

Mechanic 1291

Chapter 1291 Impact and Stand

On the ground, the Guild of Gods players posed and took pictures with Dafis' corpse. After being overjoyed for a little while, they all quickly realized the same thing and knew that this was not the end yet. They quickly wiped the smiles off their faces, took out their weapons, and looked at the Feeney Civilization's army in the sky.

Jupiter stared closely at their fleet. Once they made any move, he would immediately tell the others to flee.

However, the two fleets looked at each other like this for as long as five minutes, yet the Feeney Civilization still did not attack them and remained at the edge of the battlefield. It was as if they had made up their mind to just watch the show.

Jupiter's expression also turned from grave to confused.

He realized he could not figure out the Feeney Civilization's position anymore. At the start, they protected Dafis, yet they watched him die when their army was here, even firing at him, nailing his coffin and helping them to complete the kill. Once the dust had settled, the Feeney Civilization's army still watched on the side and did not seem to want to arrest them...

Whose side are you on really?

"President, they're all intimidated by your presence." Poseidon's fawning voice appeared in the channel.

Humph, you've been disagreeing with me and disrupting the morale of our people all this time, but now you finally thought of fawning upon me? It's too late!

Jupiter snorted in his mind, contemplated, and said, "Retrieve the players on the ground, but keep an eye on the movements of the enemy fleet at all times. If things don't seem right, immediately kill yourself and revive on the ships."

As the order was given, the guild fleet started using retraction beams to retrieve the players on the ground while paying full attention to the Feeney Civilization's army. As soon as they showed any signs of attempting to stop them, they would turn around and flee right away.

However, the Feeney Civilization never reacted at all. They just remained stationary and watched the Guild of Gods clean up the battlefield and retrieve their players. Seeing this, the guild fleet became more daring and sped up the retrieving of the players.

Even when the guild fleet had retrieved all the players, the Feeney Civilization still did not make any move.

"Weird, why aren't they doing anything?"

Jupiter was confused.

Nonetheless, since they were not going to stop them, he did not plan to stay there any longer. Suppressing the confusion in his mind, he ordered the fleet to retreat.

The guild fleet rapidly left Planet Burger and disappeared. At this point, the Feeney Civilization army finally moved. Part of its fleet chased after the guild fleet, while other ships landed on the surface to clean the city ruins and rescue the survivors.

The command ships stopped at the dock, and the hatch opened. The fleet commander walked down the gangway with a frustrated expression and saw the Planet Burger manager walking toward him angrily right away.

After the guild fleet retreated, only then did the Planet Burger manager dare climb out of the safehouse underground. He had been waiting there for quite some time and started questioning the commander immediately.

“What was going on? You didn’t pick up my communication request, nor did you pick up my calls. Didn’t the people above say they sent you here to assist us? Why didn’t you attack? Even letting these brutes leave? What the hell are you people here for?”

The fleet commander did not look happy either. Suppressing the frustration in his heart, he explained, “All of the fleet’s artificial intelligence systems stopped working earlier. Someone took over all our ships. We could not control them at all. Plus, our communication channels with the outside world were all cut off too. We could not contact anyone.”

The Planet Burger manager’s enraged expression froze. He said with shock, “What happened?”

“Someone paralyzed our fleet, most likely a Beyond Grade A Virtual Mechanic...” The fleet commander lowered his voice subconsciously.

Startled, the Planet Burger manager quickly looked around as if he suspected someone was monitoring him.

“Don’t be so nervous, I’m just speculating,” the fleet commander said.

He was filled with frustration. Initially, the order he received was to work with Dafis to capture these brutes. However, when he arrived at the scene, he was shocked to realize that the fleet’s artificial intelligence system was not working at all. Not only that, someone even controlled their spaceships to launch a round of fire at Dafis. He could do nothing but watch Dafis die and those brutes leave. Only after that did he regain control of the spaceships.

The enemy’s hacking was untraceable. The crew of the fleet had absolutely no way of fighting against it, and they could only stare at the ‘Candy Crush’ on their screens.

If these brutes really came from the Black Star Army, Black Star might have done this personally... It was because of this speculation that the fleet commander did not dare to make any extreme moves. Even after he regained control of the ships, he only sent a small fleet after the enemies while he cheekily remained on the planet. “Then... What do we do now?” The Planet Burger manager was still shocked.

The fleet commander sighed. “I’ve already reported what happened here to the upper echelons. Let’s wait for their response. This is not a decision we can make.” At this time, his communicator rang. An upper echelon of the Feeney Civilization came online, looked at the two of them, and said with a deep voice, “This was a private battle. The two sides conflicted in Dafis’ headquarters, and the law enforcement went to investigate. Dafis used the law enforcements to escape all the way to Planet

Burger and landed on the planet surface without having obtained approval, wanting to make use of the planet's garrison fleet to stop his enemies. Because of that, he brought disaster to the planet's residents. Before we could banish him, the second group of brutes came and attacked the planet. Understood?"

The Planet Burger manager was stunned for a second, then understood the meaning behind this and hastily nodded.

Planet Burger suffered huge casualties, and it became a big matter in the civilization. The upper echelons wanted to reduce its influence and remove their responsibility for the matter. Therefore, from now on, Dafis had absolutely no connection with them; everything he did was based on his own will.

The emissary did not exist, nor was he, the planet manager, ordered to protect Dafis. As long as they did not say anything, on the surface, Dafis was using them and brought the disaster to Planet Burger. Planet Burger was just the victim... This way, the rage of the Feeney Civilization citizens would be transferred onto these brutes, and the upper echelons did not have to take the blame for it.

"What about us?" the fleet commander asked.

The upper echelon glanced at him and slowly said, "You guys were dispatched to stop this disaster. Dafis brought the disaster, so the army prioritized killing him, successfully eliminating the brute who caused this. After that, you let the other group of brutes leave because they took citizens of the Planet Burger hostage. Hence, your army let them leave for the time being, only chasing after them later, shifting the battlefield, all to reduce the civilian casualties, understood?"

"Understood."

The fleet commander heaved a sigh of relief while giving the upper echelon a thumbs up in his mind.

It was still the same matter, but just by changing how they described it, it felt completely different. Not only were most of the responsibilities removed from them, but they also emphasized their image of protecting the safety of their citizens. Marvelous!

At this time, the upper echelon suddenly changed his tone. He said with a bit of anger, "Of course, this is just to calm the citizens down. As for those Immortals, we will openly condemn their actions and bring the attention of the public to them. We will also report to the Civilization Conference and ask the three Universal Civilizations to give us an explanation!"

"Emphasize that they're the Black Star Army's men?" the Planet Burger manager asked.

"No, we can only say they might be from the Black Star Army. Just emphasize that they're Immortals..." The upper echelon clenched his teeth.

The fleet was taken over instantly. It was most likely the doing of a Beyond Grade A Virtual Mechanic and not just an ordinary Beyond Grade A; it might very likely be Black Star himself.

The reason the Feeney Civilization was not afraid of offending the Black Star Army was that the army was too far from the Endless Nebulae. However, since Black Star might have acted personally, they had to hold back to a certain extent.

However, the Feeney Civilization was not going to just put up with this. They suffered severe civilian casualties, so as the victims, they had the moral high ground. They were definitely going to make a big deal out of it. Of course, they also considered the possibility of Black Star having the evidence of them protecting Dafis.

However, this risk was not enough to turn them into cowards. The Feeney Civilization clearly knew that even if they were found out to have protected Dafis, they would still have the moral high ground. The side that actively slaughtered civilians would always be the side that was wrong. Them protecting Dafis would not be the main cause of it, but the fact that these Immortals did not retreat and still attacked... This was the logic of the galactic society, the rules set by the Peace Treaty.

Actually, the upper echelons very much wanted to insist these Immortals were from the Black Star Army. However, when they tried finding evidence earlier, they discovered that all evidence that pointed toward the army disappeared. This group of Immortals suddenly became a 'ghost team' with unknown origins.

These upper echelons knew that someone had erased the evidence. While they were frustrated, they could not do anything about Black Star.

Nonetheless, the fact that they were Immortals was already a clue. After all, the entire universe now knew that the organization with the most Immortal members was the Black Star Army... The Feeney Civilization was only giving the three Universal Civilizations ammo for their conflict with the association. As long as this happened, their plan could be executed even without solid evidence.

Several days later, an announcement made by the Feeney Civilization in the Endless Nebulae caused a sensation in the galactic society.

The topic of the announcement was the Planet Burger Massacre, where a large number of citizens were killed. The Feeney Civilization expressed strong condemnation for such a violent deed, stating they would find whoever was responsible and make them pay. Driven by those with motives, the message that it was a group of Immortals who were suspected to be members of the Black Star Army who attacked the colonial planet was spread quickly, attracting wide attention. If it was wanted criminals who attacked a colonial planet, this would be a police matter at most, and the galactic residents would not dwell on it much.

However, the big boss of the Beyond Grade A Association was suspected to be involved in this. As a giant organization of the Lawful Faction, they violated the Peace Treaty and slaughtered civilians. At such a sensitive time, this matter immediately became a political issue and sparked intense public discussion!

That was especially so when the Feeney Civilization reported this to the Civilization Conference, crying and asking the three Universal Civilizations to pressure and question the Black Star Army, hoping to investigate and find out the truth. The matter became even bigger.

In the next few days, the three Universal Civilizations took the ammo from the Feeney Civilization, fully activating their propaganda machine, and started to verbally condemn the Black Star Army in all directions. At the same time, they increased the matter to involve the Beyond Grade A Association too, strongly questioning the association's purpose and its 'justice'.

The Star System civilizations were within the protection range of the 'Peace Treaty'. Such a violent act of slaughtering civilians on a colonial planet caused everyone to be enraged. Even the Super Star Cluster did not dare show support to the association at this point of time and remained quiet.

Emotions needed a place to vent. Driven by the advanced situations, although the Feeney Civilization only claimed that the brutes were suspected to be from the Black Star Army and had no proof, ordinary people did not care about that. They directly assumed that the Black Star Army was responsible for it. Their fear and hatred toward the Supers and Immortals that had been suppressed for a very long time turned into overwhelming verbal condemnations... After all, they had the most Immortals in the entire universe, so who else could they scold?

Han Xiao became the main target of the condemnation. With the advanced civilizations controlling the tempo, tons of civilians ignored what he did in the past and infinitely exaggerated the importance of this matter. They started to question why a leader who allowed his subordinates to do such horrible acts could receive the 'Stuarts Peace Prize' and the 'Galaxy Medal'. How could he possibly have the right to be respected by the galactic society? There was no way the three Universal Civilizations were going to let such an amazing opportunity slip past. They started to go all out to damage Han Xiao's image-as long as they could take away the 'reputation amulet' that they had once built for Han Xiao, they would have the 'moral high ground'.

With the operations of the advanced civilizations, the Planet Burger massacre became a fuse that intensified the conflicting emotions of the ordinary people and the Supers.

Countless galactic residents were worried. As ordinary people, no one wanted to be dragged into wars between Supers and die for no reason.

The influence this matter had on the ordinary people was that they supported the three Universal Civilizations' pressure toward the Beyond Grade A Association more and more. From their perspective, of course, they wished that all Supers could be strictly controlled by civilizations so that disasters would not fall onto them one day for no reason.

Suddenly, the people's request to attack the Beyond Grade A Association received more and more support... However, that was where it stopped. The three Universal Civilizations only used this opportunity to damage their reputation; they did not plan to make a move yet.

Faced with such aggressive accusations, the Black Star Army only made a simple announcement, saying it would investigate internally and only make an announcement when they come to a conclusion. Plus, the Black Star Army warned the Feeney Civilization not to accuse them without evidence. Then, they remained quiet no matter how noisy the outside world got.

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In a desolate universe belt in the Endless Nebulae, the Guild of Gods fleet was slowly flying. Tons of guild pillars were standing and sitting around while looking at the forums casually, giggling with joy from time to time.

"President, look, our deeds have already been written into the Galaxy Chronicles. Our first guild kill has been acknowledged."

Poseidon was overjoyed. Jupiter looked at the forums. The Guild of Gods making the first guild kill of a Calamity Grade had filled the pages for many days and gained a ton of fame for the club. He was also rewarded by the upper echelons of the club because of this.

However, looking at the praise on the forums, Jupiter was not that happy but distracted.

Poseidon noticed and asked, "What's wrong? You don't look too happy." Jupiter shook his head and said with a worried tone, "Don't you all watch the galactic news? It's a mess out there. We caused big problems for the army this time..." The emotions of the galactic society got worse day by day, and Jupiter was very worried. However, he did not regret it. After all, achieving the first guild kill was too amazing an achievement. He would probably make the same choice even if he went back in time. Only, he could not help but be worried about how the army would deal with this.

Those members who caused problems for the army in the past did not end up well, so he had examples to learn from. Although the Guild of Gods did not do this on purpose, since the matter had become so big, Jupiter was unsure what the army's stand was on this.

He had been waiting for the army to contact him all these days, but it never did, and he became more and more anxious.

Buzz!

Suddenly, the spaceship's communication system suddenly activated on its own, attracting everyone's attention. Han Xiao's remote projection suddenly appeared in front of them. "Army Commander?"

The various players present, including Jupiter, were all startled. They did not expect Black Star to come so suddenly.

Han Xiao scanned over everyone and stopped at Jupiter. With a poker face, he cut to the chase and said, "Don't you owe me an explanation?"

Jupiter's heart skipped a beat, and a resigned expression appeared on his face.

He knew he was in the wrong. What he did caused huge problems for his faction. Facing the questioning of the leader of his faction whom he had spent five versions with, he did not know what to say.

Seeing that he did not say anything, Han Xiao narrowed his eyes and purposely paused.

When he secretly saw that some of the guild players around started recording, he then continued

"You acted on your own without reporting to the army, which is why things escalated to this point, giving our enemies reasons to make the public condemn us. I'm very dissatisfied with this."

Hearing this, their hearts sank.

However, Jupiter expected this. It would be weird of Black Star did not react to such a huge matter.

He sighed.

"... How will the army punish us?" Han Xiao looked around, viewing everyone's expressions, snorted, and said, "I'll be straightforward. This time, the army won't give you any punishments. We're all old

comrades from the Planet Aquamarine, so just this time... I'll settle it for you! But if there's a next time, don't blame me for following the rules!"

Everyone was stunned.

Seeing Han Xiao's tone earlier, they were all mentally prepared to be punished by the faction. When they suddenly heard this, they froze.

Chapter 1292 Villain and Background

Jupiter originally thought he would be heavily punished this time but was stunned. Suddenly, his memories since Version 1.0 resurfaced. He was both relieved about not having to be punished and touched by Han Xiao's words. As a professional guild leader on a salary, what he had in mind had always been how to operate the guild better. Although he also had some emotional attachment to the Black Star Army after so many years, he did not see the army as his own faction like the normal players. The interests of the guild were his priority.

However, at this time, he still felt great warmth in his heart. He felt a sense of nostalgia in Han Xiao's words.

However, though touched, Jupiter still could not help but ask, "Is this really ok? We caused bad influences after all..."

Han Xiao waved. "I understand the situation. If you people attacked a colonial planet out of nowhere, the army would strictly follow the rules and deal with you. However, your target was an enemy who kept disrupting your mission, and your mission in that area could not be carried out if you didn't kill him. Since I told you guys to take over the black market, I gave you some freedom. Although I'm not very satisfied with how you guys overdid it... since the Feeney Civilization chose to protect your enemy, they're an obstacle to our progress of taking over the black market, and they have to deal with the consequences of it. I can't let them bully my men."

"But the public opinion..."

Han Xiao interrupted him and casually said, "Although you guys were the fuse, the main conflict is still between us and the three Universal Civilizations. Even without this incident, they would find something else to shift the public opinion against us. I'm not going to punish the army's members because of my opponent's method of fighting us. Therefore, you guys don't have to pay for the pressure from the outside world this time."

Jupiter coughed and softly said, "But you became a target of the public too. Aren't you worried about your reputation..."

Han Xiao shook his head and said, "I hope you guys can reflect on your mistake this time. It's perfectly fine to eliminate enemies. If you come across enemies who disrupt the army's mission again, do what you need to, but be mindful of the impact it might cause and make sure to do it cleanly. Unless left with no choice, don't drag civilians into it. Request the army's assistance if you need to, but don't act alone again like this time and cause a large impact."

Then, Han Xiao looked around at everyone's pleasantly surprised faces and nodded in his mind. He believed these b*stards all understood his hint.

Ever since the start, he never wanted to completely forbid things like this but allowed it. He only wanted to guide them and make sure they did things cleanly, which he could not say out loud directly.

From the way he looked at it, what had happened had already happened. No matter what explanation he gave the outside world, it was not going to end up well. Therefore, he might as well ignore the public opinion guided by the three Universal Civilizations and let the army members do what they wanted to do, increasing the threat of the 'Cancer of the Universe' while removing the positive image the army had. Before he opposed the three Universal Civilizations, the three Universal Civilizations had always been promoting him and increasing his reputation, making the galactic residents give him all kinds of titles and auras. They did these things both to praise him and restrain him; it was a double-edged sword.

With reputation, the actions of the army were restricted. If they did something that violated the rules, they would suffer for it. This was the rope the three Universal Civilizations tried to put on the army.

Han Xiao knew very well that as the form of conflict became more complex, remaining in the rules set by the opponent would only make things more difficult. Therefore, although the players caused a big mess this time, it could be a chance to adjust his strategy.

Wanted criminals like EsGod did tons of extremely evil things, but most people were only afraid of them and did not dare say anything. This was because they knew they were evil villains and did not dare mess with them. One of the important reasons the outside world dared to condemn and scold the Black Star Army was that, in their hearts, the Black Star Army was once 'good', and 'good' entities could be messed with.

After being 'good' for too long, others fear him less and less... Those many civilizations who responded to the call of the three Universal Civilizations and obstructed the association from uniting the black market more or less had this attitude. They felt that they had the Peace Treaty 'amulet', so they thought the Black Star Army would not dare violate the rules and do anything to them.

Clearly, this mindset was part of the reason the Feeney Civilization used its colonial planet to protect Dafis. If they really cared about the casualties of their citizens, they would not have done that.

If the other civilizations learned from them and improved on it, the association's work would only get tougher as time went on.

If the threat of the Cancer of the Universe increased through the Planet Burger incident and the outside world could see that there were a group of violent brutes in the army who were not afraid of violating the rules, some civilizations and Calamity Grade organizations would think twice before deciding to stand against the association...

Play and mess around all you like, but don't take the Cancer of the Universe lightly!

As long as things like this happened several times and they became afraid and intimidated, a lot of trouble could be avoided, which was beneficial to speeding up the takeover of the black market.

However, these things could not be said out loud. Therefore, the army was not going to admit to any accusations and would insist they were false. As for the truth, the outsiders would have to guess.

As for the public opinion... the three Universal Civilizations controlled the most powerful promotion tool, so his reputation would be damaged sooner or later. Han Xiao was already prepared for it. There

was definitely a price to pay for standing against the three Universal Civilizations. Plus, his reputation and image were unreal.

Armed organizations were not civilizations, after all. The things they cared about were different. In the current situation, public opinion did not matter at all. No matter how bad it got, when it came to what mattered, the three Universal Civilizations would not dare make a move.

When he was working with the three Universal Civilizations, a positive reputation was beneficial for the army to obtain more partners and create a profit network. Now that the three Universal Civilizations had made a law that prohibited any civilization and consortium from working with the association, reputation no longer played a part. The image of being 'good' was useless; instead, being 'bad' worked better.

Because of exactly this, Han Xiao did not mind switching the army's reputation. To him, they were just different paths. As long as it could help him reach his goal, he would use whichever was better.

When the World Tree war broke out, the negative image would be meaningless. No one would care about such trivial matters then.

Of course, even though he decided to take the 'bad' path, there was still a limit to things. Therefore, he still had to restrain the players' actions to a certain extent. Hence, he personally criticized Jupiter and the others to subtly express his attitude. Causing small scale accidental casualties when fighting bosses was fine, but doing it deliberately was not allowed.

With what had happened, if the players crossed the line again in the future and he 'followed the rules' to punish them, most players would accept it.

Since he was going to insist that the army was not involved to the outside world and not stop the other players from imitating it, plus the Guild of Gods made the symbolic first kill which received much more attention among the players and acted within the limits, there was no need to give them any punishment today. Of course, he was not going to reward them either. The guild had to pay for the cost of fighting a boss.

Although this somewhat went against the 'punish all mistakes' rule, there was no right or wrong to most decisions made in complicated situations, only what was suitable or not. The rules had to be adjusted often.

Another reason for this was that Han Xiao knew very clearly who the teammates worth earning currently were—the players were the foundation of his rapid growth. His level 360 Promotion was extremely crucial and had to be done as soon as possible. Therefore, knowing his priorities, there was no need to hesitate.

As the enemy started it, unless the players retaliated too strongly, Han Xiao was neither going to stop them nor punish them. Otherwise, he would give them a feeling that they could only get beaten and not fight back, which would impact their sense of belonging to the faction severely, making them frustrated and possibly leave the faction.

Back in Version 4.0, the Black Star Army fought with multiple small factions. The small factions chose to restrain them and blame the players, while the Black Star Army protected its members and poached

their players. Han Xiao was an expert in harvesting leeks; he was not going to make such a rookie mistake.

After all, players could not be easily restrained by simple management methods. Their challenging Calamity Grades was something that was bound to happen. Han Xiao knew the players' mindset very well.

Since we can't fight bosses properly here, we can just leave this faction. No way are we not going to fight bosses.

Han Xiao knew that not everyone had a strong sense of belonging to the faction.

As players grew stronger, their need for the faction would gradually decrease. Strength was what mattered most. With strength, they had the right to negotiate their prices and could be treated well anywhere. Plus, Han Xiao never doubted the players' interest in creating their own factions. At this stage, the importance of profit had decreased among the factors that attracted the players to remain in the army. Instead, sense of belonging and habits proportionally increased. His long-term investments in the past netted more and more returns.

Therefore, Han Xiao spoke with the Guild of Gods personally to promote his 'emotional attachment' to the forums.

He already controlled the spaceship artificial intelligence, so the players could only use their interfaces to record. Therefore, this video would only circulate between the players. No one else would be able to see it.

"I understand. We'll definitely report to the army in the future for operations like this," Jupiter answered.

"Hmm, good." Han Xiao nodded. "Work hard and control the black market of this area soon."

After saying a few more words, Han Xiao ended the communication, and his remote projection disappeared.

The Guild of Gods exchanged looks and were all smiling with relief.

This feeling of being protected is amazing!

"Poseidon, I recorded the conversation. Should I put it on the forums?" Poseidon asked.

"Yes!" Overjoyed, Jupiter waved and said, "This is Black Star's personal stand, which means we have new information that's beneficial to everyone. Post it on the guild's behalf!"

Chapter 1293 Black Star Decides How Peaceful the Galaxy Is

The Guild of Gods' first Calamity Grade kill remained popular on the forums. Players were talking about it all the time. Although the Temple of God team had gotten quite a lot of blame in the past few years, they finally recovered from this first kill. Many players acknowledged and praised their achievement while feeling curious about the army's attitude toward this matter.

Although the galactic society was condemning this incident, the players did not give a damn. They all saw the post the Guild of Gods posted, which showed the entire incident, and Dafis clearly opposed the army. Plus, the Feeney Civilization protected Dafis first. From the way they looked at it, the Feeney Civilization deserved it and brought it upon themselves.

However, the condemnation from the outside world did indeed bring trouble to the army.

Therefore, many players were waiting to see what the army would do to the Guild of Gods.

Meanwhile, seeing that the Guild of Gods started it, the other large clubs also had the same thoughts.

Although the first kill was gone, killing a Calamity Grade boss was a display of a guild's strength. The way the clubs looked at it, when more and more guilds killed Calamity Grade bosses, it would most likely become one of the basic criteria of becoming a big guild. When recruiting new members, if they saw that this guild had not even killed a Calamity Grade boss before, they would instantly be less attracted. Clearly, the big guilds of the various countries did not want to lose competitiveness.

However, their thoughts were only limited to that for the time being. Since the Guild of Gods did it first, the other guilds were waiting to see how the army dealt with it. They were going to make plans based on the army's stand. One way or another, they had to fight bosses, only with different methods.

Observed by many players, the Guild of Gods' official account released a video. The content of it was their conversation with Han Xiao. In just a few minutes, it was pinned to the top manually and received wide attention on the forums.

The players were surprised by Han Xiao's attitude and excitedly discussed it.

(The Germinal Organization Leader Is Always Watching: No punishment, Old Black is so generous!)

(Coolest Kid on Planet Aquamarine: Hahaha, I knew the army commander would be sensible. Otherwise, anyone could just hide on colonial planets after attacking us, and we wouldn't be able to attack them. This is the right decision.)

[Princess Feet: The army commander expressed his intention clearly. As long as we don't go overboard when fighting back, the army will back us up. Nice.]

[Army Commander's Big PP: Thank the Guild of Gods brothers for avenging me, amazingly done!]

(Poseidon: Now this is a reliable leader. Old Black never changed.)

(Bun-Hit-Dog: I'm new here, is this how he treats his old comrades? I'm so touched.)

The many players analyzed and discussed on the forums, confirming Black Star's intentions.

Firstly, when the guilds fought bosses, as long as it was an enemy, not only would the army not stop them from doing it, but it would also encourage it to a certain extent. For example, the army could provide some technological support, help them to create an undisrupted environment, and trap the target.

If they accidentally caused casualties while fighting bosses, as long as they had a reason such as someone protecting their enemy and they did not overdo it, the army would not punish them. Although

Black Star did not clearly state what would be considered overdoing it, with the Guild of Gods example, as long as they did not go beyond that, it would definitely be fine.

Many Chinese players were very touched by Han Xiao's words. As for the majority of players who joined in the later versions, although they did not have much emotional attachment toward Black Star personally, they still felt good about the army's way of dealing with the incident.

Many guilds were also less worried.

They were worried that the Guild of Gods might be heavily punished, such as getting sealed by the Spacetime Amber. They did not want their guild pillars to face the risk of having their accounts 'banned and would have no choice but to consider leaving the army. But since the faction's stand on this was sensible, they did not have to prepare for the worst.

Over the next ten days or so, the three Universal Civilizations continued to stir up public discussion about the topic. All kinds of verbal condemnations kept increasing. The public wanted the Black Star Army to give them an explanation and get rid of those who were involved.

However, the Black Star Army remained firm. The Black Star Army could explain how the Feeney Civilization protected Dafis on purpose, but there was no need to. They only stated that they were still investigating the matter and would not give in to such an accusation that had zero evidence, completely ignoring the public opinion the three Universal Civilizations deliberately stirred up.

The civilizations in the various Star Fields searched for the details through all kinds of channels. None of them believed what the three Universal Civilizations pushed the public to believe easily. They knew that there were definitely some things that were not publicized, and the truth could not possibly be as one-sided as the public believed. However, Planet Burger was indeed attacked. Even if there was more to the incident, the laws were indeed violated. Hence, the various civilizations were only watching and did not do anything

Seeing the Black Star Army's attitude in this storm, many Star Systems sensed something.

The Peace Treaty set by the three Universal Civilizations had always been their protection. Anyone who violated the laws would be strictly punished. This was one of the key reasons they remained the rulers. For all this time, the Black Star Army had been following the laws like a tiger hiding its teeth and claws. The public gradually forgot about just how dangerous this tiger was out of habit... However, in a special time like now, if the Black Star Army no longer followed the laws strictly, could the three Universal Civilizations restrain them?

The answer was clear-hardly, if at all.

Currently, the three Universal Civilizations had used the laws against the association and closed the galactic society toward it. This was much more severe than the punishment of violating the laws. However, with that, the three Universal Civilizations had no further method of punishing the association anymore other than to start a war, which the association was not afraid of at all... The various civilizations knew that if the three Universal Civilizations were willing to start a war, they would not have waited this long. In this situation, the various civilizations no longer felt that the three Universal Civilizations had the ability to force the association to follow the galactic laws. This meant that the strength of the protection from the Peace Treaty would definitely decrease.

Of course, judging from the Black Star Army's attitude, they probably did not intend to openly violate the galactic laws. However, as for the things that were in the gray area, Black Star most likely no longer held back. As for the three Universal Civilizations, they would definitely make a decision that caused the least problems for them. As long as the association did not deliberately attack a civilization, the three Universal Civilizations would most likely only make the public condemn them. The three Universal Civilizations doing something about it was not going to happen.

Having understood these things, many civilizations that answered to the three Universal Civilizations' call started to hesitate. If the Black Star Army no longer restrained themselves, the effects of the laws decreased tremendously. Clearly, continuing to oppose the association was no longer wise. Even if they stood on the three Universal Civilizations' side, they would only be used and would have to deal with the damage on their own in the end.

Facing this situation, many civilizations made similar decisions.

When these two giants fight, we're the ones suffering. We can't mess with either side, so it's better to keep a low profile. Responding to the three Universal Civilizations is one thing, but we'd better turn a blind eye regarding the Beyond Grade A Association's act of uniting the black markets everywhere. The three Universal Civilizations can send their own people to stop them all they like. We're not going to put in as much effort anymore.

This decision quickly circulated between the upper echelons of the various galactic civilizations. Even the Feeney Civilization was no longer as confident when seeing this. When they were interviewed by the media, although they still condemned the act, their word choice became less extreme and more cautious.

"Cancer of the Universe..."

Holmes browsed the messages on the quantum network and had a grave look.

He was a Calamity Grade super who operated an armed force in the Sea of Star Spirits. He was quite famous in the local Star System.

Ever since the Planet Burger incident got so big, Holmes had paid close attention to it.

He had come to know Dafis when he went to the Endless Nebulae on business in the past. The two of them became friends and occasionally chatted. Because of that, he knew about Dafis' recent work.

Inspired by Dafis, Holmes also secretly worked with the local civilization and did what Dafis was doing. Through obstructing the act of uniting the black market, he obtained resources and benefits from the civilization.

However, this incident startled Holmes.

He was not as strong as Dafis. When Dafis messed with the Cancer of the Universe and got chased all the way till he was killed, he became alarmed too.

While secretly obstructing the association, Holmes had killed some Immortals too. He could not help but be afraid of the Immortals grouping up and targeting him. He was not as arrogant as Dafis and did not think he could deal with the revenge of tons of Immortals.

There were risks to opposing the association to begin with. Holmes only agreed to working with the local civilization because they promised to protect him when needed.

However, the Black Star Army's response to the Planet Burger incident scared him. The Cancers of the Universe were very firm about taking revenge, so much so they were willing to violate galactic law. While the Black Star Army refused to admit anything... how useful could the protection the local civilization promised him be?

"The risk is getting higher. If the Cancers of the Universe come to take revenge, my life will be in danger too... I can't keep doing this."

With a worried expression, Holmes took out the communicator and called his contact in the local civilization.

Very soon, the contact appeared on the screen and smiled respectfully.

"Your Excellency Holmes, what can I do for you?"

Holmes cut to the chase and said with a grave tone, "From now on, our partnership will be terminated. I will no longer deal with the association's men taking over the black market for you guys."

The contact was stunned, surprised. He said hastily, "This is... so sudden. Is there anything you're not satisfied with in the agreement? We can talk about it. I'll..."

Holmes interrupted him and said with a deep voice, "My mind is set. Tell your upper echelons, the partnership stops here. I quit." As he said that, not giving the contact a chance to reply, Holmes hung up the call right away. He stood up, walked back and forth in the room, and was still a little worried.

Hesitating for a while, Holmes clenched his teeth and walked toward the dock.

"I can't stay in my headquarters. The enemies might come. I shall go somewhere to hide for some time."

In the Central Galaxy, the three Universal Civilization leaders' conference room...

"Hmm, the Black Star Army's response is expected. Black Star indeed won't fall for this."

Louis looked at the report from the Public Opinion Control Department and nodded at the other two.

"Humph, of course. If Black Star was naive enough to respond and sell out his men, he'd be too easy to deal with. We wouldn't have to put in this much effort." Marbruce crossed his arms and snorted.

The Feeney Civilization provided them with an opportunity, and they took it; that was all. They only wanted to damage Black Star's positive reputation and never expected to force Black Star to obey using the public opinion. That would clearly be daydreaming.

The church's pope tapped the table and said, "Although Black Star's positive reputation is decreasing and we have the moral high ground, he also used this to defuse the locks we had on him, which will only make the various civilizations fear him more. Instead of causing problems for him, it's become a problem for us." "Using the cancers of the universe to do the dirty work and intimidate others, what a good plan." Louis frowned. "According to the intelligence, many Star System civilizations are already

unwilling to continue sending people to hold the black market. Looks like we have no choice but to send our Immortals too.”

“Hmm, cancers of the universe against cancers of the universe, it’s the most efficient way.” Marbruce nodded.

The three Universal Civilizations had raised some Immortals too. To them, letting Immortals fight each other was clearly more efficient than spending their direct troops. After all, they would not feel hurt if the Immortals died.

The church’s pope said with a deep voice, “But the Immortals are very difficult to control and restrain. If they make a mess...”

The three of them exchanged looks and were all troubled.

The players in the three Universal Civilizations were just as difficult to control. They caused quite a number of problems, but the three Universal Civilizations did not have any good methods of dealing with them. They had punished them many times, but some of them just left the faction and joined some other organization. Some even became wanted criminals. Because they controlled these Immortals too strictly, they lost quite a number of them.

As Version 5.0 began, the strength of the players started to increase again. The three Universal Civilizations realized the seriousness of the matter too and suspected the Immortals had the potential to become Calamity Grades.

If that day ever came, the cancers of the universe would be the most suitable opponents for the cancers of the universe. Therefore, they had to have enough Immortals in their hands and could not afford to lose any more of them. Hence, the three Universal Civilizations gave the players special treatment, not punishing them unless absolutely necessary. However, they still could not stop the Immortals from leaving. The three Universal Civilizations had always been beleaguered by this matter.

Hence, the three of them were very envious of the Black Star Army. The Immortals who they could not control were already very obedient in the Black Star Army’s hands. In the entire universe, the Black Star Army restrained the Immortals most effectively.

Now, the Black Star Army showed signs of taking away this restraint, and if it really did it...

Marbruce shook his head, changed the topic, and said, “Sigh, let’s skip this for now. The most important matter now is to confirm if Black Star can freely use the Sanctum Revival.”

The other two shook their heads but still looked grave.

If the Black Star Army’s Immortals continued to grow, it was very likely that in the future...

Black Star would become the one to decide how peaceful the Galaxy was!

Chapter 1294 Memory File and First Unique Talent

As time passed and the galactic civilization saw that the three Universal Civilizations still did not make any move, they realized the situation. Knowing the three Universal Civilizations could not do anything to the Black Star Army, the public gradually condemned the Black Star Army less.

On one day, the Super Star Cluster Alliance received an anonymous piece of information that stated how the Feeney Civilization protected Dafis. The Super Star Cluster Alliance then released this piece of information without hesitation and promoted it, quickly shifting the public opinion in another direction.

At this point, the masterminds behind this incident basically all got what they wanted and stopped making moves. Without those who guided the public opinion, very soon, voices online quietened down. The galactic society was never in shortage of topics and news, other new events quickly attracted the attention of the galactic residents.

However, the impact this incident caused remained.

The various civilizations adjusted their strategy, no longer willing to participate in the conflict between the three Universal Civilizations and the association. They stopped part of their disruptions of the black market, making the work of the various Beyond Grade A organizations easier.

Without the local civilizations working for free, the three Universal Civilizations dispatched their own Immortals to interfere in the black market conflict and deal with the Black Star Army's Immortals.

The conflict between players had no restraints. In the next month or so, the two sides fought intensely. Many planets with black markets became battlefields. With the technological aid from the army, the various big guilds eliminated hostile Calamity Grade Supers one after another. The Cancer of the Universe title became more and more recognized.

Han Xiao, however, did not pay attention to how boisterous it got in the outside world. While the two sides were fighting night and day, he spent most of the time in the lab, reverse engineering SWY-001 continuously while building new Universal Treasures to increase his God's Trait Transformation stage.

One day, he finally made a breakthrough in the reverse engineering of SWY-001.

In the bright research lab, SWY-001's enormous body was fixed in the middle covered in tons of operating multifunctional mechanical arms, doing all kinds of reverse analysis.

Mechanical assistants flew around SWY-001 in midair, transporting parts from time to time like bees.

Han Xiao hovered in midair at the same height with SWY-001's head. Beside him was a round anti-gravity worktable. Tons of neatly arranged virtual screens surrounded him, showing all kinds of parameters nonstop. He commanded the various research teams through this worktable.

"The deciphering is finally done..."

Han Xiao let out a deep breath.

After more than a month, he had finally deciphered the many modules of SWY-001. Of course, the memory file was the most important among them. He already deciphered it completely and turned it into readable data.

On the virtual screen, tons of information was displayed. The meaningless data was all filtered out, leaving only the essence of SWY-001.

Han Xiao browsed through. The useful information could mainly be classified into three groups. One was the various technology this mechanical body used, another was the blueprints in the memories of those Mechanics who sacrificed themselves, and the last was their memories about that unknown civilization.

The name of this Universal Civilization eliminated by the World Tree Civilization was 'Karma Republic' after translating it into the galaxy common language.

Unlike the explored universe, the Karma Republic was the only Universal Civilization in the area it was in. It took over all the other races in its area, turning them into its own subsidiary civilizations and had absolutely control over them. The Karma Republic even distributed all of their territories and lands.

They created a surveillance system and came up with Civilization Levels. They made the rule that the results of the research and developments of all civilizations had to be reported, copied, and given to the Karma Republic. If they made breakthroughs, they would gain 'Civilization Points'. With enough points, the civilization would be allowed to level up and receive better privileges with the Karma Republic's approval.

If a civilization could not make any technological breakthroughs in many years and could not reach the minimum point of a certain period, that civilization would be downgraded. The Karma Republic would retrieve all kinds of privileges including its territories.

The galactic society level of the Karma Republic was very strict. Although the competition between civilizations gave them a certain amount of motivation, overall, the atmosphere of the entire society was still quite boring. After all, all of their developments were monitored and controlled by the Karma Republic. They could see the end of their path right away. Most civilizations had no choice but to spend the majority of their resources on research projects to maintain their level or level up. As for the lives of their citizens, it was kept at the minimum.

Most citizens were only surviving too. Under

control of the Karma Republic, the cost of violating the law was way too high, so there was no point in doing it. The Super knowledges were also strictly controlled by the Karma Republic and could not be spread freely. The only way to learn them was legally. If things went on normally, the Karma Republic's civilization strength would continue to rise as time passed, absorbing the nutrition of so many subsidiary civilizations at the same time. Sadly, they met the World Tree Civilization and were wiped out in the end.

As Super knowledges were strictly controlled, the Karma Republic had firm control over the various civilizations under them. However, because of that, they lacked high level combatants and had fewer than twenty Beyond Grade As. Plus, due to the lack of conflict, there were only two peak Beyond Grade As.

Both had its pros and cons. The three Universal Civilizations were worried about individual strength going out of control but accumulated tons more high-level combatants because of it. Chaos would breed more strong individuals. The Karma Republic did not have such worries, but when facing an exterior enemy, they ended up not having enough high-level combatants.

Facing the overwhelming attack of the World Tree Civilization, the high-level combatants of the Karma Republic almost collapsed on the spot. In the end, they were forced to use a technology called 'Fusion Mechanical Ascension' that only Mechanic Supers could use.

Through focusing the strength of one peak Beyond Grade A, tons of Grade As and Grade Bs, they aimed to help this peak Beyond Grade A break through the limits and turn into a real 'Mechanical God', stepping into the higher territory. However, it failed in the end. Although they did obtain a much stronger individual, he did not evolve and was defeated in battle surrounded by the people of the World Tree Civilization.

Han Xiao looked at the information of the technology. The interface showed that the name of the blueprint was (Fusion Mechanical Ascension). Other than the functions he already knew, the side effect was that the user's personality would change and become a collective consciousness.

"This technology can't reach its planned goal, but it is a breakthrough for them nonetheless. It's not very useful to me on its own, but the modules formed after the fusion are very powerful. Maybe I can reverse engineer them, imitate their structure, and create a new Mechanical Deity?"

The SWY-001 was the combination of flesh and machinery. The flesh provided tons of Super cells that gave the machinery the Mechanical Force it needed. He had (Polar Channel Flow— Blood Rage), so he should be able to achieve the same effect if done correctly.

If he could successfully imitate SWY-001's form, he had a feeling that his Mechanical Deity would undergo a huge change.

Other than (Fusion Mechanical Ascension), Han Xiao also obtained tons of blueprints from the mechanical body's memory file. However, only the peak Beyond Grade A's memories had a few Gold blueprints.

Han Xiao recorded all that technology before looking at the decipher page of the memory chip.

He was done deciphering the quantum network code of the Karma Republic and broke through the firewall long ago, so he could already rewrite SWY-001's artificial intelligence program.

Han Xiao hesitated for a while before closing this page. He did not want to make modifications to it before finding out the connection between the artificial intelligence consciousness and SWY-001's biological consciousness.

"Speaking of which, I'm not sure if there's some kind of bonus to studying SWY-001 or not, but the trigger rate of my Unique Talent is quite high for some reason."

Han Xiao looked at the interface. In the past month of studying SWY-001, the progress of obtaining a Unique Talent was triggered again and was at 75.8% now.

According to the previous progress it made every time it was triggered, a Unique Talent would be formed after triggering it two more times.

However, he had no idea when these two times would happen. Since he was only a quarter away from completing the progress, Han Xiao leaned toward completing it using Awakening Points. He did not do it in the past because his progress was too low, but now that he was very close to completing it, the cost became much lower.

The players had already been online for quite some time, and he had accumulated quite a lot of EXP. Although he was still far from the Promotion at level 360, leveling up a few levels was not a problem.

Plus, when he used Random Rewards to try to acquire Mission Completion Cards, he sometimes got lucky and obtained Awakening Points too.

“Let’s try it. It should be doable.” Han Xiao put all his EXP into leveling up all the way to level 344 before it ran out.

He took out one Awakening Point, put it into his Unique Talent, and a notification popped up.

Use 1 Awakening Point to increase the progress of Unique Talent? (Confirm/Cancel]

Confirmed.

According to the level of this Unique Talent, 1 Awakening Point = 2.8%-3.2% progress.

Unique Talent Progress +3.02%.

Current Progress: 78.82%.

“A three-percent increase for one point on average...”

Han Xiao’s eyes sparkled. This was much better than expected.

He would be able to obtain a Unique Talent with just about seven or eight more Awakening Points this way.

According to the rules of the Awakening Points, a hundred points could activate the basic structure of a Unique Talent, and the accumulation of progress would only start after that. Converting one Awakening Point to three percent, the cost of obtaining a Unique Talent from nothing would at least be 134 Awakening Points.

He had naturally activated the basic structure of his Unique Talent, then slowly accumulated the progress to about seventy-five percent, meaning he saved 125 Awakening Points.

“At most eight Awakening Points, which I have right now and don’t even have to level up abilities for. The cost is completely acceptable. I’ll do it.”

Han Xiao rubbed his hands. With excitement, he put one Awakening Point after another into the progress of his Unique Talent.

Very soon, with enough Awakening Points, the progress finally reached a hundred percent!

A notification popped up on the interface.

Unique Talent Awakened.

Please select one main focus for the talent from the three options below.

Basic Attributes.Special Resistances.Main Class Enhancements.

“Oh? So, this is how it is...”

Han Xiao raised his brows. He had thought the effects of a Unique Talent were completely random, but it turned out that he had a certain extent of freedom in choosing his preferences. This reminded him of creating his Racial Talent back when he became a Beyond Grade A.

There were not many choices. It was probably because the Unique Talent progressed naturally.

Maybe if he used Awakening Points since the start, he would be able to completely design it to his likings.

Han Xiao hesitated for a while, then chose the Main Class Enhancements.

Main focus confirmed.

Please select one secondary focus for the talent from the three options below.

Machinery Building.Virtual Technology.Machinery Combat.

“The two Unique Talents of old Manison are building and Virtual Technology, which should be strong enough for me...”

Han Xiao considered for a while, then chose the third choice.

Secondary focus confirmed.

Please replace one of the bonuses from the three options below.

Long-range Attacks.Mechanical Force Enhancements.Machinery Efficiency Enhancements.

“Replace one effect, huh? This means that these last three options are the bonuses given by the talent in the end.”

Han Xiao narrowed his eyes, pondered for a few seconds, and chose the first one. It was the only one that was slightly weaker than the other two.

Replacement complete.

(Long-range Attacks) randomly switched to (Class Main Attribute Bonus).

All preferences confirmed, creating Unique Talent...

Creation complete.

You have received Unique Talent ((Unnamed) – Han Xiao)!

(Unnamed)—Han Xiao: +10% INT. In battle, +1.2 Mechanical Force multiplier, +1.3% machinery efficiency multiplier. All multipliers are applied after other bonuses

Remarks: (To be filled).

You have received your first Unique Talent. Difficulty of activating the next Unique Talent increased. Initial level of the next Unique Talent increased, meaning higher bonuses and more preferences.

Chapter 1295 The Second Key and Invasion Operation

“Overall multiplier bonus, huh? Quite powerful.”

Han Xiao’s eyes sparkled.

The bonuses of this talent clearly reached the Molding Talent level.

Given his current Intellect, the ten-percent Intellect increase would give him a few thousand Intellect points. With the Mechanical Force strength and the Machinery Efficiency bonuses, his actual combat capability increased significantly. One of his Apostle Weapons could now fight a high level Beyond Grade A for some time.

Judging from the interface's description, the difficulty in awakening Unique Talents increased each time he obtained one, but the effects would also be stronger. Old Manison had both a single bonus talent (Virtual Technology Innovation) and a large-scale bonus talent (Billion Mechanic Empire). Clearly, Manison obtained the latter many Unique Talents later than the former. Yet, Han Xiao acquired it easily.

"Sigh, Old Manison, oh Old Manison, how sad for you..."

Han Xiao sighed and was so sad he laughed.

Since his Unique Talent would get stronger after each one he acquired, he could not complain about his first Unique Talent. Only, he had no idea when he would trigger the brief structure of the next Unique Talent.

"I wonder if Old Manison has talents that increase the chances of awakening Unique Talents..."

Han Xiao subconsciously licked his lips and was tempted.

Thinking back, he had to admit that Old Manison really had a rich inventory. Sadly, he was an ally on his side now, or he might really be tempted to hack into Old Manison's database... After all, others' databases were way too tempting to Mechanics.

Putting this impulsive thought behind, Han Xiao looked at the interface. The name and the remarks of the talent had yet to be filled up, and he had a headache about it.

As an 'expert' in naming things, he had extremely low confidence in his ability to name things.

"What should I call it? I have to think of a proper name this time, or what will happen if the players get this talent through Character Summon Cards one day?" Han Xiao pondered for a while and filled in a name he felt was acceptable.

Having confirmed the name, the content of the talent was updated on the interface right away, and he could not change it again.

Emperor of War-Han Xiao

Remark: Born for wars.

"This name should be normal for this kind of fighting talent."

Han Xiao felt it was fine, but he was not very sure about his naming sense. However, since he had already named it, he stopped dwelling on the matter.

As he was about to leave the lab and try out his new talent at a desolate planet nearby, his communicator suddenly rang.

He took out to look at it, and to his surprise, it was the head of the Land of Four Gods, the elderly whom he beat up before, 'Mystery Mage' Joey Terrain.

He accepted the communication request, and Joey appeared on the screen.

“What is it? Have you contacted me because you guys made up your minds?” Han Xiao sounded interested.

Joey looked a little gloomy, took a deep breath, and said softly, “We agree to join the Beyond Grade A Association, but we hope to keep our freedom. Plus, the coordinates of the Land of Four Gods must remain a secret to the other members. We’ll attend the plenaries, and if something important happens, we’ll also provide assistance, but we won’t be forced... Is this okay?”

Han Xiao smiled.

These four b*stards finally made up their minds. This was probably their limit.

“Sure, this is a good start. With you guys, the association will become stronger. I won’t publicize the coordinates of your secondary dimension, and the association doesn’t force its members to do anything. However, I’ll mention you guys are Beyond Grade As who retired. Plus, you guys have to be at the venue yourselves when showing up for the first time. Is that ok?”

“Sure.” Joey nodded and hesitantly said, “So, about the Sanctum Revival...”

“Don’t worry, you’re one of us after joining the association. If you guys die, I’ll revive you.”

“That’s good...”

“Alright, send me all of your information later. I’ll register you guys into the association and arrange for your welcome ceremony.”

After chatting a bit longer, Han Xiao hung up the call. About ten seconds later, he received the personal information of the four of them and told Phillip to arrange the procedures to have them join the association.

He thought for a while before calling Oathkeeper. He had already spoken with some of the Holy Accord members to have them appear in public when the time was right. Since Joey and the others were joining the association too, he might as well have them join at the same time so that it would be easier and more convenient.

Very soon, Oathkeeper appeared on the screen.

“Black Star, what is it?”

“Hmm, it’s about the welcome ceremony of a new batch of Holy Accord members. I’ve already made the arrangements, so you can have them come to the Flickering World now,” Han Xiao said.

“I’ll tell them.” Oathkeeper nodded. He hesitated for a moment before suddenly saying, “Black Star, there’s one thing I have to tell you. The second set of the Sanctum keys have almost all been collected.”
“... So soon?”

Han Xiao was surprised.

Oathkeeper was in charge of this matter, and Han Xiao did not pay close attention to it. He thought the Holy Accord would need a few years to collect the second set of keys. He did not expect them to be this efficient.

“Yes. The resources list the Super Star Cluster Alliance provided included quite a number of materials for the Sanctum keys that are very difficult to purchase elsewhere, but these advanced civilizations had them. Some more sensitive materials that are banned from circulating on the market are surprisingly circulating on the black market, and you gave them to us, which increased our progress greatly,” Oathkeeper explained.

“I see.” Han Xiao understood and felt relieved like invisible weights were lifted off from his shoulders.

He would only really be confident about facing the cleansing with the second set of Sanctum keys. He no longer had to act like it in front of the three Universal Civilizations.

“Which Sanctum?”

“The First Sanctum this time.”

Han Xiao was delighted.

The Third Sanctum he entered the last time contained knowledge mostly about biology, genes, and Esper Abilities. Although he acquired quite a lot of knowledges, it was not very compatible with his class. However, the First Sanctum seemed to be closely connected with machinery technology. If he could enter it once, he would probably obtain the technology that suited Mechanics best, which would be incredible.

It just so happened that his authority level in the First Sanctum was even higher than the Third Sanctum. He currently had seven fragments. Entering the First Sanctum would give him one more, meaning he would have level eight authority when he entered and would be able to do many more things while inside.

“What about the collection of the keys of the other Sanctums?”

“I’ll show you...” Oathkeeper sent him a set of data.

The Holy Accord recorded the progress of the several Sanctum keys, so it was easier to see. At this point, other than the First Sanctum key, which was at ninety-two percent, the second highest was the Third Sanctum key, which was at sixty-seven percent. The others were all around forty percent, except for the Sixth Sanctum, which was only at seven percent.

Han Xiao looked at the progress before looking at the material lists of the various keys. “I’ll pay attention to these materials too. Keep up the good...” “Hmm, you keep up the good work too. The organization will treat you generously.” Oathkeeper said it and felt extremely good. Before Han Xiao could respond, he hung up the communication right away.

Han Xiao placed the communicator down, scratched his head, and had a weird expression.

Usually, he was the one who spoke like that to Oathkeeper. However, this time, Oathkeeper suddenly changed his tone and took him by surprise.

Interesting, he's not happy with being ordered around by me, so he wants to gain small advantages over me verbally?

Humph, childish...

I'll definitely say it quicker than you next time!

Han Xiao curled his lips and decided not to be concerned. Besides, everybody knew who was making the calls.

"The second set of keys is almost ready. I can consider showing some of my cards to the three Universal Civilizations now..."

Han Xiao focused and pondered.

According to his judgement of the situation, one of the most effective ways to defuse the stalemate between the three Universal Civilizations and the association was to seek peace after a war. Let the three Universal Civilizations start the cleansing and let the two sides fight all they wanted. When the association suffered from severe losses, they would revive all their members and display the truth about the Sanctum Revival not having a limited number of uses.

This way, while learning a painful lesson, the three Universal Civilizations would realize there was no way they could restrain the Beyond Grade As. Then, they would most likely abandon their current strategy and focus on studying the Sanctums. The balance achieved through this should last for a very long time.

However, although this method would have limited damages to the Beyond Grade A Association, the three Universal Civilizations would suffer severely from it. After all, the destroyed fleets, armies, and killed soldiers could not be revived. If the three Universal Civilizations' direct members died in this war, even though the Sanctum Revival could revive them, Han Xiao was definitely going to postpone their revival to after reviving the association's members.

He had two goals, one to deal with the World Tree, another to protect the Beyond Grade A class to not take the Celestial Star Alliance's path. The former was more important.

"Before the World Tree war breaks out, it's best not to cause too much damage to the military force of the explored universe. Therefore, the intensity of the conflict has to be controlled; the association can't start a battle, and the current situation has to be maintained. This plan can only be executed if the three Universal Civilizations actively start a cleansing..."

Han Xiao let out a deep breath.

From another perspective, stopping the cleansing was possible. In order to avoid damaging the explored universe's strength, he might have to go against his initial plan and share the World Tree Civilization's information in advance so that the war would break out earlier...

However, whether the three Universal Civilizations believed it or not was not for him to decide.

"Hope the three Universal Civilizations don't play with fire. Maintaining the current state is good enough..."

In the Primeval Star River, somewhere in a desolate universe belt, a spherical galactic fortress hovered. It looked like an enlarged metal brain. This was a Super Long Range Virtual Mind Wave Enhancer. On its surface were matrix-style quantum network bases that could hide the data sent to a certain extent and enhance the strength of a Virtual Intrusion.

Two round mechanical devices flew around it. This was the Federation of Light's Multi-Dimensional Sky Opening Transportation Device. Outside it, highly advanced stealth devices hovered like buoys and shrouded the area, preventing all kinds of detection means, including prophecies.

At this point of time, the avatars of Mornisa and several Beyond Grade A Mechanics sat inside the Virtual Mind Wave Enhancer on their own seats. They were all direct members of the three Universal Civilizations.

After preparing for about two to three months, the three Universal Civilizations finally agreed to this operation. The participants were all direct Beyond Grade A mechanics. Led by Mornisa and assisted by the three Universal Civilizations, they had gone to the Primeval Star River to hack into Manison's database.

The three Universal Civilizations took out many cutting-edge devices, even sharing the computing power of their civilizations' main artificial intelligences to help with the intrusion, all to successfully break into Manison's database and take him by surprise.

"Virtual Mind Wave Enhancer and Intrusion Style Quantum Network Base Matrix operating at full power output, Multi-Dimensional Sky Opening Transportation Device entering preheating stage... Federation of Light, Crimson Dynasty, Arcane Church main artificial intelligence computing power shared. Hacking route adjusted. Preparation complete. Please give the command."

The emotionless voice of an artificial intelligence sounded in the room.

Mornisa looked around at the teammates present, and a red light flashed across her avatar as she firmly said, "Guys, let's do it!"

Chapter 1296 Siege

Inside the wide factory filled with mechanical devices, many mechanical arms were working constantly. Teams of mechanical assistants worked day and night, and countless assembly lines produced all kinds of machines.

Manison hovered midair in the factory and meditated with closed eyes. Golden electric arcs jumped on his body like snakes. His brain was operating rapidly, focusing on training his computing power. This was something most Virtual Mechanics did every day.

While he traveled in the sea of data, an alarm suddenly rang from the firewall at the link between his mind and the quantum network, echoing loudly in his mind!

"Alert! Alert! Abnormal data detected, infiltrating the database firewall!"

Manison suddenly opened his eyes, his focused state interrupted.

"Someone's hacking into my database?"

He frowned and subconsciously thought of Han Xiao.

The last time someone did this was many years ago. Could it be that b*stard Black Star this time?

Although they were now on the same side, Manison never stopped expecting the worst from Black Star.

His consciousness sunk into the quantum network. Through the network nodes, he instantly jumped to the firewall that was hacked. The next moment, the scene before his eyes changed drastically, and he came to a virtual world formed of data streams.

In front of him was a thick firewall like layers of translucent protective shields, and endless code flowed on its surface. This was what protected his virtual artificial intelligence center and his multiple databases, making it invisible on the quantum network so that ordinary people could not find it.

Anyone who could hack into it would either be a Beyond Grade A or the main artificial intelligence of an advanced civilization or a large organization. Regardless, the attacker did not come with good intentions.

At this time, a large pile of slightly illuminated dark purple data stream was stuck to the surface of the firewall like a slime, rolling and moving nonstop to corrode the firewall. Large portions of purple spread out. At a micro perspective, the two sides' data codes were slaughtering each other at the point of contact. The shattered bits of the firewall reformed and became the purple data stream's bits, devoured and assimilated by this strange data stream, causing its size to slowly grow.

Inside the firewall, a data stream rose from the ground and turned into the appearance of Manison's Virtual Soul. He looked at this with narrowed eyes, extended his palm, and grabbed a data stream. The two sides of the data stream extended outward, and it turned into the shape of a staff in Manison's hands.

He tapped the ground with the staff, data streams rose from the ground like lava and quickly became a fully armored AI soldier army, standing behind him.

Having completed the preparation for battle, only then did Manison speak with a poker face. "Dare to invade my territory but don't dare show yourself?"

As soon as he said that, Mornisa's virtual figure appeared outside the firewall. Looking at Manison who was protected by the firewall, she coldly said, "We meet again... teacher!"

"So, it's you." Manison narrowed his eyes. "What, you still haven't given up?"

In the past, Mornisa tried to secretly steal his technology because she found out some secret routes from him, so her ambition pushed her to do it. However, back then, Mornisa was not strong enough and failed; Manison discovered her plan and scolded her heavily. Afterward, Mornisa joined the Federation of Light, and this matter was left unsettled.

In all these years, Manison had taught many Mechanics, Mornisa being the most talented one among them. After Mornisa became a Beyond Grade A, he originally wanted to support her to found her own organization, make her his ally, and indirectly expand his forces. Sadly, Mornisa stabbed him in the back, and this plan was abandoned. Since then, the two of them had been colleagues instead of teacher and student.

However, although their relationship was not good, they did not instantly become enemies. On the contrary, the two of them maintained a certain extent of information partnership all this time. Mornisa occasionally provided some not so crucial internal information to Manison, from the way Manison looked at it, she was her way of fawning upon him and keeping him from attacking her.

He considered himself as someone who knew the personality of this student quite well. She was someone who would not give up easily once she set a goal for herself and would definitely find all methods possible to achieve it. She was not going to give up stealing his technology so easily.

Therefore, Mornisa's invasion was out of Manison's expectations but within his understanding.

Hearing this, Mornisa snickered. "Teacher, times have changed. Black Star's rise took away the faith of the Machinery Faith; you're no longer the invincible Mechanic Emperor you were decades ago."

Hearing Black Star's name, Manison snorted in his mind and did not refute it. He said, "Even so, beating you will still be easy."

"I'm not so overconfident to think I'm capable of fighting you alone..." A sarcastic smile appeared on Mornisa's face as she said, "I came with help this time!"

As soon as she said that, unusual data streams rose simultaneously from a few other directions and suddenly crashed into the firewall. Tons of code fragments shattered. Along with the data streams, a few other Beyond Grade A Mechanics appeared.

With the support of the part of the computing power of the main artificial intelligence of the three Universal Civilizations, the speed at which they broke through the firewall received astonishing bonuses. Defense blocks were shattered one after another, and layers of firewalls were filled with holes.

He was surrounded instantly! Manison's expression changed slightly. These people were all direct members of the three Universal Civilizations. This was clearly a joint operation from the three sides.

Dealing with the invasion of several Beyond Grade A Mechanics was already troublesome enough, yet on top of that, the three Universal Civilizations even shared part of the computing power of their own main artificial intelligence to assist them.

The main artificial intelligences of the three Universal Civilizations had the highest computing power in the entire universe. They were improved and updated by Beyond Grade A Mechanics one generation after another, even fusing the memories, experience, and part of these Mechanics' consciousnesses. They could be considered the strongest tools in the Virtual Technology field. Without them, the three Universal Civilizations' core database would have been infiltrated many times.

However, usually, most of the computing power of the main artificial intelligences had to be used to maintain the operation of the civilizations' affairs, so their strength was not displayed. If all of their computing power was focused in one, it would be extremely horrifying

Since the three of them were working together to assist several direct Beyond Grade A Mechanics, this kind of power was tough for one person to match up to. Sure, Manison was strong, but he still had limits.

Plus, because of Black Star, he was no longer at peak strength. He could not help but feel powerless.

“The three Universal Civilizations really think quite highly of me, huh,” Manison said with a deep voice. “Blame yourself for being so cocky in the past, always trying to steal the Federation of Light’s secrets. The federation has put up with you for a very long time, only letting you off because you were their loyal ally. You should’ve known this day would come. I only made the suggestion to the three Universal Civilizations and made it come sooner.

“They want to cleanse the secrets you stole and the intelligence of the various civilizations in the Primeval Star River you collected... As for your technology, they’re just rewards for me.”

Mornisa’s tone was filled with mockery and glee.

Manison snorted. Knowing there was no point in saying anything, he stomped the ground with his staff.

The next moment, the artificial intelligence soldier army charged forward to stop their invasion, while Finette appeared with many artificial intelligence lives and joined the battle.

At the same time, beams made of data streams suddenly shot out from the firewall, evaporating large portions of the invading data stream. The firewall’s formation also started to shift. The traps within were activated one after another to stop the enemies’ data streams.

As he opposed the three Universal Civilizations back during the Intelligent Plague, Manison planned ahead and reinforced his firewall afterward, as well as added a lot of Virtual Technology measures, all to prepare for this situation.

“You’re still the same. But, even if you made preparations in advance, can you stop us today?” Mornisa’s eyes flickered.

“Try me.” Manison was not affected.

The enemies’ invasion was stronger than he expected. He had already used all measures he had and was still unsure if he could hold on.

The two sides’ data stream continued slaughtering each other, analyzing and defusing each other’s tricks. The amount of information processed every second was unimaginable.

The passage of time in the Virtual Domain was different. It relied on the speed of the individual’s mind. To the Beyond Grade As, every second felt countless times longer.

Facing the powerful attacks, Manison started to show signs of defeat. The thickness of the firewall kept getting thinner, holes started to appear, and part of the low-level data at the exterior of the database was exposed.

The enemy’s data needles penetrated through these holes and stirred up a tsunami within, sending out data streams even deeper... The secret database at the most inside was their key target of this battle.

Although the situation was not good, Manison’s mood was still unaffected. He carefully tightened his line of defense, fighting the enemies firmly and accurately, cleaning out their data streams.

While Mornisa controlled her data stream and tried to penetrate Manison’s defenses, she taunted with a mocking tone, “Teacher, your abilities have become quite a lot weaker. Losing the bonuses from ruling the Machinery Faith and falling from your peak strength sure doesn’t feel good, does it?”

“Why don’t you seek help from Black Star? Black Star would probably generously help someone he defeated... Oops, almost forgot, we blocked all communications to the outside world. We will have gotten what we came for by the time you send a rescue message.

“Black Star has been suffocating you, taking away what belongs to you time after time. I’m only surprised by how you can put up with how he treats you. If it were in the past, how could you let him be? Tsk tsk, you’ve really gotten more cowardly now you’re older, or did Black Star scare the sh*t out of you?”

Harassment came one message after another, all hitting where it hurt in Manison’s heart.

However, he maintained a poker face. His computing power was unaffected, and he coldly said, “... You done?”.

Hearing this, Mornisa suddenly felt as if a blood red ‘danger’ appeared above her head.

Just as she was about to react, Manison’s Virtual Soul lit up and locked onto her.

The next moment, a strange data stream appeared.

Mornisa’s sight turned blurry. Her Virtual Soul was dragged into a silver data world filled with countless machines by an irresistible force. An enormous silver giant stood before her; it was indeed Manison.

Manison looked down, his eyes like a god looking at mortals. He opened his mouth, and his voice echoed in this world.

“Are you prepared for a beating?”

Mornisa mocked, “Since I dared come to you, I prepared long ago. Getting beat up in exchange for your technology is worth it. Plus, this is just Virtual Paramount. How long can you trap me here?”

“Not long... but more than enough to thrash you, rebellious student!”

Manison bent his waist. His fist fell instantly and bashed Mornisa’s Virtual Soul into a patty.

The entire world shook!

Chapter 1297 Change

Boom! Boom! Boom!

Countless cannons roared, launching attacks toward Mornisa. The silver giant Manison thrashed Mornisa’s Virtual Soul.

In the Virtual Paramount territory, Mornisa was completely powerless and could do nothing but take Manison’s thunderous attacks. Agony rushed into her mind like a tsunami, wave after wave. Her mind almost stopped working. Her Virtual Soul was buzzing with white noise and looked extremely unstable.

“Argh!” Mornisa screamed and wailed. Although she was mentally prepared to get a beating from Manison, when her consciousness felt such intense pain, she could hardly endure it. She could feel the murderous intent from Manison’s attacks.

This pain reminded her of the lesson Manison gave her when she failed to steal his technology for the first time.

Back then, Mornisa had just become a Beyond Grade A. It was a time when she was arrogant and overconfident, and she did not know much about how strong the senior Beyond Grade As were. After she failed, she got absolutely crushed by Manison; all attempts to fight back were meaningless. She was just as helpless as she was now, being tortured like a powerless doll.

At that time, Manison adjusted her perception of reality, and the deep fear pushed Mornisa to join the Federation of Light.

This humiliating memory had been suppressed at the bottom of her heart. At this time, this mental scar of hers was reopened. Mornisa could almost feel her soul shivering intuitively. She clenched her teeth and endured the torture, hoping Manison would soon stop.

After an unknown period of time, Mornisa, who was doing her best to endure the pain, suddenly felt refreshed and left the Virtual Paramount territory, returning to the Virtual Intrusion battlefield where an intense battle was still carried out.

Mornisa's mind almost collapsed. Although the actual amount of time she was controlled was very short, she felt like she had been tortured nonstop for more than a decade. It felt like countless mixers were stirring up her brain, turning her brain tissues into a mess.

Furthermore, in order to keep hacking, she could not stop working her mind and had no choice but to remain conscious, making the pain even worse.

In the moment right after she left the Virtual Paramount territory, her mind still remained stunned for a second. Her computing power plummeted, and the attacks on the area she was in charge of suddenly slowed down.

In this short instant, Manison who was prepared for it suddenly released a sea of data streams, attempting to break through the communication lock and send a message to the outside world.

Buzz!

Suddenly, layers of light curtains rose at the edge of this virtual battlefield. The data lock barrier formed by the main artificial intelligences of the three Universal Civilizations cut off the data sent to the outside world. These enormous streams of data bumped into the barrier and exploded like countless mosquitoes rushing onto an electric net, instantly vanishing.

"Ahem, don't think you can easily send a message out while I'm wounded. I expected this..." Mornisa was still in a weakened state, but she still snickered when she saw this.

Maintaining the same poker face, Manison waited for Virtual Paramount to cool down while fighting against the invasion as well as trying to send a message to the outside world by any means necessary.

With his Virtual Technology, it was almost impossible for them to lock him down completely, but he still needed some time to break through.

Mornisa endured the pain in her mind and intercepted a message sent to the outside world. It was a distress signal sent to the Beyond Grade A Association.

Seeing this, though wounded, she still sneered. "That egotistical Mechanic Emperor finally learned to ask people for help? Where did your pride go?"

Manison glanced at her and did not respond.

He knew that after this distress signal was sent, Black Star would most likely be the one to come. God only knew how he would ridicule him.

If possible, he did not want to have any connections with Han Xiao, mostly to prevent Han Xiao from seeing his database. After all, (Virtual Purification-Restore) was his nemesis. However, in this situation, it was tough for him to hold on, so he had no choice but to call for help.

One side was resisting and trying to seek help, while the other side was invading and locking down the information. The situation remained in a stalemate for quite some time.

Despite Manison's efforts to continuously mend his firewall, his line of defense kept shrinking in the face of the Beyond Grade A enemies and the main artificial intelligences of the three Universal Civilizations. More and more needles stabbed into his databases one after another, stealing the data he had accumulated over many years.

Virtual Paramount went off cooldown many times, and Manison used it every time on Mornisa and gave her a heavy beating.

It was not like Mornisa could suggest that Manison target her other teammates, so she had no choice but to endure all of it. Her injuries got worse and worse. If not for her teammates who were helping her, her consciousness would have been very close to being unable to maintain the intrusion.

Suddenly, an invading data stream finally penetrated the firewall and infiltrated the secret database. It only lasted for a short instant before being wiped out by Manison.

However, in that short time, this data stream absorbed a ton of nutrients and transmitted part of Manison's secret data back.

A Mechanic sent a message to his teammates. "We got his key technology data!"

"Keep going!" Mornisa's heavily damaged consciousness suddenly became energetic like she was on steroids.

It was like suddenly finding gold after mining for a very long time; all the torture she had gone through felt worth it!

However, Manison, who had remained calm, found a gap in the barrier and finally sent out a distress signal.

"Sh*t, he managed to send out a signal!"

Mornisa's joy only lasted for a few seconds before her heart sank.

Her tone was arrogant, but she was actually quite worried inside. If the association's Mechanics came to help, this mission would definitely fail.

That was especially so if the unfathomable Black Star came. That was a man who kicked her teacher who she once admired more than anything down from the top. Just thinking about it made her feel fearful.

If Black Star came, Mornisa would flee instantly... She dared to backstab Manison, who was no longer at his peak, but she did not dare touch Black Star, who was right at his peak.

“Don’t panic, we still have some time,” a teammate said with a deep voice.

Mornisa focused her mind, clenched her teeth, and tried her best to steal as much information as possible before reinforcements arrived. At the same time, she removed a large portion of the three Universal Civilizations’ main artificial intelligences’ computing power from the message blocking barrier and moved them to focus on invading.

Since Manison’s distress signal was out, there was no point spending so much effort to block his communications. The others also all focused on invading.

With no time to spare, their invading strength increased again. Data stream needles stabbed into one key database after another. Manison could only frown and resist with all he had.

After some time, a direct Mechanic who was calculating the time suddenly said, “That’s about time. If we remain here, reinforcements are going to arrive.”

“Retreat!”

Mornisa clenched her teeth. They were far from turning Manison’s database upside down, but she did not dare continue.

Glancing at Manison’s hole-filled firewall, they retrieved their computing power and retreated the way they came. At this time, Manison’s Virtual Paramount went off cooldown again. Before the invaders left, he dealt Mornisa another heavy blow.

Mornisa shivered. Her Virtual Soul became even more faint as she retreated and disappeared with her last shred of consciousness.

In the Virtual Mind Wave Enhancer somewhere in the Primeval Star River, their consciousnesses returned to their bodies.

“Go, quickly...”

Mornisa only had time to say two words before her avatar collapsed onto the floor and her Lord’s Descent got deactivated.

She had been Manison’s focus and was already at her limits at this point. As soon as the mission was over, her consciousness returned to her main body right away, and she almost fainted... It would take her at least a year to recover from the injuries she had suffered.

Judith glanced at her avatar on the floor, shook his head, and said, “Leave her alone and retreat with the data we stole. The Mechanic Emperor might come any time.”

The others nodded and activated the Multi-Dimensional Sky Opening Transportation Device right away.

The two rings around the Virtual Mind Wave Enhancer started spinning and accelerating, and their afterimages formed a sphere.

The next moment, with a flash of blinding light, the entire Virtual Mind Wave Enhancer left through teleportation while the Multi-Dimensional Sky Opening Transportation Device self-destructed and shattered into ash.

Inside the Virtual Domain, Manison looked at the mess the enemies made in his territory and slowly said, "Count the losses and give me a report."

"...Understood."

The main artificial intelligence responded and started checking the status of the various databases.

Very soon, a list was given to Manison.

He looked at the enormous losses on the list, closed his eyes with resignation, and sighed. His expression looked like he was laughing at himself.

Karma finally came...

About eighty percent of the information of the various large organizations he stored in his databases was stolen. He had obtained this information through monitoring these organizations for many years. Quite a big portion of the information was secret, especially the information of the few Super Star Cluster civilizations of the Primeval Star River.

A ton of the blueprints he accumulated through research over all these years were also stolen. The only good news was that core technology such as the Felon and the Indestructible Mechanic Empire were all memorized in his mind and had never existed in the database, or his loss would have been even bigger.

Buzz!

At this time, a data stream appeared out of nowhere and turned into a man. He looked at the wreckages, tutted and said, "Yo, what a refreshing scene. The Mechanic Emperor, who once invaded the databases of people everywhere, got invaded today. How the tables turn."

Manison looked up, and who else could it be but Black Star?

He was not in the mood to respond to Han Xiao's teasing and said, "You're late."

"I'm not telepathic. I came fast enough. You should say the enemies fled in time."

Han Xiao landed before Manison, looked around, rubbed his chin, and said curiously, "How many of them came to be able to do this to you?"

"Several direct Mechanics and the main artificial intelligences of the three Universal Civilizations." Manison gave a simple description.

"Wow, they really think of you quite highly."

Han Xiao raised his brows.

Even he was not confident he could deal with this if he was in the same position as Manison. After all, his Indestructible Body was not very useful in the Virtual Technology field. It was no surprise Manison lost so much.

Manison frowned and said, "I would've crushed them if this was in the real world."

Although he was strong in battles in the Virtual Domain, it was nothing compared to his full combat capability. After all, Virtual Technology was an independent ability, and mechanical armies were useless in the Virtual Domain. With the inventory he had, he would have completely trashed these invaders in a few minutes in the real world.

In the real world, he and Black Star could fight ten enemies at once, but no one possessed this amount of overwhelming strength in the Virtual Domain.

Han Xiao shook his head and asked, "What have you decided to do next? Eat this up or retaliate?"

Manison glanced at him and said, "Depends on you."

"Depends me on?" Han Xiao was stunned.

"Aren't you the Beyond Grade A Association president? I'm a member of the association too, so you'll make the call."

"... Who are you? Release the real Manison!"

Han Xiao was taken aback.

What the hell? You made such a big loss, but not only are you not suggesting fighting back, but you're even respecting my opinion as the president? This isn't like you, Old Manison!

It's over, either this b*stard's soul got swapped, or his heart was too heavily damaged, so his personality became twisted! Looking at Han Xiao's expression that was filled with disbelief, Manison said impatiently, "What look is that? What's so hard to believe? Anyway, this matter will be dealt with depending on your suggestion."

Of course, Manison was not happy about his database being invaded, but he was not so enraged that he had to take revenge.

One reason was that the loss was not unrecoverable. His core technology was all stored in his mind and was not leaked. Another reason was that it was now a sensitive time. With concern for the big picture, he did not want to disrupt the tempo of the fight between the association and the three Universal Civilizations.

Although he had made a loss this time, the three Universal Civilizations had worked together on this mission against him. They committed so much effort and so many resources to it that Manison had to admit his defeat. Plus, after his position in the Machinery Faith was snatched by Black Star, he gradually had lower and lower requirements for his reputation. He felt he had become calmer inside, no longer concerned about the title of the strongest Mechanic in the Galaxy. It had not belonged to him for a very long time anyway.

Manison sighed in his mind. Maybe because I'm really getting old, my temper keeps getting smaller...

“Your personality has really changed...” Han Xiao said before turning serious. “Don’t worry, this is a matter of the three Universal Civilizations robbing an association member’s private assets. They won’t get away with it easily.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Hmm, condemn them first and see how they respond.”

“They’ll just say I stole the Federation of Light’s secrets before and claim this is just punishing me for it.”

Manison shook his head.

“Oh, this is indeed a good reason. They have the moral high ground, after all. If that’s the case, the question will be thrown back to the association... Doing this to you at this time, the three Universal Civilizations are testing us.”

Han Xiao pondered and said, “The three Universal Civilizations’ so-called ‘punishment’ is simply cover. They’re testing to see if the association will retaliate for you and see how confident we are. If we only condemn them and don’t act, it’ll look like we don’t have any confidence. If we retaliate, the extent of it will reflect how confident we are.

“This was also to continue damaging the association. They have the moral high ground, so if the association retaliates for you, we’ll look tyrannical, and they’ll be closer to ‘justice’. If the association doesn’t do anything, the association members would be worried and unhappy, which is not good for unity.”

Hearing this, Manison nodded in agreement.

The three Universal Civilizations had made a move on a core member of the association at such a sensitive time; their intentions were clear, but the association had to deal with it.

However, at this time, Han Xiao suddenly said, “However... We have not considered a colossal change that might occur. If this change occurs, the three Universal Civilizations will not react as I just said.”

“What change?” Manison frowned.

Han Xiao looked at him and calmly said, “Let me ask you a question, and you must tell me the truth... The data you lost this time, did it include the Virtual Mutiny Virus you secretly faked?”

Absolutely not mentally prepared, Manison froze.

Then, his expression suddenly changed drastically, and he stared at Han Xiao in confusion.

When the f*ck did you find out my secret?

Chapter 1298 Argument

“What are you talking about?”.

Manison glared at Han Xiao. Having his biggest secret exposed, a storm was happening in his heart.

He had never told anyone he secretly studied the Virtual Mutiny Virus, so how did Black Star know?

Prophecy? Doesn't make sense, my base is covered in Information Form disruption devices, so others can't even find where my main body is, let alone that I've been studying this technology.

Is he faking it?

"Don't lie. Since I've pointed this out, of course, I've obtained solid information," Han Xiao added. "As the president, I have to know my key members well. What you thought is a secret is no secret to me. Plus, I also know your research has already shown results... This is very important, so tell the truth."

Manison looked at Han Xiao's calm expression and felt a chill in his heart. Suddenly, panic appeared in his mind for the first time in an extremely long time. He felt as if all his secrets were transparent to Han Xiao.

No matter how dangerous the situation he was in earlier when being invaded, his emotions remained completely unaffected. Now, just speaking with Han Xiao, his calm mood was broken instantly, and his mind was shaken.

This *sshole Black Star... is really my fated nemesis.

Manison clenched his teeth in his mind.

He was in a dilemma. He really wanted to insist on hiding it, but he decided to tell the truth in the end.

"Since you knew, why didn't you stop my research?"

Han Xiao smiled in his head. It's not like I can control what you research about... Plus, what I have is better.

The Virtual Mutiny Virus Manison made was only a semi-finished product. As for him, when he completed the [Intelligent Plague] mission with an S Mission Rating back then, he obtained the original (Domino Virus). Though incomplete, it was not something a mere forgery Manison created could compare to.

However, there was no need to tell Old Manison this. Han Xiao coughed and said, "Only because there was no need to."

Hearing this, Manison started making guesses and narrowed his eyes.

"Humph, I got it. You actually wanted this insurance too, but because you wanted to be elected president, you deliberately watched me do the dirty work. You don't oppose us having this dangerous technology, but it won't affect you this way." "... Whatever you think."

Han Xiao's mouth twitched. To be frank, he liked talking to people who loved making speculations. He did not even have to come up with excuses, and the other person would do it for him. It was really quite convenient.

"Humph, we're the same, after all." Manison snorted.

Han Xiao thought he might as well follow Manison's speculation, so he said seriously, "But I still don't agree with the path you wanted us to take. That hasn't changed."

Manison subconsciously wanted to argue, but as he thought of the Sanctum Revival method Han Xiao revealed that was indeed much more effective than what he planned to do, he could only shut up.

Seeing this, Han Xiao paused and continued, "The Virtual Mutiny Virus is a weapon of mass destruction to the galactic society. It's more than powerful enough to overthrow all order and turn the entire explored universe into chaos. Back when I personally shattered the virus core, in the eyes of the public, this dangerous technology disappeared forever, so they stopped worrying. However, if the three Universal Civilizations find out this technology surfaced again, things will be different."

"I think the three Universal Civilizations will be more wary." Manison did not seem concerned.

"You still want to be so stubborn and take one path to the end. It'll soon be too hard to turn back..." Han Xiao sighed.

Though the association was confronting the three Universal Civilizations, the two sides were only intimidating each other, which formed a balance. However, if the Virtual Mutiny Virus appeared again, it would be seen as holding the entire galactic society hostage. Even if the association had no intention to use the virus, the nature of this conflict would change completely.

After all, the Virtual Mutiny Virus was too powerful. It could shatter the order of the galactic society and turn into a universal level disaster. When this technology was controlled by an individual and turned into a modifiable virus weapon, its threat would multiply tremendously once again. The individual could totally invent countless generations of the virus and release them all at once, crushing the galactic society's average artificial intelligence technology.

Without even having to think about it, there was absolutely no way the three Universal Civilizations would allow anyone other than themselves to have a hold of such a deadly weapon. It would be the equivalent of giving someone else the power to control the life and death of the galactic society.

Furthermore, Han Xiao would be affected too. The outside world all thought that he had destroyed the virus, so if Manison was discovered to possess it, even if Han Xiao was not related, conspiracies would definitely receive a lot of recognition. The outside world would think Han Xiao only put on a show back when he destroyed the virus core, while he actually formed a partnership with Manison behind the curtains.

This way, his image would shift to the complete opposite side and he would really become the common enemy of the universe. The association would be dragged down along with him too... Fighting the domineering three Universal Civilizations as the oppressed side would be a justifiable battle for their rights and would receive a lot of support. However, if the association forced the three Universal Civilizations to obey through holding the entire galactic society hostage, the entire situation's nature would change, and the number of people supporting the association would plummet.

"There's never been a way to turn back to begin with," Manison said slowly. "You've always talked about intimidation and balance. When will all that end? If we don't obliterate the three Universal Civilizations' ambitions completely, they'll never give up controlling the scale of individual greatness. A balance without strategic deterrence isn't sustainable. Isn't it good to let the three Universal Civilizations know we are capable of rapidly destroying the entire galactic society?"

Han Xiao rubbed his temple and said, "Sure, the galactic society is very important, but when their rule is strongly threatened, the three Universal Civilizations will be willing to pay any price to eliminate their enemies. Although it's not easy to form a galactic society, at least it can be rebuilt. But if they lose their ruling position, the three Universal Civilizations would rather wipe out everything and start anew. The three Universal Civilizations are acting cautious and fearful now, but once something crosses the line, they'll have the decisiveness to destroy everything and be reborn. They'll never be threatened. This is not something we want to see happen."

Having spent so many years in Galaxy, he had seen things clearly. The production power of the galactic era was astonishing. When the production chains of the society no longer needed people to participate, to some advanced civilizations, population was only a renewable resource that was not even that valuable. They granted their people the rights they enjoyed only because of the functions they provided, not the people themselves.

Most of the time, the more advanced and stronger a civilization was, the less it had to care about the wishes of its people because there was nothing the people could do anymore. The three Universal Civilizations and the Super Star Cluster civilizations had already reached this level, only they did not do it. One reason was their traditions and regulations, and another was so that the society would remain in a virtuous cycle. This was not their weakness.

Therefore, Han Xiao had never doubted that the three Universal Civilizations would flip the table if pushed too hard. To them, people dying was no big deal. They only were not willing to flip the table, not that they could not.

"Hehe, if it were in the past, maybe you're right. But now you've brought the Sanctum Revival to the association, along with the intimidation of the Virtual Mutiny Virus, I don't think the three Universal Civilizations will still be as daring... Anyway, I hid this technology to back the association up. You're the president now, so deal with it," Manison said unhappily. "The fundamentals of this technology are in my brain, so these people can't steal it. But they stole some related lab records and logs. Although there is no clear description of the technology in them, whether they can link the records to the Virtual Mutiny Virus or not, I don't know."

"... Tell me the truth, did you do it on purpose?"

"It's already happened. On purpose or not, does it matter?" Manison's tone was calm. "I hid this trump card mainly to prepare for the worst. Since the association wants balance, them finding out about us having this trump card is much better than finding out when we use it. At least it won't be the worst situation." "... Really good job, and I thought you'd really respect the path I want to take as the president."

Han Xiao gave him a meaningful look, turned around, and left right away.

Manison watched Han Xiao disappear in his sights. His lips seemed to have moved faintly, but he then went back to focus on repairing his firewall.

As his consciousness returned to his office in Black Star Palace, Han Xiao opened his eyes.

"Mechanic Emperor... what an ass."

Regardless of whether the three Universal Civilizations stole it or Manison deliberately leaked it, there was quite a high chance the existence of the Virtual Mutiny Virus was going to be discovered by the three Universal Civilizations. This meant that the association had no choice but to deal with it.

Although the second set of Sanctum keys were collected now and he did have plans for an all-out war, he wanted it to come as late as possible. He thought the balance could last for a long time, but this sudden incident probably sped up its arrival tremendously. Han Xiao's eyes sparkled.

One way or another, it had already happened, and he had to prepare for it.

In the Joint Conference Room of the three Universal Civilizations...

"Oh? Mornisa did it, nice."

Seeing the report, Louis nodded with satisfaction.

"Nothing to be happy about. If all of our main artificial intelligences couldn't deal with just one Mechanic Emperor, that would be strange," the pope said calmly. "You're right." Louis looked at the remote projections of the Beyond Grade A Mechanics in front of him and wondered, "Where's Mornisa? Why isn't she here?"

"She was heavily wounded by the Mechanic Emperor and is resting now. She doesn't have the energy to deal with other things," 'Defender' Romo said with a deep voice.

"Hmm, send her my regards then." Louis waved. "What did you guys get this time?" "All data has been sent to the Science Institute. They're reorganizing and stitching the information. The results should come in very soon," Romo replied.

The data fragments they stole from Manison's database were not in order. It was a violent invasion, after all. Quite a large portion of the data was incomplete and had to be put together like puzzles. Only then would they know what data they had acquired.

Louis nodded. As he was just about to speak, an emergency report popped up on the virtual screen on his table. It was from the Science Institute.

"So soon?"

Louis raised his brows and looked at the report. Suddenly, his expression changed drastically.

The report consisted of the incomplete experiment records of Manison's research and developments of the Virtual Mutiny Virus. The Science Institute was still adding in more information as quickly as possible. However, just from the test results of these records, one could see that Manison had already achieved some results.

Marbruce and the pope saw his expression and turned to him. "What is it?"

"... Take a look yourselves." Veins appeared on Louis's forehead as he sent the report to the two of them.

The two of them looked at it. Their expressions suddenly changed too, and rage appeared on their faces.

Romo and the other direct Beyond Grade As were curious.

What information did the Science Institute piece together from the data they collected that was able to make all three leaders so furious?

This time, Louis closed his eyes, calmed his mind, and looked at the curious Mechanics. He waved and turned off the remote projections. Only the three leaders were left in the room.

Seeing that the outsiders had left, Marbruce coldly said, "Mechanic Emperor never gave up and is still studying the Virtual Mutiny Virus, achieving some results even... I wonder if Black Star shattered the virus core back then just to put on a show for us."

"If not because we hacked into the Mechanic Emperor's database this time, god knows when we would've found out about this." The pope had barely suppressed his rage.

Louis looked at the two of them and said slowly, "The nature of the matter has changed. We have to prepare for the worst. Get ready for war."

Chapter 1299 Arriving Storm

"... These are the new members who'll join the association today. We'll be comrades on the same side from now on."

At the Beyond Grade A Association headquarters, Han Xiao introduced these newcomers to everyone present with a smile. They were Joey's group and the new batch of Holy Accord members.

After Manison got hacked by the three Universal Civilizations, he quickly arranged the time for them to join the army, and it was that day.

Hearing Han Xiao's introduction, the various Beyond Grade As present sized these newcomers up and looked surprised.

Although they already knew the Sanctum Revival's existence, they were still astonished when they saw a new batch of revivors.

Plus, not only were there revivors who were joining the association this time, but Black Star even attracted a few others who were avoiding the world previously to make the association stronger. From the way they looked at it, this was undoubtedly Black Star's measure against the three Universal Civilizations' plans, and they were excited by it.

At the same time, this proved that Black Star could use the Sanctum Revival more than once, which was what the majority of people present cared about and were pleased by.

"We're all friends now that you've joined the association. Please, sit," Kasuyi said with a smile.

Joey and the others sighed and sat in their seats. Although they had a bit of social anxiety, they still tried to chat with the other Beyond Grade As.

The Holy Accord members exchanged looks and chatted as if this was the first time they had met.

The people chatted with the newcomers for a while. The atmosphere was harmonious like a big family.

Han Xiao waited for a while. Seeing that everyone chatted about enough, he smiled and said, "Alright, now that you guys have gotten to know each other, other than welcoming the newcomers, there's actually another matter that needs to be discussed today."

Hearing this, the room immediately became quiet. Everyone turned around and looked at Han Xiao, waiting for their president to continue.

Seeing this, Han Xiao changed into a serious expression and said slowly, "Not long ago, the three Universal Civilizations worked together to hack into Mechanic Emperor's database and succeeded. The three Universal Civilizations are both testing and provoking us. Therefore, I'd like to hear everyone's suggestions today about how we should respond."

The people subconsciously glanced at Manison and saw that Manison was resting with his eyes closed. "I know about this. I received the distress signal back then too," Kant said with a deep voice, "Manison is a member of the association, so we should stand up for him." "That's right. Although Manison is despicable, dishonorable, wretched, petty, old, ugly, and shameless, he's one of us. He was attacked by the three Universal Civilizations for no reason, so the association can't act like it never happened," Sun Hunter said.

"I agree." Secret Master nodded. Sun Hunter turned and glanced at him. "Which part?"

"... All parts." Secret Master's eyes twitched and felt a bit of his luck had disappeared.

Manison snorted, opened his eyes, and said, "Focus on the matter. Don't insult others."

"Come on, is telling the truth illegal?" Sun Hunter said with a surprised tone.

Manison took a deep breath and calmed his emotions down. Calm down, calm down, no point getting angry... Han Xiao gave Sun Hunter a look of approval and asked the others for suggestions.

More than ninety percent of the people agreed to stand up for Manison. It was not because they were good friends with old Manison, but it was not a personal matter. They hoped to receive the same treatment if something similar were to happen to them in the future.

"... Since the majority agrees, the association will condemn the three Universal Civilizations' actions tomorrow and demand that they give an explanation. At the same time, everyone, dispatch your armed forces. When necessary, we might have to take military action on the three Universal Civilizations."

Hearing this, the people were slightly stunned.

They thought just verbally condemning was about it, or a group of Mechanics causing trouble for the three Universal Civilizations' vassal organizations at most. Why did Black Star sound like he was about to start a war?

However, their surprise only lasted for a few seconds, and they did not oppose it.

With the Sanctum Revival, most people were quite confident. Starting a war was not impossible to do. Plus, most people felt that Black Star was just planning to make it an exercise to intimidate them. After all, the situation was balanced for the time being and did not look like a war was about to break out.

“Hmm. Also, to prevent things like this from happening again, I suggest having everyone’s original body gather in the Flickering World and not give the three Universal Civilizations a chance to take us out one by one. Of course, this is not compulsory. If some people don’t want to come, they can choose not to, but they’ll have to deal with the consequences of that themselves...”

While saying that, Han Xiao glanced at Manison.

Manison closed his eyes again and acted like he did not hear it. He was definitely not going to show his well-hidden original body in front of others.

Most people had no problems with this. Quite a number of them had come to the Flickering World recently to begin with, operating their forces here, so they did not have to travel far. The Beyond Grade As in the other Star Fields also had no problems with staying there temporarily.

They discussed for a while more to confirm the arrangements before going offline as the meeting ended.

Very soon, Han Xiao, Kasuyi, and Ames were the only three left in the venue.

Han Xiao glanced at Ames and said, “Aren’t you going offline? I have some private matters that I need to speak with old Kasu.”

Ames shook her head, sighed, and said, “Aesop told me to tell you. He saw a confrontation that attracted the attention of the entire universe. The two sides confronting each other were the association and the three Universal Civilizations. The future he saw stopped there. He only knows that the results of it will change the fate of the entire universe. He wants to tell you to deal with it cautiously.”

“The old man saw a prophecy again, huh?” Han Xiao narrowed his eyes, nodded, and said, “Got it, wait for me at home. I’ll fetch you with the King after the meeting ends.”

Ames smiled and went offline.

Now, only Kasuyi and Han Xiao were in the room.

Kasuyi heard the conversation from earlier and softly said, “Black Star, are we going to start a real fight with the three Universal Civilizations?”

“Very likely.” Han Xiao casually explained the matter about the Virtual Mutiny Virus.

Kasuyi’s expression changed uncontrollably, and he did not know what to say. After quite some time, he sighed and said, “The Mechanic Emperor is still too stubborn, but there’s nothing we can do about it, since you aren’t telling him that the Sanctum Revival can be used an infinite number of times... Without the Virtual Mutiny Virus, your plan could have been carried out steadily. This added deterrence will only make things worse and change the nature of the entire situation.” “Hehe, even if he knew the truth, he’d most likely think the Sanctum Revival and the Virtual Mutiny Virus are a perfect match.” Han Xiao curled his lips. “Never mind him. Anyway, be prepared. Tell your Void Dukes to monitor the three Universal Civilizations’ armies in the various big secondary dimensions. If they send troops to fight us, they’ll definitely go all out.” “Understood.”

Kasuyi nodded and went offline.

The confrontation between the Beyond Grade A Association and the three Universal Civilizations already lasted for quite some time, the galactic society already gradually got used to this uptight atmosphere.

However, on this day, the Beyond Grade A Association openly condemned the three Universal Civilizations for hacking the database of its member, Manison, and demanded an explanation. The Federation of Light retaliated and claimed that Manison had stolen their secrets multiple times. This was just a late debt collection and a punishment that should have happened long ago.

The galactic residents were already used to seeing conflicts like this and thought this was another joyous day of the two sides verbally fighting each other. However, what happened next made many people sense it was different this time.

According to the past experiences, the association and the three Universal Civilizations would condemn each other back and forth a few times, and this matter would be over without much happening. Even if there were any punishments, it would at most be like a new law to target the Beyond Grade A association.

However, this time, the galactic residents and the various organizations shockingly realized that the two sides seemed to have decided to do the real deal.

After the announcement was made, the three Universal Civilizations and the Beyond Grade A Association surprisingly both dispatched troops on a large scale. The three Universal Civilizations' fleets rode out from the Central Galaxy and stationed themselves at the various Star Fields, while the Beyond Grade A Association's people mainly gathered in the Flickering World.

A storm was brewing.

Even ordinary people could see that something was wrong. Although the three Universal Civilizations did not continue to make announcements after making the initial response, they were clearly sending the message that they would start a war any time.

Since the two sides confronted each other, most galactic residents were only watching a show, but now they were all nervous.

Most messages online of hoping the three Universal Civilizations could cleanse the Beyond Grade As were just people venting their emotions. When it seemed like it was really going to happen, many people panicked a little and were worried such a large-scale battle might affect them too.

Suddenly, the atmosphere of the entire galactic society became tense. Countless pairs of eyes paid close attention to the two sides.

"Weird, why are the three Universal Civilizations so daring all of a sudden?"

Inside the conference room of the Super Star Cluster Alliance, the various leaders were all surprised.

According to their analysis, due to all kinds of reasons, the three Universal Civilizations would not easily start a war, same for the association. Why did both of them suddenly become so headstrong?

If they assumed Manison was the fuse, they did not think it was that big of a deal. All that happened was some of the information in his database was stolen. Manison had not been killed or anything. Was there a need to escalate the situation this much?

“Did the three Universal Civilizations change their strategy and want to eliminate the problems no matter the cost?” someone pondered aloud.

“Probably not likely. Don’t forget, we’re still here. If the three Universal Civilizations and the association both get heavily damaged, won’t that be giving us an opportunity to rise?” the Star Arc Civilization’s leader said hesitantly.

Their existence was the exact reason a weak balance could be maintained. If not because both sides were worried about the Super Star Cluster Alliance, they might have acted long ago.

“What do we do?”

“Just watch. If they’re really going to fight, it’s a good thing for us...” the Star Arc Civilization leader said. “But we need to be careful about the three Universal Civilizations dragging us in. It won’t be the first time they’ve done something like that. We’d best station heavy troops at our borders. Don’t have to interfere with their war, just protect our territories.”

The Super Star Cluster leaders discussed their options quietly. They all sounded excited. Although they had no idea why the three Universal Civilizations and the association both suddenly became so impulsive, it was not bad news for them.

Time passed by quickly in the intense atmosphere. Under the close attention of the galactic society, both sides dispatched their troops more and more frequently without hiding their movements at all. They set up their formations like playing chess but never clashed with each other as if they ignored each other’s existence.

However, neither of the two sides made any announcements, which caused all kinds of rumors to spread, leading to panic everywhere.

The population flow of the various Star Fields showed the public’s reaction. The galactic residents in the Flickering World left in large numbers, causing the stargates to jam. The number of people going to the Central Galaxy and some border Star Fields to take refuge increased tremendously day by day. Under the eyes of the entire world, an enormous joint fleet of the three Universal Civilizations advanced into the Primeval Star River and right toward the Mechanical Race’s territory.

At the same time, the three Universal Civilizations finally made a new joint announcement.

“Through the Science Institute’s analysis of Mechanic Emperor’s database, we have acquired solid evidence that proves the Mechanic Emperors has been privately studying the Virtual Mutiny Virus, hoping to replicate this possible source of a universal level disaster. He has already achieved results and could attempt to bring catastrophe to the galaxy.

“On behalf of the galactic society, the Federation of Light, the Crimson Dynasty, and the Arcane Church have made a joint warning to the Mechanic Emperor-give up the Virtual Mutiny Virus technology immediately and destroy all backup data under our supervision. We will protect the safety of the galactic society no matter the cost!”

On the day this announcement was made, the dark clouds of the Intelligent Plague once again shrouded galactic society and the hearts of countless galactic residents. Panic swept one Star System after another at an unbelievable speed.

The Virtual Mutiny Virus is still in this world

Someone produced this monstrous virus capable of threatening the entire universe again for his own interests?

The galactic society exploded!

Along with shock and fear, there was incomparable rage. The Mechanic Emperor deserves to die!

Chapter 1300 Storm

“Hehe, the three Universal Civilizations have really done it now. Looks like they’ve made up their minds...”

In the guest meeting room of Black Star Palace, more than a dozen Beyond Grade As gathered and looked at the virtual screen on the wall of the room that was playing the news about the three Universal Civilizations’ announcement.

They were all looking worried except for Han Xiao, who was holding his chin and had a poker face.

Bang!

Someone suddenly slammed the table. The others looked over and saw Kant had a gloomy expression, and his fist was planted into the cracked table.

“Manison is forcing us to waste our one chance at the Sanctum Revival!”

The people present all had hostile expressions on their faces.

The two sides’ military forces had made frequent movements. These were all core members of the association invited by Han Xiao to gather in Black Star Palace.

At the start, they thought this was another trick played by the three Universal Civilizations, till Han Xiao briefly explained what had happened when Manison was attacked. They were shocked both by the fact that Manison really produced the Virtual Mutiny Virus and Manison leaking the lab records deliberately.

With the Sanctum Revival backing them up, they were not afraid of fighting. However, being willing to fight and being forced to fight were two different things.

Initially, after the three Universal Civilizations invaded Manison’s database, the association standing up for him would be normal. However, with the Virtual Mutiny Virus’ appearance, the nature of the matter changed. The association became the side in the wrong. Furthermore, Manison most likely did it on purpose to drag them down.

At this time, they were all very unhappy with old Manison. After all, there was only one chance to use the Sanctum Revival, and no one wanted to use it too early.

“Black Star, what are we going to do? The three Universal Civilizations brought this matter up. Will the association still back Manison up?” Kasuyi asked. He did not react much to it as Han Xiao had told him long ago.

Han Xiao rubbed his chin and said with a deep voice, "Based on my speculation, after the three Universal Civilizations found out about the Virtual Mutiny Virus' existence, there were a few possible paths they'd take, and what they're doing now is one of them. After announcing it to the galactic civilization, they sent an army to surround the Mechanical Race's territory, threatening and trying to force Manison to give up the technology.

"If the association backs the Mechanic Emperor up and holds onto the virus technology, the three Universal Civilizations will only have to push the public opinion slightly, and the neutral image and reputation the association has built will collapse instantly. At the same time, an all-out war might erupt, and the three Universal Civilizations are probably ready for it."

"How about we give up Manison?" someone asked. "The situation is different now. I believe most members understand. After all, we really had no idea about the Virtual Mutiny Virus. The Mechanic Emperor did it on his own, so it's not our concern."

Han Xiao shook his head and said, "The three Universal Civilizations have already shifted the public opinion against us. They created a sense of fantasy and fanaticism the Supers have in us. At this point in time, if we back off like this, even if it is sensible and logical, it'll mean we have lowered our heads to the three Universal Civilizations. We'll very likely lose our special guiding position among the Supers, which will be very difficult to regain in the future... To the three Universal Civilizations, eradicating the Supers' admiration and fantasy for the association will be a good result."

"Is the association really going to take the blame for Manison? Why not insist that this is the three Universal Civilizations framing us and is nothing but a lie, or could we say they were the ones who created it first and Manison only stole it?" Sun Hunter widened his eyes.

Han Xiao cut him off and said, "They have a ton of evidence in their hands. It'll be tough to push it back to them, and it might make our situation even worse. Also don't forget, in many people's eyes, the civilizations can touch some things, but civilian organizations can't. Even if we claim the three Universal Civilizations created it first, they don't have to explain much. Plus, they can totally say that if not because the Mechanic Emperor had ulterior motives, why would he have stolen this technology? It's too easy to find such reasons."

Then, he paused before continuing. "The moment the Mechanic Emperor gave them this leverage, we were already in a dilemma. At this point, the matter has exceeded the verbal argument stage, and the public opinion is only an add-on. Either they step back, or we do; there's no way any of us can dodge the core of the issue by playing tricks. It all depends on if we protect Manison or not, or if we give them the technology... I'll say this, we are going to protect Manison, and we are also not going to give up the technology to them. At most, we'll make what we do sound better in words."

They exchanged looks.

"What do we need to do now?"

"I've already spoken to Manison about sending your troops in the Primeval Star River to the Mechanical Race territory to form a line of defense, stopping the three Universal Civilizations' joint fleet. As for yourselves, stay here for now. I'll go to the Primeval Star River with the King. If a fight breaks out, then I'll bring you guys over to help." Han Xiao shook his head.

Hearing this, the others had nothing to say and left the room with a lot of things on their minds. They needed some time to digest the sudden changes.

Han Xiao leaned back in his chair, took out his communicator, and looked at what was going on online. The terror of the Virtual Mutiny Virus was carved deep in everyone's heart. The entire galactic society was in a panic. Almost all the messages were scolding Manison for how ambitious he was and how what he did threatened the universe once again.

After the virus incident, Manison's reputation had been poor. His goal of developing this technology was clearly to weaponize it. Almost all galactic residents were terrified and furious.

Even Han Xiao was dragged into it. His act of destroying the virus core was doubted by countless people. Many people felt that if Black Star still had the same mindset as before, he should once again destroy or give the virus technology to the three Universal Civilizations. Otherwise, what he did back then might be an act of destroying the technology on the surface to avoid the three Universal Civilizations' attention while working with Manison behind the curtains. "Tsk..."

Han Xiao curled his lips and did not say anything. He then closed the tabs and called Manison.

Very soon, Manison appeared on the screen.

"Black Star, when will you be coming?" Manison cut to the chase.

"Wait for a while." Han Xiao said with a poker face, "Are you really not going to migrate the Mechanical Race?"

"No, leave them be." Manison was unconcerned.

"... Wait for me to go over then."

Han Xiao did not want to say anything else to Manison. He ended the call, stood up, and left the room.

Over the next few days, the explored universe remained stormy. The three Universal Civilizations' joint fleet advanced toward the Mechanical Race' territory without hiding their movements at all, while the troops the association had in the Primeval Star River also started to gather around the Mechanical Race's territory.

Fleets from Beyond Grade A organizations were stationed at half a day's distance from the Mechanical Race territory around it, forming a spherical defense formation, and blocked all routes toward the Mechanical Race territory, allowing no one to pass. They did not hide their intention. They were clearly blocking the three Universal Civilizations' joint fleet's path.

At the same time, responding to the three Universal Civilizations' announcement, the association also made an announcement to the galactic society.

"The association did not know about the Mechanic Emperor developing the Virtual Mutiny Virus before this and is now investigating it. As everyone knows, solving conflicts between Beyond Grade As and restraining the actions of Beyond Grade As are the purpose of the association's founding. If the Mechanic Emperor is found to possess the Virtual Mutiny Virus technology, the association will certainly take actions and ensure this technology won't damage the order of the galactic society.

“However, the association won’t interfere with one’s freedom to research and grow, nor does it agree with how all dangerous technology must be controlled by the three Universal Civilizations. If the Mechanic Emperor does indeed possess this dangerous technology, the association will restrain him and tell him to seal this technology up and never use it, ensuring the safety of the galactic society all the same.

“Also, the association strongly opposes the military actions the three Universal Civilizations are currently taking against Manison’s people. This is an immoral act. The association hopes the three Universal Civilizations will remove their troops immediately and not escalate the issue. When the association completes the investigation, it will give the galactic society an answer. There’s no need for the three Universal Civilizations to interfere.”

As soon as this announcement was made, it shocked the galactic society once again.

Many people originally thought the association would back away this time for sure; they did not expect them to be this firm.

Although the Beyond Grade A Association said that they were investigating, their attitude of not backing down was clear. They directly expressed the fact that this was an internal matter, and they would not let the three Universal Civilizations interfere. Plus, their point was sensible...

The three Universal Civilizations can monitor things, so can we.

The galactic residents trusted the three Universal Civilizations more, but since the association claimed to ensure that the galactic society would not be damaged, though many had doubts, as onlookers who knew nothing about the truth, they could not accuse the association of having ulterior motives.

After all, the Beyond Grade A Association was no ordinary civilian organization, it had a certain authority. At the same time, the outside world could not find out if Manison’s personal research was done with the association’s support. Therefore, at least the reason the association gave made sense... As for whether their monitoring would really work, words could not prove it.

The Super Star Cluster Alliance that was watching earlier jumped out again at the sight of opportunity, supporting the association’s decision. They questioned on what grounds could one guarantee that giving the technology to the three Universal Civilizations would be safe and that it was just an excuse to rob the technology from others.

It was not weird for them to do this. The Super Star Cluster Alliance was probably the last group that wanted to see the three Universal Civilizations have the Virtual Mutiny Virus technology. If not because they were not in the position to, they would have suggested to be the third party to ‘monitor’ this technology.

To countless galactic residents, the situation of the world changed way too rapidly. It felt like only yesterday when everything was peaceful, and suddenly, a war was about to break out.

When the intense atmosphere spread throughout the entire universe, the joint fleet of the three Universal Civilizations finally came into contact with the defense circle the Beyond Grade A Association had built up around the Mechanical Race territory.

Inside the bright night sky, the enormous joint fleet slowly advanced. The exterior defense circle outside the Mechanical Race's territory was already in sight. The defense circle was formed by fleets, temporary fortresses, and portable satellite bases. From one look, it appeared to extend infinitely. Psionic protective shields were set up in a formation and formed an enormous protective shield, extending all the way out like a wall made of energy, dividing the two areas.

Inside the main fleet's command room, Fleet Commander Simon Tagman stood in front of the porthole and stared closely at the defense circle that was getting closer.

He was a high-level military commander of the Federation of Light who was appointed as the main commander of this joint fleet.

The aide-de-camp looked at the radar and whispered, "Commander Simon, we've already reached their defense circle. They're blocking the way. Should we stop?"

Without even turning around, Simon calmly said, "What's the order?"

"Surround the Mechanical Race's territory."

"Is this the Mechanical Race's territory?" Simon asked.

"N-no..."

"Then why stop?"

"Understood!" The aide-de-camp took a deep breath and ordered in the communication channel with a deep voice, "All ships, continue to advance and get ready for battle. If anyone tries to stop us, fire at will!" The order was quickly passed down. Cannon barrels extended from the battleships of the joint fleet and aimed forward, ready to fire any time.

The front of the joint fleet gradually entered the attack range of the defense circle. The distance between the two sides kept reducing, and the atmosphere kept becoming more and more intense. Almost every crew member held their breath.

Ding!

At this time, a remote projection suddenly appeared in the command room. It was a military officer of the combat command department.

"Order from above, all fleets stop advancing immediately."

"Stop." Simon raised his hand.

The aide-de-camp immediately passed the order down.

Very soon, the joint fleet slowly stopped only a short distance from the defense circle. The battleships at the front could almost see the crews of the other side through the portholes.

Seeing this, the atmosphere in the command room relaxed a little. Everyone was relieved.

Seemingly not surprised at all, Simon looked at the remote projection of the military officer and asked, "Any other orders from above?"

“... Spread out, surround them, and standby. Wait for the results of the negotiation.”

In the Mechanical Race’s territory, Manison’s Lord’s Avatar looked at the remote surveillance screen and smiled.

“You guessed right. The three Universal Civilizations are not willing to start a war right away.”

Han Xiao sat opposite him with his eyes narrowed and casually replied, “The three Universal Civilizations definitely did not send a fleet so openly here to start a fight. If they really wanted to attack the Mechanical Race territory, they would have used the Multi-Dimensional Sky Opening Transportation Device long ago. Plus, your original isn’t here, so attacking the Mechanical Race won’t do much. This should be their last test.”

This had already become the center of the storm, and the attention of the entire universe was focusing on the situation here. He had arrived not long ago. He and Manison were the only Beyond Grade As there at the moment.

“Although they’ve made up their minds, they’re sadly not decisive enough.” Manison shook his head.

Han Xiao glanced at him and said, “Things have become like this because of you. Don’t you have anything to say?”

“... What are you trying to say? You want to get off the boat now?” Manison paused.

“Nothing, but now that I’m backing you up, at least act like the one who’s being helped.”

“Humph, what a strange thing to say. Do you like to see me put down my pride that much?” Manison was not in a bad mood now, so he did not mind it. “Alright, help me settle this matter, please.”

Han Xiao’s eyes moved subtly and glanced at the interface. He then grinned faintly for a short instant.

He slowly stood up.

“Let’s go. It’s time for me to meet my old boss.”