be best if he could complete this mission, but it would not matter if he could not complete it.

According to the nature of the mission, the reward was most likely going to be mainly the dynasty's Contribution Points. If this was in the past, he would have needed them to acquire more blueprints from the dynasty. Now, however, with Jayz' treasure, the dynasty's Contribution Points were no longer valuable to him. The only thing that was still useful would be Political Assets.

...

The next day, Han Xiao entered the online channel of the dynasty task force on the dot. His remote projection appeared in a conference room.

As soon as he entered the room, projections appeared one after another, sizing each other up.

Han Xiao saw familiar faces like Clotti, Kant, Ravenlaude, and so on, as well as unfamiliar faces.

Before they started chatting, Tarrokov appeared, attracting everyone's attention. "Everyone here is a member of the dynasty's task force, so I won't waste any time. You all know what needs to be done. This team has gathered the experts of various fields. You guys are authorized to use all resources the dynasty has in the Flickering World. The dynasty only has one requirement; find the culprit and Gaud's whereabouts."

The next moment, Clotti said, "I'm the team captain for the task force for the time being. Any requests to utilize resources can be made through me. As for the detailed arrangements of your jobs, the vice-captain will decide."

This time, a tall, skinny dynasty officer stepped up, looked at everyone, and did a dynasty style greeting.

"You can call me Sherlock Dillman. I work for the dynasty's intelligence department. Pardon me for not sharing the details of my work. For this task, the upper echelons have sent me to be the vice-captain. I'll be in charge of the investigation work. My power alone is limited. Everyone will have to work together."

Han Xiao raised his brow.

Sherlock? The name sounded like a famous detective. This person was definitely not ordinary. He should be the dynasty's special talent in the investigation field.

The task force did not need muscles, only expertise. Therefore, Sherlock was the vice-captain, and the Beyond Grade As in the team were experts in different fields. In simple terms, the Beyond Grade As were acting as tools.

The rest introduced themselves one after another. There were three experts in charge of the quantum network search, Kant, Judith—the dynasty's direct member—and himself.

Sherlock allocated different jobs for the experts in different fields one after another. Very soon, he came to the three of them and quickly pointed out the requirements.

"... That's the situation we're in. The Virtual Domain is a key area of the search. Please find clues to the best of your abilities. I'll leave it to Your Excellencies."

Sherlock bowed. His attitude was very respectful. After that, he turned away and went to assign tasks to the others.

Seeing that Sherlock had left, Kant scratched his head and said, "You two are more than enough. I'm not a Virtual Mechanic, so why did the dynasty call me here?"

"The dynasty was probably just being nice and did not think you'd agree, but to their surprise, you're actually thick-skinned enough to really come," Han Xiao joked.

Kant's mouth twitched. "... Black Star, you'll lose me as a friend like this."

"Ahem, ahem, Your Excellencies, we've already received the authorization. We better get to work," Judith said from the side.

Han Xiao focused and received the quantum network authorization shared by Judith.

The dynasty had called them, the experts, of course, not to let them fight alone. The dynasty had opened up almost all the resources in the Flickering World for them to use.

For example, the three of them could command all of the dynasty's Virtual Mechanics in the Flickering World. The backdoor of the quantum network stations the dynasty had set up in the Flickering World was also open to the three of them. They could log in to the Flickering World's quantum network as administrators.

Furthermore, even some permissions of the dynasty's main artificial intelligence 'Heroic Soul' were temporarily given to Han Xiao and Kant, despite them being 'outsiders'. Other than to investigate the case, Judith's mission also included preventing the two of them from doing anything out of the line while they had such high-level authority.

Han Xiao logged into the network through the backdoor. His mind sank into the quantum network vision, and everything seemed so clear.

The network of more than half of the Flickering World was clearly laid out in front of him, all within his control. He felt like he had become the processor of the network. He had access to any and all data in every station. With so much power, he almost felt all-mighty.

“Nice.” Han Xiao enjoyed it quite a lot.

No matter how strong his Virtual Intrusion ability was, he would still be a thief sneaking into someone’s house. Now, however, it was like the owner of the house had directly rented the entire house to him; he could do almost anything he wanted.

Although Judith and Kant were beside him, with his abilities, he should be able to do some things without them noticing. However, the best thing to do for the time being was to observe how things were going first.

More importantly, with this level of authority, he could totally wipe out the possible flaws he might have left, erasing any evidence that could lead to him even more thoroughly, completely making his alibi legit.

Since the dynasty had given him this chance, he was certainly going to ‘treasure’ it.

Han Xiao spent the next few days submerged in the quantum network, carrying out the investigation with Judith and Kant.

Initially, Han Xiao thought he would not be able to find any leads. However, to his surprise, this was not the case. He discovered that the situation had taken a slight turn.

He did not have to do anything. The Super Star Cluster Alliance and Manison were already fighting with each other. They had started forging evidence and framing each other.

Both sides were doing it very discreetly. If not because he had the administrator authority of the Flickering World’s quantum network, Han Xiao would not have discovered what the two of them were doing.

With the authority and his incredible Virtual Technology, their tricks did not escape his eyes.

Tsk, you guys didn’t even do it, but you’re already trying to frame each other...

Han Xiao’s mouth contorted slightly.

Never mind if the others discovered this, but since he was the real culprit, from his perspective, this situation was like two villagers accusing each other of being the werewolf, while he, the real werewolf, was not suspected at all.

However, with some thought, he understood what the two of them were thinking.

The Super Star Cluster Alliance was afraid that the three Universal Civilizations might claim they were the culprit without any evidence, so they decided to act first. Manison knew this, so he took countermeasures. Hence, both sides immediately discovered each other’s tricks, and they started fighting.

This is exactly why I muddied the waters.

The plan worked!

The two sides are trying to frame each other. Both are suspicious. Since there’s no way the real culprit is going to be discovered, one side will definitely be deemed as the culprit by the dynasty...

Han Xiao's eyes shifted quickly.

Currently, the two sides were at a stalemate, unable to completely frame each other. This was where he could interfere.

Since the situation had developed in this direction, to him, framing someone else became easier than he had expected.

With his current level of authority, he only had to play a little trick, and the dynasty's judgement would be affected. He could easily help one side beat the other side, which meant that he was the one who could make the decision.

Who should I help? Han Xiao pondered.

He had always been against Manison, but on this matter, he planned to help the old man.

After all, Manison was the current Beyond Grade A Association president. If he took the blame, though his personal reputation would be damaged, the Beyond Grade A Association would be affected too. The impact would be very negative. If the president had secretly attacked the association's newest member, many members would feel threatened and much warier, which was bad for the association.

On the other hand, if the Super Star Cluster Alliance took the blame, it would have the opposite impact on the association. The Beyond Grade As would feel that Gaud's tragedy was because he was involved in the conflicts between factions. They would think that the same thing would not happen to them if they chose not to join any faction but the Beyond Grade A Association. It would instead increase some Beyond Grade As' sense of recognition for the association, which was beneficial for the association's growth.

Most importantly, the three Universal Civilizations and the Super Star Cluster Alliance were already at war. If they took the blame, the others would not be impacted.

Although the dynasty would not stop searching for the real culprit after, for the time being, letting the Super Star Cluster Alliance take the blame would minimize the risks for him.

Humph, old Manison, I'm not helping you; it's for the association.

Han Xiao curled his lips.

Mumbling a little in his mind, he started to execute the plan right away.

No matter how these two villagers accuse each other, in the end, I, the werewolf detective, will still be the one to make the call.

...

"It feels like a mysterious force is helping me..."

Inside the Mechanic Emperor's secret base, Manison had a weird expression on his face.

In the past few days, he had discovered that the Super Star Cluster Alliance was indeed trying to frame him. Hence, he retaliated.

Originally, both sides were only suspects, and there was no evidence. They had now added quite a lot of 'flaws' to each other's alibis.

In this silent war, Manison was actually at a disadvantage. After all, the opponent was the entire Super Star Cluster Alliance. Although his Virtual Technology was strong, he was alone.

However, not long ago, he discovered something abnormal. Some of the evidence the Super Star Cluster Alliance forged surprisingly suddenly disappeared, as if someone was helping him fight against the Super Star Cluster Alliance.

"To be both able to discover my conflict with the Super Star Cluster Alliance and interfere... is this the doing of the three Universal Civilizations?"

Manison thought about it.

The reason the three Universal Civilizations were doing this should be that they had confirmed the Super Star Cluster Alliance's guilt, so they did not want them to successfully frame him... Or thinking one level deeper, if the dynasty could not identify who the real culprit was, this would have been a strategic decision to accuse the Super Star Cluster Alliance.

If he went one level deeper...

Manison pondered and fell into a cycle.

...

About a week later, on the Crimson Dynasty mother planet, Urranrell browsed the report of the task force and rubbed the bridge of her nose.

"After the investigation carried out in the past few days, you guys have found a chain of evidence that seems to be legit, all pointing toward the Super Star Cluster Alliance... but this isn't the dynasty's initial intention."

Before her was the remote projection of an intelligence department upper echelon who sighed and said, "Whether it's real or not isn't important now. As long as this chain of evidence is more than enough to convince the outside world, it's enough."

"I want the real culprit and Gaud's whereabouts. Why else would I need the task force?"

"But time waits for no man. The real culprit did not leave any traces at all. If we keep investigating like this, the truth will remain out of reach. The outside world is already doubting that the dynasty can find the culprit. There are even people on the internet starting to admire this culprit who enraged the dynasty but still has yet to be punished... We can take all the time we want to find the real culprit in the future, but what the dynasty needs now is results."

Urranrell frowned slightly.

After the tricks Han Xiao played, the task force found a complete chain of evidence that led to the Super Star Cluster Alliance. However, after carefully verifying it, the task force knew this was forged, most likely by Manison. These two parties' act of trying to frame each other did not go unnoticed by the dynasty.

However, even though this was the case, after some discussion, the task force still decided to submit this result to the upper echelons. The dynasty upper echelons all knew about this, but still, this report was placed on Urranrell's desk.

Currently, the public opinion of the outside world was becoming worse. What the dynasty urgently needed was a 'result', real or fake. The target this chain of evidence led to matched the dynasty's war strategy too; the Super Star Cluster Alliance was the best target.

Furthermore, the Super Star Cluster Alliance was trying to create a 'culprit'. They were the ones that started this. If things were delayed for too long, they would succeed, and the dynasty did not want to see that.

Urranrell hesitated for a few seconds. She did not approve it immediately, sighed, and said, "Call Clotti and Sherlock here. I want to hear their opinions..."

This time, she paused and added, "Call up Black Star while you're at it."

Chapter 1232 Master of Tempo

Not long after, the remote projections of Han Xiao, Clotti, and Sherlock appeared in the office. "Your Excellency Urranrell." The three nodded respectfully in greeting.

Urranrell nodded in return, pointed at the report on the virtual screen, and cut to the chase. "Is this the result of your work? I'm not very satisfied. You guys know this kind of evidence that'll only fool outsiders isn't what I want."

Sherlock stepped up, knowing he would be scolded, and said, "Your Excellency Urranrell, we've been trying to find the whereabouts of the real culprit, but the culprit left absolutely no flaws at all. We have found zero leads. While doing that, we discovered that the Super Star Cluster Alliance and Manison were fighting each other, so..."

He explained the progress of the task force's work. In simple terms, they did not find a single lead or clue, only a ton of forged evidence.

Seeing that the outside world was having more and more doubts, with the mounting pressure from the upper echelons, Sherlock had no choice but to reluctantly pick out some of the forged evidence and form an evidence chain using his deductive skills. Though fake, after he arranged and analyzed them, it at least sounded real.

Urranrell frowned. "Tell me the truth, how long do you think it'll take to find the real culprit?"

"... For now, never, unless we find a breakthrough." Sherlock sighed and shook his head.

"Do the two of you feel the same way?" Urranrell asked.

Clotti did not speak and nodded slowly with a poker face.

Han Xiao shrugged as if he was saying that there was nothing he could do either. "The person who attacked Gaud is very slippery and did not leave any clues. Even I have not found any leads. Based on the current situation, I feel that the dynasty can look at the matter from another perspective. Based on the perspective of benefits, the dynasty needs to find a suitable target to take the blame to calm this

matter down for the time being, and the Super Star Cluster Alliance is perfect... Furthermore, since they're in such a rush to clear their suspicion, they might be involved somehow."

Urranrell shook his head and said, "But there'll definitely be people in the outside world who'll see through our plan. The Super Star Cluster Alliance won't easily admit it either. To the dynasty..."

Han Xiao interrupted her. "I know your concerns, but that is not important. The dynasty already lost when Gaud was attacked. All you can do now is save the situation as much as possible. What the dynasty needs now is results. Display its stand and muscles. You can't shut people up, but you can make them afraid. This way, even if someone mocks this result, they'll still be afraid. Thus, the goal is essentially achieved."

"But if we do this, won't the real culprit laugh all day seeing that the dynasty has accused the wrong side? Won't some people with ulterior motives think they can use the dynasty to their advantage because of this?" Urranrell said with a deep voice.

This was what she was worried about. Once the outside world saw through what the dynasty was doing, some people would think the dynasty was easy to fool, which would also damage the dynasty's reputation.

"That's inevitable, but a choice has to be made. Not everything can be done based on one's likings, right?" Han Xiao's skin was as thick as metal. He chuckled and said, "Plus, this might not be a bad thing. This will more or less make the real culprit lower their guard, increasing the chance of them showing flaws, which might one day give us a breakthrough."

An intelligence department upper echelon agreed and said, "His Excellency Black Star is right. We'll have to make a choice sooner or later."

Urranrell sighed, signed the order, and said, "Do it then."

The moment this proposal was placed on her table, Urranrell already knew that this was the silent agreement of the dynasty's upper echelons. They only needed her signature. Even the ruler could not do whatever she liked; she still had to compromise here and there. Her term was nearing its end. She could not dictate things anymore.

After signing the order, Urranrell felt weirdly relieved. She shook her head.

"Looks like the mission to find the real culprit can only be passed on to the next ruler. It's good, I suppose. I have an easier time."

Han Xiao's eyes flickered, and he said, "Actually, we might have missed something. There's another possible scenario that might explain how Gaud went missing. Did the dynasty consider it?"

The others instantly turned toward him.

"Oh? Tell us about it." Urranrell was interested.

"Is it possible that this is Gaud's own doing?"

Hearing this, the intelligence upper echelon laughed uncontrollably and said, "Your Excellency Black Star, we made this assumption long ago. We came to the conclusion that it's not possible. Gaud doesn't have a motive to do that."

"I don't feel the same way." Han Xiao shook his head. "Just because he's a direct member doesn't mean he's totally loyal. Is it possible that he only wanted to use the dynasty's resources to become a Beyond Grade A, then fake his death and free himself from the dynasty's restrictions and hide?"

After saying that, he subtly glanced at everyone and saw the unconvinced looks on their faces. He then added, "Of course, this is just speculation based on logic. I don't know Gaud's origins nor personality, so I don't trust him completely. Anyway, in my eyes, it's not completely impossible for something like this to happen. After all, it has happened before."

Sherlock thought for a moment and said, "Hmm, your suspicion makes sense. The amount of time Gaud has served the dynasty is too short."

Urranrell gave him a glare and said with a typical politician's tone, "You don't have to worry about that. The dynasty has its own system of checking through its direct members and won't take in anyone suspicious. The dynasty trusts the loyalty of its direct members completely..."

Han Xiao glanced at Clotti's poker face and understood that Urranrell did not want to continue this topic here.

He shook his head, smiled, acted casual and said, "Alright, I'm just saying."

Sherlock, however, continued asking. "I'm curious, why do you think Gaud might have faked his death? Something must have caused you to have that speculation. Did he act suspicious on any occasion?"

Han Xiao looked at him surprised.

Are you really that interested? I don't know if I should say that you have a strong desire for knowledge or that you don't know how to read the room. Didn't you see the look on that upper echelon's face?

Han Xiao suddenly realized that this was an opportunity to set the tempo. He fake-coughed and said, "One reason is that we could not find any clues at all. It's way too clean and doesn't look like he was attacked. Another... well, it's not that Gaud acted suspicious or anything, but I just happen to know someone who successfully faked his death, so it came to mind."

"Who's that?" Sherlock was curious.

"This person is quite famous actually. You guys definitely know him. It's that Limitless Financial Group's Sorokin."

Before the others asked anything, Han Xiao continued. "I coincidentally discovered his little secret. He's not as weak as he looks. I sensed danger from him. He might not be any weaker than me, yet he has always presented himself as being very weak. No one knows what his plan is. Plus, his soul's true age seems to be much higher than his current age. I tested him a bit and discovered that he might be a Beyond Grade A from history who possibly faked his death and lived till now using different identities..."

He kept some of the key information and exposed Sorokin's identity using ambiguous words, making the others doubtful.

“How do you know?” Urranrell wondered.

“This involves a certain Universal Treasure I acquired not long ago. It has special uses in the soul field.” Han Xiao smiled and did not give any details.

Urranrell knew that Han Xiao did not want to share, so she did not continue asking. Thinking of Sorokin’s actions in the past, she said, “If this is true, Sorokin definitely has a big plan. We’ll have to adjust our approach for him...”

She would not instantly believe what Han Xiao said. However, Han Xiao’s Political Asset count was quite high. He even had the bonus from the weird [Civilization Leader Slayer] talent, so what he said was taken more seriously.

Urranrell planned to secretly investigate Sorokin. Compared to Black Star, Sorokin was even more of an outsider.

Seeing this, Han Xiao stopped talking about this topic. He did not want to say too much; getting the dynasty interested in Sorokin was enough.

After all, making the Super Star Cluster Alliance take the blame was only the dynasty’s temporary solution. They would continue to search for the culprit in the future. Therefore, Han Xiao wanted to use this opportunity to mess with Sorokin.

This guy was a master in knowing when to be a coward. He was way too well hidden, so God only knew what he was planning. If Han Xiao could expose him, it was definitely a good thing.

With what had happened to Gaud, once Sorokin’s real strength was exposed, he would also be a suspect.

Although, from the way the Great Mechanic Han looked at it, Sorokin did not have any motive. However, at least he could disgust this b*stard...

Humph, who told you to plot against me secretly all the time. Did you think my little notebook is empty?

“Alright, that’s the situation for now. I don’t have anything more to ask, so if there’s nothing else...”

Urranrell was just about to end the communication. However, before she finished, she heard Han Xiao speak again.

“Wait, one last thing.”

“... Go ahead.” Urranrell clenched her teeth in her mind.

She thought Han Xiao was about to make another report, but saw that Han Xiao suddenly put on a serious expression and said,

“Your Excellency Urranrell, I’m now speaking to you as the vice president of the Beyond Grade A Association. I fully support the dynasty’s decision to target the Super Star Cluster Alliance, but I hope this won’t impact the association’s members.”

Hearing this, the others looked at Han Xiao with surprise and became serious too.

“Go on.” Urranrell narrowed her eyes.

“I believe we both know that there are direct members of the Super Star Cluster civilizations hidden among the neutral Beyond Grade As. I am all for the dynasty’s plan to target the Super Star Cluster Alliance, but I don’t wish to see the Super Star Cluster Alliance’s Beyond Grade As included in the revenge target. I’m not covering the culprit. I’m asking the dynasty not to vent its rage on some neutral Beyond Grade As who might be direct members of the Super Star Cluster civilizations. The culprit might be among them, but before the real culprit is found, they’ll be protected by the association.”

Han Xiao spoke with a serious tone that felt like he was going to fight for this even if he would offend the dynasty for it.

Urranrell and the others understood what he meant immediately. Black Star knew how the evidence had come about. Though he supported the dynasty’s decision, he did not want it to become an excuse for the dynasty to target the Beyond Grade As. He was planning ahead.

You can beat up the Super Star Cluster Alliance, but you can’t drag down the unrelated Beyond Grade As!

His identity swapped smoothly. One second ago, he was the dynasty’s ally giving suggestions for the dynasty’s sake, the next he became the Beyond Grade A Association’s vice president thinking ahead for the association.

“You’re really thoughtful.” Urranrell had a complicated look in her eyes.

“If I don’t speak for the association, when word gets out, how can I remain vice president?”

“... Alright, I understand. The dynasty’s target is only limited to the Super Star Cluster Alliance’s forces. Before we acquire solid proof, we won’t target their hidden direct Beyond Grade A members. After all, the association has made a stand to help us too.”

Urranrell sighed.

Seeing this, Han Xiao finally smiled again. He thought for a while and said with a chuckle, “Alright, if the dynasty doesn’t mind, can you help me promote it? Just say that the dynasty initially wanted to investigate the neutral Beyond Grade As or even forcibly interrogate them, but I quarreled with the dynasty using logic, protecting the association’s members, and in the end, convinced the dynasty of only targeting the Super Star Cluster Alliance. And please emphasize the fact that I played a crucial part in the dynasty’s decision.”

“...”

Although the others did not speak, they had the same looks on their faces.

Wow, just how f*cking shameless can you be!

“... Okay.”

Urranrell took a few deep breaths to calm her emotions, or she was worried she might grab the cup on the table and throw it at Han Xiao.

Although she complained about how shameless Black Star was in her heart, she still decided to help him to promote, increasing Black Star's position and reputation in the association. There were more pros than cons to having Black Star control the association.

Having received a definitive answer, Han Xiao only then bade farewell with a smile.

After deactivating the remote projection, his sights returned to the office where his original body was. He heaved a sigh of relief.

"This tempo I've set has finally completely deviated the dynasty's direction..."

Han Xiao felt much more relaxed.

Luckily, he had enough Political Assets, which made making the dynasty accept his proposals easier.

If not because Manison and the Super Star Cluster Alliance were going at each other's throats, he would have had to spend more effort. It could be said that these two sides helped him to make things easier. He grabbed the main conflict and did not need to make any flashy moves.

Furthermore, making the association's members see that their vice president was so responsible he argued with the dynasty to protect their interests would increase his reputation considerably. This would probably make more people see the benefits of letting him lead them.

Even Han Xiao could not say how many birds he killed with this one stone. He only knew that the negative impact caused by Gaud being attacked was tremendously reduced. When the dynasty announced their plan to act against the Super Star Cluster Alliance, this matter should be considered settled for the time being.

As for the other unknown chain reactions, the only thing he could do was find out in the future.

...

On the other side, Urranrell and Clotti were the only ones left in the ruler's office.

Urranrell pressed her fingers subconsciously with a hesitant expression. After some time, she finally softly said, "Do you think he'll be the next Mechanic Emperor?"

Clotti glanced at her and shook his head.

"He's a hundred times more dangerous than the Mechanic Emperor."

Chapter 1233 Dust Settled

The state of the Flickering World was extremely tense, like a volcano that was about to erupt. Ever since Gaud was attacked, the investigation of the dynasty attracted the attention of the entire universe. A month had already passed since then. The dynasty made such a big deal out of it but still had yet to achieve anything. Voices of doubt started to appear in the outside world.

As the public opinion was getting more and more intense, the dynasty finally made a new announcement, producing a full chain of evidence that pointed directly at the Super Star Cluster Alliance. The public opinion was stirred up once again.

The dynasty claimed that this chain of evidence was carefully verified. They had discovered that the Super Star Cluster civilizations planned the attack on Gaud. Hence, the dynasty used a harsh tone to question them, demanding these three Super Star Cluster civilizations open up their databases and cooperate with the investigation, or the dynasty would take further actions.

The Super Star Cluster Alliance originally wanted to make Manison take the blame, but their moves against Manison were defused by a mysterious force time after time. In the end, it led to the dynasty being one step ahead. Facing such an obvious method to divide them, the Super Star Cluster Alliance strongly denied it and refused to cooperate with the investigation. They also made an announcement claiming that the Crimson Dynasty was only using this opportunity to accuse them of something they did not do. Since the two sides were already at war, they even stated the unfair treatment the three Universal Civilizations had been giving to the Super Star Cluster civilizations all these years, hoping to gain the moral high ground in the eyes of the public.

The federation and the church came to support the dynasty too.

The two sides' conflict stirred up a storm in the galactic civilization. Most people trusted the three Universal Civilizations more, but there were some who saw through the dynasty's plan. However, even though they knew something was going on, the situation would not be affected.

No matter how much was said, fists still spoke the loudest. After a few days of the situation fermenting, the dynasty took further action. They claimed that since the Super Star Cluster Alliance had already attacked a Beyond Grade A, the agreement they had made in the past was considered voided. The dynasty announced that they would be sending direct Beyond Grade A members into the Flickering War. The federation and the church followed and did the same after.

The Beyond Grade A Association who had made an agreement with the three Universal Civilizations long ago expressed their support, claiming that it was the Super Star Cluster Alliance who broke the rules first.

Very soon, the direct Beyond Grade A members of the three Universal Civilizations were heading toward the frontlines one after another.

With the Beyond Grade As joining the war, the intensity of it rapidly escalated. The three Universal Civilizations penetrated one stronghold after another. The Super Star Cluster Alliance was losing territories even quicker.

Originally, the outside world thought the Super Star Cluster Alliance would also send in direct members, but that did not happen. The Super Star Cluster Alliance only relied on the troops they had to fight the direct Beyond Grade As of the three Universal Civilizations. Even though they were losing quickly, they still did not bring out any hidden Beyond Grade As.

Questions related to this matter got brought up and spread on the internet, secretly guiding more galactic residents to feel curious about. When this matter attracted enough attention, a 'mysterious person' finally appeared and explained the reasons behind it with so-called 'inside information'.

According to the information, the Super Star Cluster Alliance's direct members might be hidden in the Beyond Grade A Association, and one or more of them might be the culprit who attacked Gaud. The dynasty planned to thoroughly investigate all neutral Beyond Grade As. However, when Black Star found

out about this, he went to argue with the Ruler, despite knowing it would put him at a bad spot in his relationship with the dynasty. He insisted on protecting the association's members' interests, stating that unless solid evidence was found, he would not allow the association's members to be affected.

After a negotiation that went on for days and nights, the dynasty was finally convinced by Black Star and decided to cancel this plan. Because of Black Star's hard work, the Beyond Grade A Association did not receive the forced investigation treatment. The public speculated that the Super Star Cluster Alliance's hidden members could only remain hidden because of this. Therefore, the Super Star Cluster Alliance would rather get beat up than expose their identities.

This news shocked countless organizations. In the face of the dynasty's furious investigation, almost everyone would obediently cooperate. However, Black Star dared to reject it. Furthermore, the dynasty clearly knew that the culprit might be in the association, but they still agreed to Black Star's request. Just how much weight did Black Star's words carry?

The galactic residents were dumbfounded.

No wonder he became the first ever consultant of the three Universal Civilizations. The dynasty had to give him face even when they were furious!

...

In the Super Star Cluster Alliance's remote conference room, the leaders of the various civilizations had gathered. The atmosphere was tragic.

"We guessed right. The three Universal Civilizations decided to make us take the blame... Everything feels like it was planned!"

The Star Arc Civilization leader clenched his fists with rage.

Originally, Manison alone could not stop them. However, they discovered that a secret mysterious force was obstructing them and supporting Manison, slowing their plan down by a large extent.

The mysterious force that was helping Manison could only be the three Universal Civilizations!

"The three Universal Civilizations planned to make us take the blame. Therefore, after discovering what we were trying to do, they obstructed us secretly so that we wouldn't have a chance of escaping the accusations and would have no choice but get targeted!" a leader said with an enraged tone.

The Super Star Cluster Alliance guessed what the three Universal Civilizations wanted to do. They were afraid of taking the blame, so they tried to frame Manison. Manison knew what the Super Star Cluster Alliance wanted to do, so he tried to protect himself. The three Universal Civilizations were one step ahead. They guessed that the Super Star Cluster Alliance had guessed what they wanted to do, so they helped Manison. Their final goal was still to target the Super Star Cluster Alliance.

Their hearts were filled with a strong rage and sense of powerlessness. It felt like the three Universal Civilizations had knitted a huge net. They had nowhere to run and no way of struggling.

"What do we do now? The three Universal Civilizations have sent their direct members, and we have limited reinforcements. If we don't bring our direct members out, our loss is certain," someone said with a worried tone.

The people exchanged looks and all looked troubled.

Someone sighed and said what everyone was thinking. "Forget it, don't we all see the situation? Even if we bring our direct members out, we'd have no chance to turn the tables. We'd only be exposing their identities for nothing.

"Instead of that, we might as well let our direct members continue to hide their identities... Things are different now. Black Star is protecting the Beyond Grade A Association, so as long as our men's identities are not exposed, they won't be affected."

Everyone else nodded.

Without the Beyond Grade A Association, the three Universal Civilizations would definitely thoroughly investigate most of the neutral Beyond Grade As, and no one would dare object. The result of that would very likely be another Tragedy of the Pinnacles.

With the Beyond Grade A Association, the three Universal Civilizations could no longer do whatever they wanted. Due to Black Star's existence, the dynasty could not target the neutral Beyond Grade As without any consequences. This way, their secret members would also be protected.

"Black Star..."

Many civilization leaders felt complicated.

They did not like this guy at all, but what Black Star did protected their men. This was the indisputable truth.

The Star Arc Civilization leader sighed in his mind and said, "Our days are past. Don't make any unwise moves. The three Universal Civilizations are forcing us to expose our direct members. Once we fall for it, they'll have reason to carry out checks... Don't waste the safety Black Star fought for. Let them continue hiding in the association."

...

At the Beyond Grade A Association headquarters...

"It's all thanks to Black Star this time, or we'd all be affected."

Inside the round table conference room, the atmosphere was joyful. Many normal Beyond Grade A members had relaxed looks on their faces.

Ever since the incident happened, many neutral Beyond Grade As had been worried they might be affected by it. Now, the dust had finally settled. If not because this information got out, they would not even know that Black Star had argued with the dynasty and successfully protected their interests.

This really touched many Beyond Grade A. Only a leader who cared about the interests of his subordinates could be considered a good leader. Although they were not bosses and subordinates, it was exactly why they admired Han Xiao so much. Their sense of recognition increased too.

Facing everyone's enthusiasm, Han Xiao waved with a 'Sorokin smile' on his face.

"I'm the vice president. I only did what I should have done. Don't have to be so formal, guys."

“That won’t do. I have to properly thank you!” Lucie suddenly bowed toward Han Xiao. He said with an appreciative tone, “If not for you, God only knows when I’d be free. You’re being too humble.”

He had been caught tracking Gaud by the dynasty, and the dynasty had captured him. Lucie had spent many days in fear and only been released not long ago.

With such an experience, Lucie knew more clearly than anyone that without Black Star’s help and the association’s protection, he would most likely have died in the dynasty’s hands. There was no way he could regain freedom. Therefore, although he was a secret member of a Super Star Cluster civilization, the appreciation he was displaying now was not fake.

Lucie’s words were recognized by the others. Everyone had a balance in their heart. By placing the president and the vice president on the two sides of the balance, they could easily see that Black Star had brought more benefits to the association than the Mechanic Emperor.

Putting those purposes and claims on paper aside, they had joined the association for safety and benefits. They were willing to have anyone who could bring more benefits as their representative.

Not only was the president, Manison, of no use at all, he even caused the association to be suspected. The comparison was way too stark.

“Alright, alright, don’t get so excited guys. It’s good to not be wrongly affected. At least Manison cleared his suspicion. Don’t target him for today. Wait till tomorrow.”

Han Xiao coughed and interrupted.

Although this was an act of building his reputation, this was enough. He was worried that if these members got too excited, he would be wearing a golden robe very soon.

Hearing this, the others had extremely dumbfounded looks on their faces.

Black Star spoke for Manison?

Our youth has ended!

The others could not believe it. Manison glanced at Han Xiao with a complicated expression but was less hostile than before.

The others had no idea, but how could he not know? After the Super Star Cluster Alliance took the blame, he knew that the mysterious force that secretly helped him was most likely Black Star.

He probably did this for the sake of the big picture.

Manison sighed.

Back when Hila was attacked, he had helped Black Star. Now, Black Star helped him in return.

The two of them had been in conflict for many days, but at this moment, Manison uncontrollably felt an indescribable emotion in his heart.

Han Xiao noticed Manison’s look too. He glanced at him and said, “What you looking at?”

“...Nothing.”

Manison looked away, closed his eyes, and hid his emotions.

Han Xiao ignored him, looked to the other side, and saw Sorokin.

Sorokin did not have his signature fake smile on but instead looked very concerned and was dazing off.

From the way he looks, the dynasty has probably made moves secretly.

Han Xiao snickered in his mind.

Letting the Super Star Cluster Alliance take the blame was only a short-term solution; his mission was not shown as completed. However, he was not very concerned about it.

Things had settled. The storm caused by him secretly beating Gaud up finally came to an end for the time being. Overall, he was quite satisfied with the current situation—he had cleared the hidden threat and did not get impacted. This result was quite good.

After the people spoke among themselves for quite a while, Han Xiao suddenly put on a serious expression and said, “Guys, we can’t be glad yet. The situation is clear now. The three Universal Civilizations will certainly win the war, and the Super Star Cluster Alliance won’t be able to last long. Once they lose, they’ll at least keep a low profile for many decades. When the three Universal Civilizations have more time on their hands, we’ll be their next target!

“Don’t forget, the three Universal Civilizations have been planning to do that since the start. It was only delayed by the Flickering War. We’ve been growing smoothly in the past years because the real obstacle has yet to arrive. Be mentally prepared... The day the three Universal Civilizations pressure us isn’t that far away.”

Hearing this, the others nodded with a serious expression.

...

After the direct members of the three Universal Civilizations joined the war, like the last straw, the battle rapidly became completely one-sided.

Most people predicted that the war would still go on for two to three years. However, due to the impact of what happened to Gaud, this duration was tremendously reduced.

In only eleven months, the three Universal Civilizations cleared out the Super Star Cluster Alliance’s military power in the Flickering World’s fourth exploration phase area, retrieving all territories.

The Flickering War ended with the Super Star Cluster Alliance’s tragic loss. They invested countless resources and ended up crushed. In the end, they could not change their fate and could only lick their wounds in the dark.

The Crimson Dynasty redistributed the fourth exploration phase’s territories. Those who participated in the war could keep their territory. Part of the remaining territory would be developed by the dynasty. The rest would be leased, sold, or rewarded to organizations who made contributions. This time, no Beyond Grade A ally was rewarded any territory.

Han Xiao, however, successfully bought the venue of the players' national war, Planet Milton. He stationed a regiment of the army on the planet and only slightly modified it, keeping the marks left by the players during the national war.

As the flames of war extinguished, the Flickering World temporarily entered a time of peace. The three Universal Civilizations started to deal with the aftershock of the war, recover the law and order of the various territories, and rest.

However, the impact of what happened to Gaud did not end with the Super Star Cluster Alliance's loss but continued to ferment where no one could see.

In this atmosphere, more than half a year passed.

On this day, the big event finally arrived for the Crimson Dynasty.

Urranrell retired. The new ruler had taken office!

Chapter 1234 The New Ruler

On the Crimson Dynasty's mother planet, Tarunamir Palace's biggest auditorium was the venue for all kinds of large ceremonies. All the handover ceremonies for the dynasty's rulers were held there and broadcast to the entire universe. The venue was already set up. All the seats were filled, and most were remote projections. There were dynasty officials, leaders of their subsidiary allied civilizations, and the envoys of the federation and the church.

The Beyond Grade A allies were also invited to attend. They sat toward the back of the middle area, beside the dynasty's direct members.

Han Xiao sat between Kant and Milizaus. The ceremony had yet to start, and the three of them were chatting.

"Time passed so quickly. Urranrell is retiring too." Kant sighed.

"Now that I think about it, I've already met four different dynasty rulers. Although Urranrell wasn't the wisest among them, she was definitely the friendliest," Milizaus mumbled. As a member of the Ancient Ones, his life experience was rich.

"Well, it's the first time I've witnessed the change of head of state."

Han Xiao was quite interested.

In his previous life, players could not reach this level, so it was the first time he had experienced this kind of event himself. He found it refreshing.

Although I'm stronger than most Beyond Grade As in the universe, I'm still a curious boy.

At this time, Kant subtly pointed forward with his mouth and whispered, "See that? That's the new dynasty ruler. Any idea who he is?"

"Nope." Milizaus shook his head.

Han Xiao looked over too. The new ruler's seat was right beside. From Han Xiao's perspective, he could only see the new ruler's broad back.

Long before the handover ceremony, the personnel taking over the top positions in the dynasty had already been decided internally. The path had been set long ago. The new ruler's identity was kept a secret to the outside world only because of the dynasty's practice. The allies of the dynasty had no way of finding out before the day.

However, Han Xiao was not one of them—he knew who this new dynasty ruler was long ago.

After chatting for a while, the starting time of the ceremony approached. The voices in the venue gradually lowered, and people started to sit up straight.

When the time came, the entire place was already completely silent. The official hosting the ceremony stood up, expressed the dynasty's welcome toward the people there, and announced the official beginning of the ceremony.

The dynasty ruler's handover ceremony adhered to the civilization's theme completely. The process was short and simple, not flashy and complex like the Federation of Light.

After a few programs, it was finally time for the focus of the ceremony, the handover. Urranrell first had to give a speech.

Under the attention of everyone present, Urranrell walked up to the podium. She wore a simple dynasty uniform. Her hair was tied up high, and there was nothing unusual.

She looked around the venue for three seconds before slowly saying, "Today reminds me of the day I took the position as the dynasty's ruler. I was confident, proud, and firmly believed I could make the dynasty better. After so many years, the things I wished to do have already been achieved in different ways. I can proudly tell myself that I did not fail the beliefs I initially had, nor did I fail the dynasty.

"Looking back, we've accomplished many feats in many fields such as politics, economics, order of the universe, and so on. Our biggest achievement was the development of the Flickering World. This will determine the dynasty's rapid growth in the future. Along the way of the dynasty's growth, we were lucky enough to meet many friends and allies that share our philosophies. The dynasty has been able to achieve what it has achieved today not because of me alone, it's the result of the hard work of all of the dynasty's allies and friends. For that, I would like to show my sincerest appreciation to all of your contributions."

Urranrell bowed and made a dynasty gesture. Thunderous applause sounded in the venue.

The applause lasted for a few seconds. Urranrell straightened her back, raised her hand, and pressed down, signaling that they did not have to continue clapping any longer.

"Of course, the dynasty's path is also filled with obstacles. Our path has never been a smooth ride, and we've faced a lot of challenges.

"The dynasty rose from nothing. Our predecessors fought through hardships and disasters. In the end, it led us to standing as a universal civilization, becoming one of the foundations that maintains the order of our galactic society. The golden spirit of the dynasty has been passed on through generations. It's

deeply scorched in our genes. We don't fear hardships. We solved many difficulties including the Intelligent Plaque, not only protecting our civilization but also the safety of the entire universe. What doesn't kill us makes us stronger.

"The trend of the world always is filled with twists and turns. There'll be new challenges and new opportunities in the future. I sincerely wish for all the dynasty's people to forever maintain the dynasty's spirit—no matter what difficulties lie ahead, never fear and face them with a smile.

"Today, my term ends. My duties will be smoothly passed on to the next leader of the dynasty, who will continue to carry on our divine responsibility of our civilization and the universe.

"I believe, the dynasty will reach new heights in his hands, just as I believed in myself.

"Last but not the least... long live the dynasty!"

Then, Urranrell bowed again. Her speech was not long, nor did she boast about her achievements. It was simple and clean.

Clap clap clap!

The next second, thunderous and deafening applause sounded in the venue, giving the highest approval and praise to a ruler who was about to retire.

Han Xiao clapped too. Memories of his interactions with Urranrell flashed past his mind as he sighed.

He had known her for decades. Putting aside their identities, they were more or less friends.

We'll probably rarely ever see her again in the future...

After a dynasty ruler retired, they would still continue to enjoy the same level of privileges and treatment, only they no longer had any political power. They would usually live on the dynasty's mother planet and hardly ever show their faces at any public events. After their life span ended, they could choose whether or not to upload their backup memories into the dynasty's main artificial intelligence, Heroic Soul.

The thunderous applause lasted a full minute before stopping slowly. Urranrell stepped aside, and that hefty new ruler walked up to the podium and showed his face in front of everyone.

This man's face was tough and angular. His hairline was rather high, showing his smooth forehead. He was tall and muscular. His huge chest muscles and biceps stretched out his uniform tightly, outlining his body shape. He was giving off an assertive and firm vibe all over his body, like a cluster of walking male hormones. He was confident, proud, and ambitious.

Marbruce Peel Stanson, the dynasty's new ruler. He used to be an officer in the dynasty's military. He then moved into the political field. Starting as a planet manager, he rose all the way to becoming the manager of a Star Cluster before moving to the central department of the dynasty. During Urranrell's term, he qualified to be trained by the Doyens, becoming one of the candidates for the next ruler. In the end, he surpassed everyone else and was confirmed as the next ruler.

Related information flashed past in Han Xiao's mind. This person was the dynasty's ruler the players in his previous life were most familiar with.

Urranrell was considered a semi-special case. Someone like Marbruce was actually the norm for the dynasty rulers. Of the many dynasty rulers throughout history, most had the same vibe.

Marbruce looked around, introduced himself briefly, and said with a serious tone, "I give my highest admiration to the contributions Urranrell has made in the past years. She's the key reason the dynasty stands where it stands today. For many years in the future, I'll be leading the dynasty. Just as she believes in me, I believe in myself too. I will not fail my duties and will lead the dynasty to continue forward..."

His tone was filled with a strong sense of confidence.

Compared to Urranrell's speech at the end of her term, his speech to kick-start his term was different. He analyzed the current situation, talked about his plans for the future, shared his political philosophies, emphasized on the growth route of the dynasty, created political goals for himself, and so on. It was much longer than Urranrell's speech, lasting for more than an hour.

If Han Xiao had to conclude what was said, the key words were 'strengthen centralized political power', 'reinforce area control', 'expand military power', 'encourage partnerships in multiple fields', 'reduce unnecessary resource wastage', and so on. This was quite different from the dynasty's policies when Urranrell was in office, emphasizing the dynasty's control over different fields.

Though they did not show it on their faces, many guests were already impacted by his new policies.

As the dynasty changed its policies, many forces would be severely impacted, and the firm philosophy of the new ruler was, of course, not good news for them. This was only a heads-up.

The eyes of many Beyond Grade A allies were also flickering.

"I didn't expect the new ruler to be so firm. I thought he'd choose to take the steadier path at the beginning of his term," Kant mumbled softly.

Milizaus shook his head. "What he said has definitely been approved by the internal members of the dynasty. Since they have no problems with it, it's not like us outsiders can influence who will become the leader of the three Universal Civilizations. His position is rock solid to begin with."

"Sigh, my honeymoon period with the dynasty is probably going to end."

Han Xiao shook his head and had this feeling.

Urranrell trusted him so much because they had experienced many incidents together, so they had built a trusting relationship. Marbruce, however, had never met him. Even if he heeded him, he would not be as friendly as Urranrell.

Nonetheless, it was enough. Having benefited from the partnership for many decades, the Black Star Army had already completed its rise. As long as he could maintain the current situation, he would be quite happy about it.

Everyone had their own plans, but they all looked like they were paying full attention to the ceremony, not showing anything on their faces.

Not long after, the handover ceremony finally came to its end. Urranrell and Marbruce shook hands firmly, announcing the completion of the handover of the dynasty's power. This moment would forever be recorded in the dynasty's history as a photo.

On Galaxy Calendar Year 740, February 15th, the ruler of the Crimson Dynasty changed. Urranrell retired, and the dynasty entered the age of Marbruce.

Two days later, the Federation of Light hosted a handover ceremony too. Bader retired as the president, and the new Federation of Light president took over. His name was Louis Rocky.

Two of the three Universal Civilizations changed their leaders in just a few days, attracting the attention of the whole galactic society. The majority of the galactic residents were speculating how this would change their everyday lives.

On the third day, Han Xiao finally received Marbruce's invitation to meet in private.

...

Han Xiao's remote projection appeared in the ruler's office. Marbruce was sitting on where Urranrell once sat, but his personal guard remained the same. It was still Clotti.

"Black Star, I've heard a lot about you." Marbruce gave a manly smile.

"Your Excellency Ruler Marbruce." Han Xiao nodded respectfully too.

"You're a legend in the universe. I've always wanted to meet you, and today, my wish is finally fulfilled." Marbruce's tone was liberal and somewhat friendly.

Seeing this, Han Xiao praised Marbruce in reply.

The way Han Xiao looked at it, as Marbruce just became the ruler, he had to meet with every important member of the dynasty. This meeting was just purely to get to know him; there was no special agenda.

The two of them chatted for a while before Marbruce brought up the key point.

"I won't make any changes to Urranrell's agreement with you, nor will the dynasty interfere with the territories that have been given to you. I also won't stop the support and assistance we've been providing to you. So, you have nothing to worry about."

"Hehe, I've always believed the dynasty is fair and just. I've never had any doubts." Han Xiao gave a formal and standard reply.

Marbruce grinned, suddenly changed the topic, and said, "About the issues with the Beyond Grade A Association, the dynasty is still discussing it. If you have any suggestions, feel free to bring them up to me anytime. I'll consider them carefully."

Han Xiao maintained his smile, nodded, and did not reply.

The two of them chatted for a while more before Marbruce expressing the intention to end the conversation.

As Han Xiao was just about to bid farewell, he suddenly looked at Clotti, smiled, and said, "Can Your Excellency Dark Lord escort me out?"

"Escort a remote projection?" Clotti frowned.

This time, he suddenly noticed Marbruce nod at him, so he led Han Xiao out of the room.

Closing the door, Han Xiao looked at Clotti and asked curiously, "How's Urranrell?"

"Her? She joined the Doyens," Clotti said. "Why ask?"

Unlike the Federation of Light, the dynasty's doyens had no power. They were only responsible for raising the successors of the ruler at most. It was really a place for retirement. The doyens hardly had any contact with the outside world.

"Just curious. Anyway, why are you still the ruler's personal guard?" Han Xiao smiled.

"Well, originally, Gaud might have taken over after he grew stronger. Now he's gone, and the other direct members all have their own tasks, so I can only continue as the ruler's personal guard."

Clotti shook his head. Although he still had a poker face, his tone had a hint of resignation.

While the two of them chatted outside the door, Marbruce, who was in the ruler's office, looked at the closed door, and a tint of worry flashed across his eyes.

"The ex-ruler really left me a difficult problem. You've given Black Star way too much..."

As the representative of the hawk faction, Marbruce did not like an ally who was too strong to be controlled, like Black Star.

However, for now, he did not plan to do anything to Black Star. He was going to maintain the current situation till further in the future.

Marbruce still remembered Bekorodi's report—Gaud, whom they had high hopes in, might have fallen into Black Star's hands. Although he was not sure if it was true, with the Mechanic Emperor as a prior example, he was already cautious toward Black Star.

Chapter 1235 Inheritors of the Underworld

After deactivating the remote projection and returning to his room, Han Xiao opened his eyes and sighed. "Marbruce has quite a lot of thoughts about the Beyond Grade A Association... Well, I suppose it's his duty to do that since he's in that position, and he just so happens to need achievements at the early stages of his term."

Han Xiao shook his head.

Urranrell was so much better. Sadly, he had no choice but to adapt.

The benefits he gained in the past few decades of his honeymoon period with the dynasty was a crucial factor in the Black Star Army's rise. For various reasons, there was no way the dynasty was going to take these benefits back. Even if Marbruce wanted to, he could only follow the partnership agreement Urranrell had signed with Black Star. Therefore, Han Xiao had absolutely no need to be concerned about

him. Even if he would not acquire any more benefits in the future, the benefits he would continue to gain from these agreements were enough.

You can't divorce me, so we might as well put up with living together.

While Han Xiao pondered about this issue, he left his office, came to the secret area inside Black Star Palace and walked into a combat training room.

Clank!

As soon as he entered, he saw a tall mechanical suited warrior fighting two virtual opponents. Every step this warrior took, the entire room shook.

As soon he saw Han Xiao, this mechanical suited warrior stopped and stood in a respectful manner.

Han Xiao smiled. "Working hard, I see. Come out and let me see your progress."

The mechanical suit split up from the middle, showing the user inside. It was Lothaire.

Ever since Lothaire assassinated Modo's leader, Han Xiao had hidden him, and he had been training all this time. This mechanical suit was training assistance equipment Han Xiao had specially made for Pugilists. It had zero combat capability and would instead add an extremely high load to the user, enhancing the effects of the training.

Almost a decade had passed, and Lothaire's strength had been growing steadily, unlike those officers who had been stuck in the same place in Calamity Grade. Clearly, Lothaire had more potential. Han Xiao had high hopes for him.

Han Xiao raised his hand. Golden sparks of electricity jumped around his fingers. He placed his hand on Lothaire's shoulder, sending a highly-stimulating electrical stream into Lothaire's body.

Lothaire's body shivered, but he endured the pain and remained still as Han Xiao electrocuted him.

Han Xiao only lifted up his hand after quite a while. Seeing the combat information, he smiled and said, "You've become stronger again than the last time I checked, but your energy is still your weakness. You need to make up for it..."

He pointed out a few things. Lothaire listened carefully, writing down Han Xiao's suggestions on his training schedule from time to time.

This was an assistive training method Han Xiao had come up with. By looking at the person's attributes through the interface, he could point out a direction the person should take. Since he could see all of their attributes, he could always give very constructive suggestions that not only gave them a clear direction but even clearly conveyed how much they had grown, making them more motivated to train.

Through this method, he could help others grow. Han Xiao had already used it on some important officers in the past years. After realizing just how incredibly effective it was, Lothaire treasured all the opportunities he could learn from Han Xiao.

After giving the suggestions, Han Xiao patted Lothaire's shoulder, smiled, and said, "Keep up the good work. You might be the next Beyond Grade A of the army. Then, if you want to found your own force outside, I'll support you."

Lothaire shook his head. "I'll always be your blade in the dark."

Even if he could become a Beyond Grade A, it would be thanks to Han Xiao's teaching. Lothaire was very appreciative of this, and he was not so cold-blooded that he would forget how much Han Xiao had helped him, or he would not have joined the army to repay Han Xiao.

"I appreciate the thought."

Han Xiao was quite glad. He said a few more words before leaving the room.

Han Xiao followed the corridor in the base into another room. Aurora sat in the room with her legs crossed. Vital energy filled her body. She was training her energy. The moment she saw Han Xiao, she joyfully pounced over.

Pa!

Han Xiao pressed onto her head, stopping her a few feet away. He sighed and said, "Come on, how old are you? On Planet Aquamarine, you're already old enough to be someone's grandma."

"Humph, I don't care. I'm forever eighteen!" Aurora became unhappy right away. Don't mention my age and we're still good friends.

"Alright, alright, let me see how much your body... ahem, your strength has grown." Electric sparks appeared on Han Xiao's fingertips, and he poked Aurora's forehead with it.

Combat information appeared on the interface. Han Xiao mainly looked at her Energy Rank and maximum energy, then nodded in his mind.

In the past decade, Aurora had been harvesting the Holy Light Seeds and accumulating energy. Not having any growth limit was really an incredible trait, her strength had been growing steadily.

Furthermore, Aurora did not even have to study her abilities too much. The information the last generation of the two sisters left in the Esper Ability was basically like an ability tree that had already matured; she inherited it directly.

What's hacking? This is hacking!

Han Xiao was bitter.

He had had his eyes on the life energy for quite some time and used [Energy Analysis] on Aurora long ago.

The results were just as he expected. He could control this type of special energy during the duration of the Character Summon Card, but he lost it after the duration ended. However, part of the understanding of the very nature and principles of the life energy remained in his mind, which would help in studying it afterward.

The [Perfect Energy Affinity Physique] he had obtained from Gaud played a big role in this, largely increasing Han Xiao's efficiency in analyzing the life energy. Although creating life energy with machinery was still extremely difficult, at least he had a direction.

Han Xiao's current focus was Jayz's technology treasure trove. It was the most valuable thing to study. Before he depleted the essence of Jayz's treasure, he was not going to spend too much time studying other things.

These thoughts flashed past his mind in a second. Han Xiao removed his hand, smiled, and said, "You've been working hard lately, no less than your sister."

Hearing this, Aurora smiled brightly. She loved hearing Hila, Ames, or Han Xiao praise her.

At this time, Aurora suddenly thought of something and said, "By the way, sis told me to ask you to go to the Underworld dimension a few hours ago. Go and take a look."

"Why did you only tell me now?" Han Xiao gave her a stare.

"Sis said so... She said to tell you later if you're busy. It's nothing urgent anyway," Aurora murmured softly, tapping her index fingers on each other.

"Got it. Her skin is probably itchy and needs a beating. Alright, I'll go eat her up now."

Han Xiao waved, activated the King, and disappeared.

The next moment, he was in the Underworld dimension.

Compared to the last time he came, the size of the Underworld seemed to have expanded quite a lot.

"Where is she?"

Han Xiao looked left and right and did not see Hila, so he lifted his leg and stomped the ground.

"Come out, Onicelu!"

As soon as he said that, Onicelu came out from under the ground.

"You're finally here. Hila has been waiting for you."

"Where is she? Let's start the fight quickly. I've brought all the tools. I still have other things to attend to." Han Xiao took out a ton of weapons and looked around.

Onicelu sighed. "She's not asking for a fight. The Underworld was fully repaired yesterday. Hila plans to wake up all the Hero Spirits and is worried about something happening, so she wanted to ask you to watch her do it."

"Oh, so this is why she called me here."

Han Xiao's eyes sparkled. He waved his hand and stowed the weapons away. He calculated in his mind. Judging from Hila's charging speed, repairing the Underworld would indeed take about a decade.

He still remembered that he had a mission called [Inheritors of The Underworld]. Once the Underworld recovered to its peak, he would receive the [Mark of The Underworld] reward. That would enable him to use the Underworld's powers to a certain extent and send souls into the Underworld.

"The Hero Spirits are all sleeping in my energy core. Hila is already waiting there. Take my hand, I'll guide you there." Onicelu raised her arm.

Han Xiao grabbed her hand. The next second, he felt a space energy erupting around him, and one moment later, he already arrived at a place that looked like an underground cave.

At the middle of the cave was a dimly lit white energy sphere that had dark-red patterns on its surface like blood vessels. The patterns were even moving slightly.

This was the energy core of the Underworld. Only the dimensional consciousness entity could lead the way and enter easily. The part of the Underworld outside was like Onicelu's skin, and coming here was like entering her body.

This was Han Xiao's first time entering, while Hila had already come in and out countless times. She was resting with her eyes closed sitting beside the energy core. As soon as Han Xiao arrived, she sensed it. She opened her eyes and looked at him.

"Shall we?"

Hila had no intention of chatting and cut to the chase.

Seeing Han Xiao nod, dark red death energy flowed out from Hila's palm into the energy core. Onicelu, who stood to the side, also controlled the Underworld to work together.

Ohm!

As the place started to shake slightly, the energy core became brighter.

When their sights were filled with a blinding light, an enormous beam of light suddenly rushed up, penetrating the thick ground and the grayish sky.

Han Xiao looked up at the beam of light. Through his sharp senses, he noticed that blurry silhouettes were being shot into the sky along with the beam of light. In his senses, soul presences appeared one after another.

The beam of light extended all the way up until it hit the interior wall of the Underworld. It then spread in all directions. It looked like a fountain that connected the ground with the sky. Awakened Hero Spirits fell like rain, landing on the Underworld's ground.

This process lasted for more than ten minutes. Very soon, the quiet and unpopulated Underworld became boisterous. Hero Spirits were everywhere on this desolate land.

The light on all the Hero Spirits gradually faded. From the outside, they surprisingly looked no different from living individuals. They were all looking around with confusion, seemingly yet to regain focus after their long sleep.

"It was very successful. Let's go meet them."

Onicelu was relieved. She led the way to fly out. Hila and Han Xiao followed right after.

The three of them flew up into the sky. All the Hero Spirits sensed it and looked up at them. Seeing Onicelu's familiar face, almost everyone looked like they were searching through their memories.

Not long after, seven unique Hero Spirits dashed into the sky and stood around the three of them.

"Onicelu, the Underworld has recovered? Have Nerkese and Eros returned?" one Hero Spirit asked hastily.

"Hmm, it has recovered but not because of the two sisters. Let me introduce you. This is the new Lord of Death, Hila. She inherited Nerkese's ability and is now the new master of the Underworld."

Onicelu then pointed at the seven Hero Spirit and said, "These seven are the seven Hero Spirit Kings of the Underworld. They were all Beyond Grade As and are the seven strongest beings of the Underworld."

Hearing this, Han Xiao sized the seven of them up and realized that they were all Primordial Ones whose names had been recorded in history. He nodded in his mind.

No wonder those revivors of the Holy Accord organization once said that not many people were willing to mess with the life and death sisters during the exploration era—they could summon seven Beyond Grade As in every fight who were unkillable. Who could deal with that?

Even now, this level of strength would be the top tier in the universe.

However, Onicelu was not finished. What she said next made Han Xiao's heart skip a beat.

"Although the Underworld is a place for souls to rest, there are way too many Hero Spirits, so we created a management structure to have the seven Hero Spirit Kings help manage the others. There are 3,600 Calamity Grades, 1.8 billion Grade Bs, and billions of other Hero Spirits. They are all the residents of the Underworld."

Han Xiao subconsciously took a deep breath.

What the f*ck? That's so many souls!

This was a total of 3,600 Calamity Grades. It was a horrifying force anywhere! Without the players, the Underworld would be the biggest undead army!

He could indirectly feel how bloody the exploration era war was just from this number. Some of these souls were collected by the two sisters, and others were ones who requested to enter the Underworld and gain eternal life.

While he was being shocked, the seven Hero Spirit Kings were sizing Hila up. Feeling the death energy Esper Ability on her, they knew Onicelu was telling the truth, but they were troubled.

Never mind working for the two sisters, they now had to work under a new master. They were not very willing to accept it deep in their hearts, but they had no choice, so they were quite bothered.

However, since they were willing to enter the Underworld for eternal life, it meant they cared more about their lives than working for someone else. Therefore, they were not bothered for long before they

convinced themselves. Furthermore, Nerkes and Eros had committed suicide, which really ripped off these Hero Spirits who trusted these two sisters. They were all not happy about it.

This time, the seven Hero Spirit Kings turned to Han Xiao and looked confused.

“Who’s this guy then? The new Lord of Life?”

“No, my name is Black Star. Actually, I...”

Before he finished introducing himself, he got interrupted by Hila.

“I’m all of your boss, and Black Star is my boss,” Hila said calmly. “You guys can call him big boss. You’re all now his men.”

“What’s with you?” Han Xiao was surprised.

Hila turned to him. Her tone became gentler as she said, “My powers are yours. These Hero Spirits are for you to command too.”

“I’m quite touched by you saying that, but...” Han Xiao pointed at the seven Hero Spirit Kings, who looked unhappy. He sighed and said, “You didn’t have to be so direct. At least think about how they feel...”

They’re the Primordial Ones who once stood at the top of the pyramid, yet you’re giving them to me like cargos. Don’t they want face?

A Hero Spirit King who had a bad temper was annoyed. “New Master of the Underworld, we’re indeed controlled by you, but you have to respect us too. Even your predecessor did not dare speak to us like this... I’ll let this time go, but don’t do it again.

“However, we’ll never listen to anyone else. With us, you’re among the strongest people in the universe. You don’t have to work for anyone anymore. If you want, we can get this guy called Black Star right away and give him to you to do whatever!”

Han Xiao was unhappy.

This little b*tch, trying to mess with my relationship with Hila as soon as he came out. If not because you don’t have a physical body, I’d make sure you live the rest of your life eating from a tube.

Hila frowned and said with a deep voice, “Shut up. You can beat it if you’re not happy, or I can send you back to sleeping forever.”

The expressions on the seven Hero Spirit Kings’ faces froze. They exchanged looks and were shocked.

Even the previous two sisters treated them with respect and would not offend them because they were the ones controlling their bodies during battles. The two sisters could only revive them temporarily but not control them in combat, so they could totally choose not to fight for them.

However, this new master was completely different. It was like she did not care about their strength at all. She supported her boss even though it meant she would offend them...

You’re a Beyond Grade A!

The seven of them looked back and forth between the two of them. Suddenly, they thought of something, and their expressions became enigmatic.

Hehe, we've seen a lot of things and are very experienced. In this situation, either you owe him many favors, or the two of you... hehehe. These are the only possibilities for why you're so loyal.

This time, Onicelu eased the tension and said, "You guys have slept for too long. Many generations have passed. Black Star is one of the strongest people in the universe. You guys might not be able to defeat him even if all of you fight him at the same time... Plus, the Underworld now only has the Lord of Death. The Lord of Life is still growing. Therefore, you guys can't have physical bodies and can't fight."

Hearing this, the seven of them immediately threw away the thought of being tough and laughed.

"Hahaha... we were just joking with you, man."

"That's right. Don't be so serious."

"I can tell brother Black Star is talented and has a bright future just by looking at him. It's our honor to work for him."

"Exactly, if not because we can't revive for now, we would showcase what we've got right here!"

Han Xiao narrowed his eyes, and his lips twitched.

That's it?

What bullsh*t Hero Spirit Kings? You sounded so noble and all, but you're just a group of people who gave up all your dignity to not continue sleeping! I shouldn't have had any hopes!

Although he detested the personalities of these Hero Spirit Kings, he had to admit that the Underworld was extremely powerful. This was the biggest inheritance the two sisters had left, and the life and death Esper Abilities were the keys.

However, for now, since Aurora had yet to become a Beyond Grade A. The Underworld could not be put to use yet. Furthermore, reviving them required energy and had a time limit.

Compared to the Sanctums, the biggest specialty of the Underworld was that it was not only limited to the Beyond Grade As. Plus, it would not reduce their strength much.

However, the disadvantage was also very clear. Those who took this path could only work under the master of the Underworld forever and no longer had freedom.

While the few of them chatted, the countless Hero Spirits on the ground started to regain focus too. They started to modify the Underworld using the core energy.

On the desolate black earth, buildings rose from the ground one after another. The Underworld quickly became prosperous.

At this time, a notification popped up on Han Xiao's interface.

[Inheritors of The Underworld] Completed!

You have received 50,000,000 EXP and +20 Onicelu Favorability.

You have received [Character Summon Card – ‘Underworld’ Onicelu].

Character Summon Card – “Underworld” Onicelu: [Thousand Soul Stream] – Become immune to all mind attacks. At the same time, absorb any mind attacks to recover energy and health. Uses: 0/1.

You have completed the bonus mission requirements.

+40 Onicelu Favorability.

You have received ability [Mark of The Underworld]!

Chapter 1236 A Path Never Thought of Before

This mission is finally complete. It wasn’t even difficult, just took too long. Han Xiao looked down at the back of his palm. A mark that was the same as the one on Hila’s hand was slowly appearing.

He looked up and saw Onicelu smiling at him.

“This is the Mark of the Underworld. You can use some of the Underworld’s power with it. Without your help, the Underworld would never have recovered to its peak. I don’t have anything I can repay you with but this.”

“I know. I’ll make good use of your body... ahem, the Underworld.”

Han Xiao coughed.

The Underworld was Onicelu’s body, so was this her saying, “I’ll repay you with my body”?

No, no, I’m a pure person...

Suppressing these weird thoughts, Han Xiao sensed the Mark of the Underworld. Black streams of air flowed out from the mark and circled around his hand.

This was the second secondary dimension that had a connection with him. Comparatively, the link with the Void Dimension had a higher level, as he could only use part of the Underworld’s power with this mark. Nonetheless, it gave him some bonuses.

At the same time, with this mark, he could choose to have the Mark of the Underworld absorb the souls of the enemies he killed and turn them into Hero Spirits.

When Aurora stepped into the territory of the Beyond Grade A and the Underworld regained the ability to revive souls, he should be able to summon Hero Spirits using the Mark of the Underworld. However, it would still consume Hila and Aurora’s energy.

This means that the more Hero Spirits the Underworld has, the more I’ll benefit from it, so I’m not working for free.

Han Xiao mumbled in his mind and looked at the other reward, Onicelu’s Character Summon Card.

The effects of [Thousand Soul Stream] were outrageous; being able to be immune to all mind attacks and even absorb them was completely overpowered.

Although he could only use it once, it was undoubtedly a trump card.

While he was looking through the mission rewards, the Underworld was undergoing a big change. Hila was speaking to the seven Hero Spirit Kings.

After the seven of them accepted their position, coming to agreements became much easier.

“From today onward, you’re all members of the Black Star Army, understood?” Hila said.

“No problem. His Excellency Black Star’s words are absolute!” the seven of them promised. The change in their attitude was very smooth.

“Are they always like this?” Han Xiao was curious.

Onicelu whispered, “The former masters did not have any plans to expand the Underworld. Among the seven of them, two of them challenged the two sisters, got killed, enslaved, and tortured for a very long time. Their edges were rounded long ago. Three of them fled here, and two begged the two sisters to take them in... So, you can imagine what kind of people they are.”

“Damn...” Han Xiao’s mouth twitched.

From the actions of the two sisters, they were carefree and never thought of being responsible. The Underworld only had so many souls because these souls wanted to obtain eternal life. They did not care if the two sisters were reliable or not and begged to join, giving up their freedom. Clearly, they did not have much dignity left.

This explained how creating platforms was better than selling products.

The nature of all fortune was planting and harvesting leeks.

Although the seven Hero Spirit Kings joined for different reasons, after so many years, they could no longer let go of their eternal life. They did not dare offend the master of the Underworld. Plus, they were looking forward to the Lord of Life reviving them so that they could tour the outside world.

Currently, the strongest among the Hero Spirit Kings was a Primordial One called Rega. According to data, his Energy Rank was around 65,000 Ona, not a peak Beyond Grade A but above average. With an undead body, his actual strength would increase quite a bit.

Han Xiao thought for a moment, stepped forward, and asked, “Do you guys know anything about the Sanctums?”

In the past, he originally wanted to ask about the Sanctums from the Hero Spirits in the Underworld. However, he had already established a partnership with the Holy Accord and had been searching for the ‘keys’ of the Third Sanctum, so he no longer needed the Hero Spirits’ help.

Plus, these Hero Spirits definitely did not know as much about the Sanctums as the Holy Accord, so Han Xiao was just asking to try his luck.

“Sanctums? I didn’t expect you... to know about this, big boss.”

The seven Hero Spirit Kings all looked over with a slightly complex look on their faces, as if they were reminded of something in the past.

“Before we entered the Underworld, there was a rumor among some of the Beyond Grade As. It was said that some people could occasionally sense a kind of special existence outside the spacetime of the universe. Some called it a Sanctum. However, most people never experienced such things, so there was no way to verify if it was true. It was always seen as a fake rumor,” a Hero Spirit King said.

“Some said the Sanctum is the staircase to the next level; some said that all the technology and knowledge of the universe is hidden in the Sanctum; some even said the Sanctum can bring people back to life. No one knows what’s real and what’s not,” another Hero Spirit King said.

Rega sighed, shook his head, and said, “We don’t know much really. However, during the exploration era, I remember that there was a group of Beyond Grade As who founded an organization and apparently wanted to use the Sanctum to revive in the future. We didn’t think that’d work, so we didn’t join them. They should have failed by now.”

Han Xiao raised his brow. “What’s the name of that organization?”

“The Holy Accord, I think.”

“...”

Han Xiao’s mouth twitched. He did not know what expression to show.

I knew it. They did not fail at all. Their plan was a huge success!

Of course, most of the merit goes to Oathkeeper. God knows why these revived Primordial Ones were so lucky to find such a reliable partner.

I’d better not tell this to these seven Hero Spirit Kings... They’ll probably never be able to be revived by the Sanctum after entering the Underworld. If they find out about this, they probably die of regret.

It’s better to let them think the Holy Accord organization has failed. Keeping this cruel truth from them will keep these leeks healthy...

No matter what, these Hero Spirits also achieved eternal life in another way. Although they took different paths, they reached the other side all the same.

All kinds of thoughts flashed through his mind. Han Xiao suppressed these thoughts and listened to Hila and the seven Hero Spirit Kings communicate.

The few of them chatted for a while. The seven Hero Spirit Kings bade farewell and left to manage the Hero Spirits.

Seeing that the seven of them had left, Hila turned and asked, “What do you think of them?”

Han Xiao smiled and said, “Although they don’t have the best personalities, their strength is real. The Underworld is an extremely powerful force. Although it can’t be used now, Aurora will eventually become a Beyond Grade A with how quickly she’s becoming stronger. By then, there won’t be many people in the universe who can be a threat to you two... Speaking of which, the Underworld is like an exclusive Universal Treasure for the two of you. Tsk, I’m quite jealous.”

In Han Xiao's previous life, Hila had no chance to accept this inheritance, so it was wasted. This time, however, as long as no accidents occurred to the two of them, they would be more than strong enough to be in the top tier in the explored universe.

As soon as Aurora became a Beyond Grade A, these two sisters would become tremendously stronger.

"What about compared to you then? Will I be able to defeat you?" Hila's eyes were glowing.

"What, you want to overtake me?" Han Xiao joked. "Don't dream of it. I'll still crush you."

"Humph, I don't believe it." Hila grinned. "You never know till you try."

She secretly decided not to do anything else after she returned other than push Aurora to train harder so that the Underworld could be used sooner.

After the official matters were over, Hila sensed the strong and firm presence of Han Xiao and felt an itch.

"You have nothing to do now, so you want to do it with me?"

"The Underworld has just recovered. You still have many things to do. It's best for you to make a list for the Hero Spirits. Leave the sparring for next time." Han Xiao waved.

"Alright." Hila had no choice but to endure the itch.

Han Xiao said a few more things, put on the King suit, and left the Underworld.

Returning to the office in Black Star Palace, Han Xiao changed into casual clothes, summoned Phillip, and added the Underworld's data into the confidential plan documents.

While recording, he started to analyze the situation. Although this was good news, he still felt a little worried.

"With this, I have another powerful secret force in my hands. In the future, the two sisters' position in the universe will most certainly rocket. They'll acquire high positions in the Beyond Grade A Association for sure.

"When the Holy Accord comes out, the entire universe will find out the two ways of reviving—the Sanctum and the Underworld. The Beyond Grade As will have a choice between the two. However, for now, only Oathkeeper and I know that the Sanctums can revive them an infinite number of times; he others all think it's only once. So, there's a possibility some might join the Underworld because of this misinformation. As for the Supers below Beyond Grade A, they'll only have one choice, the Underworld.

"These two reviving methods are both connected to me, so I'll certainly become the focus of the entire universe and the three Universal Civilizations. The dynasty's power is in the hands of the hawk faction now. The new president of the federation seems to be a muscular man too... Tsk, things are not looking great. The importance of the Sanctum and the Underworld is far above the Evolution Cube. The advanced civilizations will not let them go easily. I might become the starting point of a storm.

"When one grows to a certain stage, he's not allowed to stop, or he'll walk backward. The advanced civilizations will never stop targeting the Beyond Grade As..."

Han Xiao frowned and thought about the future.

Due to the extremely complicated and intricate profit relationships, way too many things had no solutions. Suddenly, a brief but daring idea appeared in his mind.

If he could make the Beyond Grade A Association and all the Beyond Grade As fuse together to form a new organization, completely splitting the ordinary people and Supers...

This might be a path he had never thought of before, a revolution that would turn the world upside down. Many people would die from it.

At his current position, he already had the ability to guide the direction of the universe. Many things that looked impossible were no longer unimaginable.

However, once he made the decision, quadrillions of lives would be affected. He only had a brief thought and did not plan to act on it.

The shadow of the World Tree still shrouded the explored universe. This was not the time to make this kind of plan.

"I shall decide after dealing with the exterior enemy. Sigh, I really don't wish to take this step..."

Han Xiao exhaled, calmed the storm in his mind, and suppressed these thoughts at the bottom of his heart.

Right at this moment, his communicator rang.

Beep beep beep!

He took it out. It was surprisingly a call from Sylvia.

"Army Commander, the Crimson Dynasty has sent an official letter. They will be sending emissaries to inspect the progress of the cultural education of the Kunde Race. If standards are met, they can consider opening up parts of the sealed areas and allow some of them into the galactic society."

"Oh? It has only been less than thirty years. This is quite a lot earlier than I expected."

Han Xiao's eyes lit up.

He still remembered the Kunde Race's mission. Modo was already devastated, so only the cultural education part had yet to be completed.

Once this mission was done, he would finally acquire the abilities he had been working for the whole time.

Chapter 1237 Sorokin's Big Plan

Usually, the cultural modification movement targeted at a large civilization would last for two to five generations. However, it had been less than thirty years since the Kunde Race started accepting the cultural transformation. It was still quite early to talk about letting them out. The dynasty probably had a certain reason to do that in advance.

Han Xiao had a rough guess.

Although the Kunde Race lost, the billions of their remaining population were quite a considerable amount of manpower. Now that they were settled in the Black Star Army's territory, they basically belonged to the army. Plus, while the cultural transformation was carried out, the Black Star Army was also promoting the benefits of the army, trying to make the Kunde Race loyal and yearn to join the army.

The dynasty probably did this to stop the Black Star Army's advertising in the Kunde Race as soon as possible so that the Kunde Race would not completely become the army's talent reserve. At the same time, they likely wanted to make the Kunde Race members who were not completely transformed cause some trouble for the army.

"Tsk, feeble trick..."

Han Xiao curled his lips.

He had only met Marbruce not long ago, and the response had already come so quickly. This was certainly backed up by the dynasty's upper echelons. The dynasty's attitude change toward him could clearly be seen from this.

Han Xiao did not mind it really. It was good news for him. He pondered for a few seconds and said, "Reply to dynasty. We welcome the inspection. Get someone to arrange a time with the dynasty. We'll form an inspection team on our side and have them accompany the dynasty's emissaries to carry out the inspection."

"Understood." Sylvia nodded. "One more thing, the Limitless Financial Group owes the Germinal Financial Group three months of payments. I told the finances department to talk to them, but they are not giving a reply. Would you like to ask them personally?"

"The Limitless Financial Group owes me money? Are they having problems with their capital flow?"

"Iapetus already had someone investigate. The Limitless Financial Group's businesses are all stable. They've even achieved new records in some fields. Their capital flow is very healthy, but they're just not paying us."

"How much exactly?"

"There is a total of thirty-four projects. The total amount owed is 48.2 billion Enas. You..."

Before Sylvia finished, Han Xiao's eyes widened, and he stopped her.

"Yoho, this b*stard dares to not pay up. I'll speak with him personally."

Then, Han Xiao found Sorokin's private number and called on the spot.

It rang for a while before being picked up. Sorokin's projection appeared on the screen. His enthusiastic-on-the-surface voice sounded.

"Your Excellency Black Star, what a rare treat. I was just thinking why I am in such a good mood today. It turns out I've got an honorable guest. Can I do anything for you?"

"Nothing much, I just heard you owe me quite a lot of money, so I'm here to hurry you to pay up."

Han Xiao raised his brows.

Sorokin instantly looked troubled. He then said with a very sincere and helpless tone, "Sigh, the consortium is not doing well. Our capital flow is tight right now. You know, for people who have large businesses like us, we have to spend billions every day. I really don't have the money now."

"Stop lying. You think my finances department is a joke? The report on our side says you're doing very well. You even expanded quite a lot of businesses, and you're still telling me you have no money?"

"It's exactly because we're expanding our businesses. We're spending more money to open up new channels, and it's costing more money than I expected, so I really don't have the money."

"Bullsh*t. Don't blame me for not reminding you. If you don't pay up in the agreed period, you'll have to pay for liquidated damages. Don't regret it then... By the way, I heard some time ago that you were trying to poach Iapetus's team with a high salary. Is that true?"

"Hehe, I'm a businessman. These are all normal business operations. Don't take it to heart."

The two of them went back and forth a few more rounds, and Sorokin was still not saying he would pay up.

Seeing Sorokin's unusual responses, Han Xiao had some guesses in his mind. He suddenly said meaningfully, "Looks like this is not a business issue. It seems we're having some problems in terms of our positions."

Hearing this, Sorokin smiled faintly and said, "I thought we'd work well together, but I seem to be wrong..."

Both used very ambiguous words because they did not want to leave any evidence, but they both understood what the other meant.

Ever since Han Xiao reported Sorokin's oddness to the dynasty using the opportunity when Gaud went missing, Sorokin had been investigated and targeted by the dynasty both on the surface and secretly. In the past two years, he had needed to be careful, scared, and worried all the time. It was very irritating.

At the start, Sorokin thought the dynasty was just investigating all suspicious personnel, so he put up with it. However, the dynasty's recent actions had made him feel more and more like something was not right. Through his connections, he asked around and shockingly discovered that the dynasty's motive for investigating him was actually because they doubted his identity.

Currently, Black Star was the only person in the entire universe who knew about his secret. Initially, the Limitless Financial Group partnered with Black Star to shut him up. However, Black Star having exposed his secret to the dynasty was the only possible reason the dynasty was targeting him now. Sorokin was furious.

Since Sorokin was already betrayed, he did not want the Black Star Army to continue draining blood from the Limitless Financial Group.

"If there's nothing else, I'll be off. Hehe, I still have other things to attend to."

Sorokin gave a fake smile and hung up.

The screen turned black. Han Xiao put the communicator away with a snicker.

He did this on purpose to force Sorokin to expose his identity. He was curious about how Sorokin would deal with it.

“You thought I was just messing with you, but I’m actually hoping you’ll lose your cool. If you fight me, that’d be for the best. Beating you up would be justifiable.”

Han Xiao’s eyes flickered as he chuckled.

Sorokin’s identity was similar to Gaud’s. It was a form of protection for them. However, Han Xiao dared to touch Gaud because his level was much higher, and he could see all of Gaud’s abilities, so he had the confidence to take him down. Sorokin was different; his level was higher than Han Xiao’s even now. Han Xiao still saw a ton of question marks on the interface and did not know what Sorokin was hiding. Han Xiao was worried about messing up.

Most importantly, getting rid of Gaud was because Gaud was involved in a matter that was way too big to be ignored. If he did not do it, everyone would be done for. As for Sorokin, his importance was not as high, so Han Xiao did not want to break the association’s rules because of personal beef. This was the bit of virtue he had.

Of course, this was only limited to not attacking him first. If Sorokin came at him, Han Xiao would not mind playing ‘Welcome to the Black Underworld’ for him.

...

As soon as the call was hung up, Sorokin’s expression turned gloomy.

He was a little regretful. He felt he should not have hesitated when his identity was pointed out by Black Star back then; he should have eliminated this threat as soon as possible.

Although gathering all Soul Seeds would cause this body to be destroyed, and he would lose this identity, letting Black Star be would still risk losing this identity.

Since he would definitely lose a ton of things no matter what, he might as well drag Black Star down.

Although he was furious, he was still hesitant. He was worried that he might be blowing the matter out of proportion, but he was also worried about if he could actually defeat Black Star.

“No matter what, I have to make backup plans. I need to find a way to inherit part of the Limitless Financial Group’s enormous funds. If the cash flow is too large, it’ll attract attention even if I use the black-market channels. It’s best to turn the funds into actual items...”

Sorokin clenched his teeth.

Whether he was going to do it or not, preparing a way to back off was definitely not wrong.

“Black Star’s body is indestructible. His soul is his only weakness, but even that is speaking relatively. He has peak Beyond Grade A mind resistance at the very least. Killing him is extremely difficult. He has the King, so exiling him into the unexplored universe will also not work. Based on my ability and the

Universal Treasures I've secretly collected, only one plan has a comparatively high success rate, heavily damaging or sealing his soul so that he has to go into a long-term hibernation state.

"To do that, I'd best retrieve the Soul Flame. Only then will the success rate be higher. I wonder if the Soul Flame has a master now. If it has, I can only kill him and retrieve it..."

...

A few days later, the dynasty and the Black Star Army agreed on a date for the inspection. They sent emissaries and headed to the Flickering World from the Central Galaxy.

The dynasty's inspection team had to spend quite some time on the way, so Han Xiao told the troops stationed on the hundreds of residential planets of the Kunde Race to spread the message that the inspection team would arrive soon. He told them that they could be freed if they performed well.

Originally, inspections were usually carried out secretly. Once the inspection target knew about it in advance, in order to be freed earlier, they might 'cheat'. This had happened before.

This time, however, the dynasty did not react at all, as letting the Kunde Race out earlier was also their secret goal. Although what Han Xiao had done went against the rules, it matched what the dynasty wanted to achieve, so they turned a blind eye. Han Xiao, too, wanted to free the Kunde Race as soon as possible so that he could acquire the mission reward.

Both sides were trying to achieve their goal. The difference was that Han Xiao knew what the dynasty was thinking, but the dynasty did not know what his goal was.

The news that the inspection team would soon arrive spread out rapidly on every Kunde Race residential planet. The Kunde Race, who had spent their days meaninglessly, suddenly saw hope.

...

Kunde Race Residential Planet No.77, South of Sigaia City, Apartment F0044's rooftop...

Barton stood tall and looked over the entire city. Tall, rectangular apartments were neatly placed with the same height, shape, and distance between each other, like metal coffins. The city gave off a strong industrial vibe. The sky was dark, and the dawn hid behind the clouds, painting the city a depressed yellow.

Barton could not remember how many times he had seen this boring, forever the same, and depressed scenery. In his eyes, this was no city; it was more of a large prison.

Piercing cold wind swept past, bringing the voice behind.

"Brother Barton, the news said this is the first time the Crimson Dynasty inspection team has visited. Can we really leave here?"

Hearing this, Barton turned around. Hundreds of people stood on the rooftop, all young Kunde Race members.

He stayed silent for a while before nodding slowly.

"Definitely!"

They were all children of the residents in this apartment, born in the 'Age of the Big Lockdown'. Barton was the oldest. He was the acknowledged leader of all the youngsters there.

During the cultural transformation, everything in their lives was arranged. Their residence was arranged, and their neighbors were arranged. Leaving the house had to be reported to the local artificial intelligence management system, and they could only leave the area after it was approved. Everything they did was monitored.

The Kunde Race was not allowed to develop their technology. The only thing they could pass around was part of the Super knowledge, which came from the Black Star Army. The Black Star Army saw the Kunde Race as its talent reserve, so it did not want them to all become useless shut-ins.

The cultural transformation involved many aspects, including their daily necessities, the news they saw, the education they were given, and so on. After more than two decades, this had already become the norm of the Kunde Race's lives. They were receiving this information every day, and their mindsets changed subconsciously.

However, for the first batch of newborns during the Age of the Big Lockdown, the glory of the Kunde Race in the past only existed in words. They could not imagine it. While being educated in public schools, they were also influenced by the lingering hatred of the previous generations at the same time.

Some of the seniors who experienced the Kunde Race's defeat still had hatred buried deep in their bones, warning the younger generations to never forget about it. Some chose not to speak of it, to let the newer generations leave the past behind. Only then would their race be freed one day and have a new future.

Living on a planet in lockdown, a society that was depressed, and between divided beliefs, this generation was lost. No one knew where the path ahead led.

Now, the arrival of the dynasty's inspection team finally made them see something that was more important than anything else—hope.

Barton looked past the eyes filled with hope and said with a deep voice, "We might only have this one chance in our life... Anyone who causes problems will be a sinner to the entire race."

A young man sighed and said, "Brother Barton, maybe we won't cause any problems, but as you know, there are too many others who still are blinded by hatred just in this apartment... This is probably not what the inspection team wants to see."

Barton stayed silent for a while. He then slowly raised the pliers in his hands. Tiny electric sparks danced on his skin, and he softly said, "Someone will have to take the lead. We still have time to prepare. Go, talk to everyone in the apartment who is still filled with hatred. For the entire race, I believe they'll make the right choice.

"If there's anyone who is really blinded and twisted by hatred, not willing to make any change, a burden to everyone..."

Barton paused. Colors representing pain appeared on his carapace.

"Kill them, even if they're our family."

Chapter 1238 Inspection and Conclusion

After a long journey through Star Fields, the dynasty's inspection team finally arrived at Black Star Palace and met with Han Xiao in the guest room. "Greetings, Your Excellency Black Star. We're the emissaries for this Kunde Race inspection." A group of dynasty officers walked into the room with synchronized footsteps. The group leader reached out his hand, his tone respectful.

Han Xiao shook his hand and invited them to sit. They briefly introduced themselves and took out the documents for the main topic.

"Currently, there are 113 residential planets for the Kunde Race, with a population of trillions. The dynasty colonial review department gave us the allocation for twenty-five planets to open up for this time. This is the maximum allocation, not a fixed one. If no planet reaches the standard, we can also choose not to open up any planets."

"At most, a quarter of the population can be freed, got it." Han Xiao nodded.

Every planet of the Kunde Race was locked down separately and had no communication with each other. Therefore, the progress of the cultural transformation for each planet was different. Choosing the planets with higher progress was the job of the inspection team.

Although the dynasty had other goals and the inspection team was most probably just a standard procedure, a standard was still required. If the results were really too far below the standard, they would choose not to free them.

The few of them spoke for a while. Han Xiao called the army's patrol team over and told the two sides to discuss the details while he left the room.

Of course, he only had to show his face and express his attitude. He did not have to take care of the details.

Han Xiao returned to his office. Not long after, he received a message from Phillip saying that the dynasty's inspection team and the army's patrol team had decided on the details, already boarded the spaceships, and left Black Star Palace to get to work.

"Check the current status of the various Kunde Race planets." Han Xiao told Phillip to bring up the related information.

He did not have the time to keep an eye on the transformation progress of the Kunde Race all the time. Now that the inspection team had arrived, only then did he decide to carefully go through the current status of the various Kunde Race planets. He could also see the effects of him notifying them in advance so that he could be prepared.

On the hovering virtual screen, the records of the Kunde Race planets flashed past one after another, and Phillip spoke on the side.

"Master, hum... according to the statistics, after the news of the inspection team arriving was announced, the overall state of the Kunde Race planets changed. The trend of anti-dynasty opinions decreased by forty-six percent on average, and the average percentage of haters decreased from thirty-

two percent to seven percent. However, the security of some planets decreased. Murders occurred frequently. Some haters were killed by their own..."

"Killing their own race... looks like the arrival of the inspection team gave them hope. The more than twenty-year-long lockdown led them to fully understand that opening up the lockdown is the only way out for the race. Some of them treasure this chance, so they've started to eliminate the stubborn ones."

"That's right, hum..."

"That's quite sensible and all, but... this might achieve the opposite effect."

Han Xiao scratched his chin.

By sacrificing the minority and eliminating the stubborn ones to show obedience, at a glance, this was for the sake of the entire race, quite noble even.

However, the dynasty looked at things from a different perspective—too much yearning for freedom represented a strong motive. Killing one of their own meant a new chain of hate was formed. According to the normal inspection standards, this was a sign of the transformation not being thorough enough, which meant that the lockdown would have to continue.

However, since the dynasty had decided to carry out the inspection so many years in advance, they clearly knew that this would happen. Han Xiao estimated that the standard would probably be very low, so this might achieve positive effects.

...

For the next few months, the dynasty inspection team visited one Kunde Race planet after another, filling up their inspection records.

...

The double-sided mirror split Sigaia City Prison's interrogation room in two. On one side was the interrogation room where the criminal was in, and on the other was the surveillance room.

At this time, the dynasty inspection team stood in the surveillance room. The team leader held a set of documents in his hands, glancing from time to time at the Kunde Race member inside the interrogation room who was cuffed up everywhere. He slowly read the content of the documents.

"Barton, age 22, Mechanic Super, graduate of Sigaia City First Super Academy with excellent results. Talented, achieved Grade C last year, reason of imprisonment... murder and organizing murder. A total of 126 people died by his order. Also, he personally killed seven more, including his family.

"The victims were all haters according to the records. He claimed that this was to eliminate the stubborn members... When the marshals found him, he stopped his accomplices who tried to fight back. He chose not to resist and took responsibility for all the crimes."

"Tsk tsk, how unflinching." The Black Star Army patrol team leader tutted.

The dynasty inspection officer finished reading the report, cleared his throat, and opened up the comms. "Barton, you ordered others to murder, committing horrible sins. Is your goal to deal with the dynasty's inspection?"

Barton's eyes were closed, and he did not reply.

Seeing this, the dynasty inspection officer continued. "I'll take it as that's what you think. You couldn't possibly not have known that, after doing what you did, the marshals who monitor everything would definitely find you. In order to eliminate those so-called stubborn people, you were willing to be imprisoned and even held responsible for some of your accomplices, basically giving up your life. Is it worth it?"

Barton shook his head calmly and said, "Here or outside, both are prisons. What's the difference? On this planet, no one's life is valuable. If I can give mine for some hope, of course it's worth it."

"You think you're very noble, right?" the inspection team leader said with a poker face. "I'm the dynasty's inspector. Frankly, I do not like your extreme methods at all. Your motive is too strong. You think you can convince the dynasty by doing this? Youngster, don't you think you've underestimated us?"

Barton's carapace color shifted slightly and then returned to the color of calmness. "This might be the only inspection in my life. I only did what I thought was right. No matter the results of the inspection, I've reduced the source of hate. The number of haters born in the future will also be reduced because of it. Even if we fail the inspection now, the chance of passing in the future will increase. At least what I did was meaningful."

The dynasty inspection team leader was not touched at all. He had witnessed too many similar examples, so he was already used to it.

He thought for a moment, changed the topic, and asked, "If your planet is freed, what do you think your people should do?"

"Join the Black Star Army." This time, Barton answered without hesitation.

The dynasty inspection team leader narrowed his eyes and asked, "And why is that?"

"Even freed, the Kunde Race still lives in the Black Star Army's territory. In the short term, the Kunde Race still needs the Black Star Army's protection. Our civilization is still too weak. If one of us can become an officer of the Black Star Army, the Kunde Race will also receive help. Have the Supers work for Black Star and aid the entire race, this is the best path for now," Barton said with a deep voice.

Hearing this, the dynasty inspection team could not help but glance at the Black Star Army patrol team. He snorted and said, "Looks like the promotion you guys did was very effective."

"Thank you. The army commander taught us well. Plus, he's too charming." The army patrol team leader smiled.

The dynasty inspection team leader looked down and pondered for a while before writing some remarks on the inspection form and ticking off a few things.

...

When the inspection team visited all the Kunde Race planets, Han Xiao finally received the results.

“A total of seventeen planets reached the standard. The standard is even lower than I expected.”

Han Xiao curled his lips. He looked at the list of the planets, and Planet No. 77 was on it.

Then, he summoned Phillip and said, “Hmm, there’s no problem. Make the arrangements according to this list. Have the troops stationed at these seventeen planets guide the residents to familiarize with galactic society. At the same time, make a recruit announcement. Although they’re free, they don’t have anywhere to go, so the majority of them will choose to join me…”

“Also, broadcast the process of freeing these seventeen planets to the other planets. Encourage them to accept the transformation properly and regain freedom sooner.”

Han Xiao gave the order. He then looked at the details of the inspection and discovered the conversation between the dynasty inspection team leader and Barton.

“Oh, this kid is interesting.”

Han Xiao raised his brow. He brought up Barton’s information and said casually, “Phillip, tell the prison department of Planet No.77 to let this kid out and have him join the army.”

He felt that Barton was a man with dreams and not lazy. Also, Barton seemed to have potential. After all, the Kunde Race never had the Super system in the past. Barton was in the first batch to learn it, and he still became a Grade C at such a young age. His potential should be quite high.

However, at Han Xiao’s current position, he did not plan to meet him personally. He was only picking out a high-quality leek out of habit. If Barton could not achieve things in the Black Star Army, Han Xiao would not specifically remember him.

A few days later, the results of the inspection got approved by the dynasty. The Black Star Army acted right away to open up these seventeen planets. Billions of Kunde Race members were freed.

On this day, the screams of joy of countless people shot into the sky and echoed through planets. After more than twenty years, they were finally free. Be it seniors or youngsters, they were all tearing up.

They still had problems with the dynasty, but most of them had a strong sense of appreciation toward the Black Star Army. Not only were they thankful for the Black Star Army’s advanced notification but also for Black Star avenging the Kunde Race by making Modo suffer. There was also the protection the Black Star Army had provided them for decades.

Among the Kunde Race, the reputation of the army was at the peak. The relationship was firmly at Reverence.

At Sigaia City Prison, Barton walked out the prison door. The blinding sunlight almost made him unable to open his eyes. The streets were filled with an overjoyed crowd, and loud cheering voices came from all directions.

The lifeless city in his impression seemed to have suddenly come alive. Barton stood still, stunned.

“You’ve been let out. Now go.”

The warden spoke from behind. He had received the message from Black Star, so he did not dare ignore it and personally sent Barton out of the prison.

“Isn’t my crime very horrible? Why have you let me go?” Barton turned around. He was both shocked and confused.

You think I wanted to? While thinking that in his mind, the warden gave a stiff smile and said, “Don’t thank me. The army commander said to let you go by name. He must believe in your capabilities. Work hard, and don’t waste the army commander’s kindness.”

Barton’s entire body shivered. The color of disbelief appeared on his body.

The news was promoting how strong Black Star was every day. To say he did not admire someone that strong would be a lie; Barton simply kept this admiration buried in his heart.

He originally wanted to sacrifice himself, so he never expected to be released. Plus, he was released by Black Star personally.

Doesn’t this mean Black Star knows who I am?

Suddenly, Barton felt a stream of heat flowing in his body. He was feeling tipsy like he had too much to drink. His shell rapidly turned into the color of hot red excitement like he was cooked.

“Since Black Star... no, since the army commander has so high hopes for me, I must live up to it!”

At this moment, Barton made a decision.

He would become the army’s officer and prove that Black Star was not wrong about him!

He hoped that he could one day stand before Black Star and express his appreciation to him face to face.

...

“Your Excellency Black Star, our inspection is complete. We shall get going.”

Inside the army commander’s office in Black Star Palace, the dynasty inspection team bade farewell respectfully and expressed their intention of leaving.

Han Xiao nodded with a smile and said, “Send my regards to your superiors when you get back.”

They nodded and swarmed out, leaving Han Xiao alone in the room.

Han Xiao opened the interface and looked at the mission list. The first requirement, to provide protection when the Kunde Race was being culturally transformed, was finally shown as completed.

“Only the first batch of the planets are free, and more of them are still being culturally transformed. However, since some of the Kunde Race have entered galactic society, they’ll take care of their people who are still in lockdown in the future. I won’t be the only one providing protection.”

Han Xiao smirked. This was him completing his promise; it was enough.

“I’ve protected you guys for so long. Finally, I can get some rewards.”

Han Xiao took a deep breath and chose to conclude the mission on the interface.

Notifications popped up one after another on the interface.

Grade S mission [Kunde Race Leader's Last Wish] completed!

You have completed Mission Requirement I.

You have received 6 billion EXP, 10,000 Kunde Race Favorability, 2 Random Rewards, 4 Political Assets (Kunde Race).

Kunde Race will enter into the [Awakening Era], +10% chance of becoming a Super.

You have completed Mission Requirement II.

You have received 12 billion EXP, 15,000 Kunde Race Favorability, 1 Specific Blank Character Summon Card.

You have received the talent [The Enemy]!

You have received the talent [Proof of Leadership]!

You have received the ability [Kunde Rage]!

Chapter 1239

Sorokin's Senses

"Finally!" Han Xiao's eyes sparkled. He had been eyeing these three abilities for a very long time. Now, he had finally acquired them after almost a full version.

Both [The Enemy] and [Kunde Rage] consumed health. The former was a passive talent, giving him more damage with health lost during the battle, up to twenty-five percent. The latter was an ability, increasing his Psychological Resistance tremendously for forty seconds at most, as well as immunity to almost all negative psychological states.

Among these three, the strongest was [Proof of Leadership].

This was considered a 'Semi-Molding Talent' to players, meaning even the players could obtain it. The way it worked was that when the user was the leader of a faction, they would receive comprehensive bonuses. The bonuses increased with the size and level of the faction. The most incredible trait of this talent was that it had no upper limit.

No matter how strong the players' organizations were, they could not reach the Beyond Grade A organization level and would not be able to gain enough bonuses from this talent. However, Han Xiao was different.

The Black Star Army's position was unique and irreplaceable in the universe. After an entire mission, it was already much stronger than when he triggered this mission. He could benefit a ton from this talent.

The bonuses of [Proof of Leadership] were very comprehensive. It included but was not limited to basic attributes, health, stamina, energy, ability strength, class affinity, all kinds of resistances, attack damage, ability level, and so on.

Han Xiao looked at the talent and realized that it did not only include one faction he was in. Other than the bonuses brought by the Black Star Army, the talent showed that the Beyond Grade A Association provided some bonuses too. His vice president identity was also considered in [Proof of Leadership], only it was not complete. He would only gain the complete bonuses if he was the president.

All in all, [Proof of Leadership] gave him a huge boost. This single talent increased his Energy Rank by an outrageous 5,400 Ona!

With the increase of Energy Rank, the strength difference between every point increased too. His Energy Rank was more than 100,000; 5400 Ona was an enormous boost to his combat capability at this level.

Feeling the overflowing energy in his body, Han Xiao took a deep breath and was delighted.

“This talent really suits me very well. I’m a huge step closer to the higher territory.”

Han Xiao looked through the effects of [Proof of Leadership] several times with a huge grin on his face. He loved this talent.

Having finally achieved his dream of so many years, he was relieved.

The Kundes had to join the army of their own volition, and the dynasty freeing them in advance would decrease the number of Kundes willing to join the army, but it led to him acquiring the biggest benefit in advance.

As for the future developments of the Kunde Race, as long as nothing huge happened, Han Xiao did not plan to interfere frequently.

Anyway, the Kunde Race was now living in his territory. If they recovered to a normal civilization, they would even have to pay taxes to him instead, like a protection fee. If the Kunde Race wanted to expand in his territory, they would have to rent or purchase planets from the army.

Controlling one area was indeed an amazing way of making profit. By providing all kinds of services such as renting and selling land, he could harvest the labor of the Kunde Race as a whole and take a bite out of their produce. He had the right to decide the prices of the planets in his territory, so he dictated how quickly he wanted to harvest. He could choose to dry the pool for the fish in it, or he could choose to slowly fish over the long term. Of course, Han Xiao liked the latter more.

“Hmm, in this case, I can attract the Kunde Race Supers into the army using special benefits. For example, all Kunde Race members of the army with relatively high positions can purchase resources for the Kunde Race at a discount...”

The dynasty had definitely thought of this too and did not want to see it happen. Only, they could not easily tear away the agreement they had signed in the past.

Therefore, when the Kunde Race was freed to a certain stage, the dynasty would find a way to make the Kunde Race request to migrate. The fighting happening behind the curtains was complicated and troublesome. Han Xiao could already guess what methods the dynasty would use.

However, in his position, he did not have to attend to every little thing personally; people below him would deal with it. Furthermore, this would almost certainly not happen in the next few decades, so he did not have to worry yet.

...

A few days later, the Black Star Army announced a system to the Kunde Race, stating that in respect of the Kunde Race civilization, the army would not give them benefits for free out of pity but instead provide the Kunde Race tons of job opportunities.

The Black Star Army claimed that one reason for this was to guide the Kunde Race to blend into galactic society, and another was to give the Kunde Race a channel to acquire resources. Through working, all Kundes could earn contribution points that would be put under the entire race. The Kunde Race could then use this special currency to purchase all kinds of services to speed up the rebuilding of their civilization.

As soon as the system was announced, it received overwhelmingly positive feedback from the Kunde Race. Putting aside Han Xiao's reputation, although these trillions of Kundes gained freedom, they were also lost. Many of them did not know how to blend into the galactic society.

Now, the Black Star Army provided them with a clear direction, and the results of that were countless responses.

Han Xiao was already extremely experienced at harvesting leeks. This was the exact method he used to harvest the Planet Aquamarine players during Version 2.0 back then, turning his faction into the guiding faction. It was effective on the Kunde Race too.

Tons of quality Kunde Race laborers swarmed into the Black Star Army. The number of base-level Supers rocketed.

Currently, the Black Star Army was focusing on growing the subdivisions in other Star Fields, and the manpower from the Kunde Race came just at the right time.

The HR department arranged to have the Kundes travel far away from their home to different Star Fields to work in the subdivisions. They would work 'overseas' to accumulate contribution points for the race. This would prevent them from sticking only to other Kundes and not blending in with the galactic society well enough.

The Crimson Dynasty announced a similar policy too. However, the duration of the transformation was too short, so only an extremely few were willing to work for the dynasty, far fewer than the number of Kundes the army recruited.

However, more Kundes decided to stay among their race to rebuild the civilization and not work for other organizations, so the dynasty's plan worked to a certain extent.

While the Black Star Army was digesting the Kunde Race's laborers, Sorokin started to move.

...

"I'm finally done with the backup plans. I can act anytime..."

Inside the office at the Limitless Financial Group headquarters, Sorokin sensed the movements of his various manifestations and looked relieved.

In the past few months, he had returned to the Limitless Financial Group headquarters in the Sea of Star Spirits and prepared backup plans, placing secret warehouses in many Star Fields and some secondary dimensions that stored large amounts of resources.

Sorokin knew the strength of Virtual Mechanics, so he left no traces in the database. This was all done by his manifestations.

As for the movements of the funds, he disguised them as normal business transactions.

However, the consortium was his to begin with. Its business was growing better by the day and had no difficulties, so there was absolutely no need for the boss to take the money and run. This was like him stealing his own things, so not many people would realize the issue.

At the same time, using several methods, Sorokin left many hidden problems for the Limitless Financial Group's cash flow. If he was fine, he could easily solve them afterward.

If something happened to him, the credibility of the Limitless Financial Group would plummet. Once the partners came to tell the Limitless Financial Group to pay up, the Limitless Financial Group would be tremendously damaged. By then, the other large consortiums would definitely try to eat up the businesses of the Limitless Financial Group and dissect its corpse. This way, what was left to the shareholders of the group would be a huge mess. Even if they wanted to continue the Limitless Financial Group, they would have to pay a hefty price to fill up this hole.

This was one of Sorokin's backup plans—he would rather destroy his hard work over many years than give it to someone else, especially when Black Star was one of the shareholders.

"I can use those Universal Treasures I've collected anytime, but the most useful thing for this mission is still Soul Flame..."

Sorokin's eyes flickered.

He was once the master of Soul Flame; he knew the functions of this Esper Ability Entity extremely well. From his perspective, if he could regain this ability, the success rate of the plan would increase by another twenty percent.

Back when he gave up the identity of Soul Flame, he had no idea where Soul Flame went. In order to keep his identity hidden and not get discovered by anyone he knew, he used the specialty of his Esper Ability to change his soul frequency. Basically, he gave himself soul plastic surgery.

However, he did not completely cut off his senses to Soul Flame but split it up into Soul Seeds that had been sealed all this time. Once he opened the seal, he would be able to sense the rough location of Soul Flame.

All this time, Sorokin had disguised himself as a common Psychic Esper and had never shown all the special traits of his Esper Ability. Therefore, although he was also a soul-type Esper, his abilities looked quite different from 'Soul Emperor'.

To not attract any suspicion, he never dared retrieve Soul Flame. Anyway, he had a method to sense it. From the way he looked at it, no matter where Soul Flame went, he could totally retrieve it any time he wanted.

Sorokin narrowed his eyes, found that sealed Soul Seed in his Esper Ability senses, retrieved it ignoring the distance between him and the Soul Seed, and unsealed it.

The next moment, Sorokin's gaze changed subtly. It was a little bit colder.

Every Soul Seed was a fragment of his personality. The more he retrieved, the more whole his personality would become, and the more he would be like the real 'Soul Emperor' Rovell Sissock.

The moment the Soul Seed was unsealed, a reaction that was far away appeared in his senses, pointing him in a direction.

Sorokin turned toward that direction. He looked at the dark cosmic space through the floor-to-ceiling windows.

"Soul Flame is in that direction... the Ancient Star Desert."

...

In the Holy Accord organization, Oathkeeper, who was playing Wayne Cards with the others, suddenly felt something. He turned and looked outside the window. Confusion appeared in his eyes.

Why does it suddenly feel like I'm being watched?

Before he could think further, Beiger, who was opposite, slapped the table impatiently.

"Stop dozing off. Mechanic Emperor, do you want it or not?"

Oathkeeper regained focus and threw out a card.

"Black Star, bigger than you."

"Tsk, dog luck... pass, pass, go on."

Oathkeeper's focus returned to the game.

The Wayne Cards included almost all organizations and important people in the world, so it was an extremely efficient way to figure out the current structure of the universe and its history...

It's most certainly not because we like to play cards!

Chapter 1240 Sorokin's Bizarre Adventure 1

At a certain place in the desolate universe belt, an armed fleet was slowly advancing through the cosmic space. Sorokin stood in the command room of the main ship and looked into the galaxy. This armed fleet was a mercenary group he had secretly founded in the Ancient Star Desert. Other than a few upper echelons, no one knew that their boss was the Limitless Financial Group. For this mission, Sorokin secretly created a manifestation that looked exactly like him and left it in the consortium's headquarters. He then slipped out, led this mercenary group, and headed to the location of Soul Flame. This group did not know the exact goal of this trip; they only acted based on orders of the upper echelons. For safety reasons, Sorokin even wore a mask. Other than the leader beside him, no one else in the fleet knew that the renowned Sorokin was on their ship.

"The reaction is getting stronger, meaning I'm getting closer..."

Sorokin looked at the star map. Within a certain distance ahead, there was only one desolate planet. He was basically certain that Soul Flame was on this planet.

On the star map, this planet had no name, only a serial number. It was marked as a poor planet with no value for developing.

After the fleet advanced a while longer and was still quite some distances away from this planet, Sorokin stopped the fleet.

“All ships, stop advancing. Use astronomical observation instruments to observe the surface status of that planet.”

“...Observation complete. Boss, everything is normal on the planet surface. It’s desolate and has nothing worth paying attention to. The details still require field inspection.”

Sorokin nodded and ordered, “Hmm, send out a recon ship to land on the planet first. Everyone else, remain in stealth mode and standby here.”

He had a habit of being careful at all times. He was worried that Soul Flame might have a master, so he decided to test it first. Even if it was a desolate planet, he still had to repeatedly confirm there was no hidden danger.

The recon ship deviated from the fleet and quickly flew toward the planet. Sorokin secretly used his ability and possessed the captain of the ship.

A while later, the recon ship finally arrived on the planet. It activated all kinds of scanners and started to investigate the underground. However, after an entire hour, all results came back normal.

Sorokin immediately realized the problem and narrowed his eyes.

According to his senses, Soul Flame was right there, somewhere underground. There was no way it was not discovered unless someone had set up disguise devices underground, which would prove that someone was there.

“Even if the scanning can be avoided, the actual object can’t be hidden.”

Sorokin’s manifestation drew out a rough area on the planet’s underground model. He then ordered the crew to stop scanning and send robots to dig into the ground instead. He planned to dig a hole right toward the location of Soul Flame.

However, the moment the robots were dispatched from the ship, the recon ship suddenly became paralyzed. Its engine shut off, and it plummeted from the sky. The crew inside the cabin were bumping into everything around like they were inside a shaking tin can.

Sorokin suppressed his instincts and did not use any ability with his manifestation. When the recon ship was just about to crash onto the ground, a blue-purple magic gate suddenly appeared below it. The recon ship fell right in and disappeared.

At the same time, the mercenary group leader far away in the main ship hastily reported to Sorokin’s original body.

“Boss, we’ve just lost communication with the recon ship. It’s suddenly missing. Should we go take a look?”

“No need, move back for now.”

Sorokin’s eyes flickered.

It looked like there were indeed enemies near Soul Flame. Since he possessed the captain of the recon ship, he could now scout the enemies.

At this point of time, the vision and senses of the manifestation were being transmitted back to his mind.

After the recon ship fell into the magic gate, as if it had fallen onto a certain buffering platform, it did not crash, but the trembling of the cabin made the people inside fall down again.

The crew covered their bleeding heads. They hastily pressed on the operating table and said with panic, “Captain, all functions of the spaceship are frozen. We’ve lost contact with the others!”

Sorokin’s manifestation acted panicked and said, “Go put on the land exploration armor. Open the hatch manually, and take a look at where we are.”

As the order was given, the crew quickly changed and became land exploration armored warriors. Suppressing the nervousness in their hearts, they carefully pulled the hatch open.

Whoosh!

The sound of air pressure adjusting appeared as the hatch slipped open. After seeing what was outside, everyone froze.

This was a place that looked like an underground helipad. Outside was a group of mechanical suit warriors holding explosive energy firearms who surrounded the recon ship, aiming all their barrels at the hatch.

“What is this place?”

“Who are you?”

The crew of the ship were shocked.

The leader of the mechanical suit warriors outside coldly replied, “Disarm yourselves immediately, put your hands up, and walk out, or we’ll fire!”

This is an unknown organization? They should have been hiding in the underground of this planet.

Sorokin did not see any organization’s symbols on the mechanical suits of these people. He immediately acted nervous and cowardly. He yelled at the crew to throw away their weapons and led them out with his hands in the air.

Very soon, they were captured and imprisoned separately. Sorokin’s manifestation was alone in an interrogation room.

After quite a while, the room door was finally pushed open. A mechanical suit warrior who was clearly there to interrogate him walked in, still wearing the helmet. It sat opposite and said, "I ask, and you answer, or you die. Understood?"

Sorokin's manifestation acted scared and nodded.

"I just searched your logs and found you belong to a mercenary group. Tell me, why have you come here?"

"I-I don't know. I'm just following orders."

Sorokin's manifestation deliberately stuttered, but he was secretly relieved.

Through checking the logs and interrogating the crew, this unknown organization definitely knew that the rest of the mercenary group was there too. Luckily, out of caution, he had kept the rest of the fleet quite far away and ordered them to back away even further when the recon ship lost contact.

The interrogator asked many more questions. Sorokin's manifestation's answers had both truths and lies, keeping to the amount of information this captain should know while shivering.

He had been acting across multiple lives, so he was already a top tier expert and a competitive candidate at the Oscars, so he did not cause any suspicion.

After a while, the interrogator was done asking questions and was about to stand up and leave the room.

At this time, Sorokin's manifestation's eyes suddenly lit up. Through his eyes, Sorokin's manifestation dashed into the interrogator's body and tried to possess it.

He had to know more about this unknown organization, so possessing one of them was clearly the best choice.

Sorokin activated his ability in the blink of an eye with no signs at all. It was extremely well hidden. At such a close distance, this interrogator who was not even a Calamity Grade, of course, was defenseless. His body was instantly taken over.

Right after Sorokin took over the body, before he could feel glad, he shockingly discovered a bright flame in the mind of this body.

"Soul Flame's seal?"

The moment this interrogator's mind was occupied by an outsider's consciousness. As if it sensed something, this flame suddenly became volatile like it was about to turn into a sea of fire the next second and torch the mind of this body.

Sorokin's expression changed. In an instant, he adjusted his soul frequency, made a series of complex adjustments, and shrouded this flame with his soul energy.

The next moment, this flame slowly calmed down but still did not look fully stable, as if it could erupt any time.

Seeing this, Sorokin was relieved.

He knew all too well about the effects of Soul Flame. It could plant this type of surveillance seal on others to prevent them from leaking certain secrets or getting their memories searched. Once triggered, the seal would instantly burn all related memories. The master of Soul Flame would also sense it.

This was effective against most people, even Beyond Grade As, but not Sorokin.

He had once been the master of Soul Flame, so he already knew everything there was to know about its abilities. With the specialness of his Esper Ability, he could temporarily dodge the Soul Flame's seal. He was one of the extremely few who could infiltrate the Holy Accord in the universe.

Although he successfully made the Soul Flame seal misjudge him and did not erupt instantly, he knew that he would only be able to deceive the seal for a certain amount of time. If he retrieved his soul energy in this manifestation, the seal would erupt right away, and Soul Flame's current master would notice.

Also, he did not dare to read the memories of this body. Soul Flame sealed the related memories like a chain of traps. Once triggered, he would no longer be able to deceive the Soul Flame seal and would be exposed instantly.

"That was close. Don't tell me every member of this mysterious organization has the Soul Flame seal..."

Sorokin was on alert. He was surprised.

This meant that the master of Soul Flame should be the leader of this unknown organization, an upper echelon at the very least.

Using this method to make sure all its members did not leak the secrets... what kind of huge secret needed this degree of caution? What did this organization do?

While he controlled the new manifestation to leave the room, he pondered in his mind. Although he could not read this body's memories, he could observe the situation of this organization with it.

As soon as he walked out of the interrogation room, someone approached him. Following the rule of 'the more said, the more mistakes made', he handed over the interrogation report without saying a word. Seeing that no one gave him further orders, he left the area on his own.

He walked around for some time and very quickly realized that this organization's base was very huge and had a lot of members, but there was no organization's symbol anywhere.

Sorokin's manifestation did not dare ask anyone, so he could only walk around randomly. However, this body's authorization level seemed to be very low. Many areas were not accessible, especially the direction where he sensed Soul Flame was. It was in a forbidden area, which base-level personnel were not allowed to enter.

"This won't work. I won't find any valuable information, and I'll be exposed sooner or later... Looks like I need a push," Sorokin murmured.

From the way he looked at it, this mysterious organization was very serious about secrecy. Once exposed, it would very likely shift its location. Therefore, he planned to let the mercenary group attack this planet to force this organization to display its strength and start to migrate. Then, he would have more chances to discover the secrets of this organization and the identity of Soul Flame's master.

As for the possible casualties of the mercenary group, he did not care at all. They were sacrificial chess pieces to begin with.

Having thought of that, Sorokin's original body immediately said to the mercenary group leader, "Pass my order, send seventy percent of the fleet to bombard that planet. The remaining thirty percent, back away with me."

"Understood."

The leader gave the orders right away.

A portion of the armed fleet advanced right away, entering attack range after quite a while. They then activated all kinds of ranged weapons immediately. Enormous missiles were shot out and flew toward the target, dragging tails of flames behind.

Buzz!

Suddenly, a light-blue magic barrier shrouded the entire planet and stopped all the attacks. The missiles turned into fireworks in cosmic space.

Before the fleet made the next move, all the battleships that were sent to attack the planet lost control and started attacking each other like they were being controlled by someone else.

At the same time, a ring of fire as bright as the sun expanded from the planet like an illusion, quickly penetrating all the battleships.

The next moment, more than ninety percent of the crew's souls were incinerated, and they died right on the spot.

The armed fleet sent to attack the planet completely lost the ability to fight in less than a minute!

At this time, a hole suddenly opened up on the surface of the planet like the tracks of an airport. Spaceships with no symbols flew out and seized all the remaining battleships.

"This quickly?" Sorokin's expression turned grave.

He knew that the mercenary group would be no match, but he did not expect them to be annihilated so quickly.

However, though the battle was short, he still gained some shocking information.

Mage, Virtual Mechanic, and the master of Soul Flame... This organization has at least three Beyond Grade As!

Sorokin was intimidated.

This organization is way too unfathomable. Luckily, I was cautious enough. If I charged right in like a Pugilist...

Good thing I'm a coward!

Having thought of that, he immediately told the remaining fleet to back away at full speed.

At the same time, Sorokin's manifestation in the Holy Accord organization also received an emergency migration order.

In the underground base, members of the organization moved supplies, destroyed buildings, and activated spaceships quickly.

Sorokin's manifestation was also summoned by his boss. He quickly rushed over, did his job at the dock, and observed the surroundings.

Shortly after, he sensed that the location of Soul Flame was rapidly approaching.

Very soon, rapid footsteps came from a tunnel, along with many voices. To his shock, some of the voices sounded familiar.

"Odd, what was with that fleet? Why did they suddenly attack us?"

"Were they here for us? Did they discover us?"

"No way, they're way too ill equipped to have the guts to fight us. It seems to be a fleet that passed by and discovered our base..."

"Are we that unlucky? Did you not wash your face this morning?"

The voices got closer. Very soon, a group of people walked out the passage, complaining while walking toward the spaceship at the dock.

Sensing that the master of Soul Flame was in this group, Sorokin subconsciously turned and glanced at them.

With this one look, his mind went completely blank!

'King of War' Pangon, 'Mage God' Beiger, 'Violet Queen' Lady Lust... They were all Primordial Ones who were in the same generation as him. Even Beiger, who killed him, was there!

Didn't they die long ago?

Why are they here, alive?

While Sorokin's thoughts were going wild, the energy he used to suppress the Soul Flame seal also became unstable.

The next moment, the seal broke through the suppression and erupted, instantly incinerating the soul of this manifestation.

"Hmm?"

Oathkeeper, who was leading the way at the front of the revived Primordial Ones, instantly turned around and saw the manifestation that collapsed to the floor.

"Someone just triggered the Soul Flame seal..."

Uncontrollably excitement appeared in Oathkeeper's eyes.

Could it be... the legendary spy has appeared?

Ha! It's been so many years I almost thought you really didn't exist!

You've finally shown yourself!