

The Mechanic 141

Chapter 141: Duel

Wearing his power suit, Zhang Wei stood at the front of the battleship as the barrier. Lambert dealt damage by sniping.

This assault boat did not only have Zhang Wei's team of four—as Lin Yao was not taking part in battle—there were still ten elite fighters.

The battleship surged forward through the waves, surfing through the onslaught of bullets and missiles before it collided into the Germinal ship with a loud bang. The infiltration team jumped aboard and began exchanging blows intensely with the Germinal soldiers.

The infiltration team's attack strategy only had two goals. The first was to massacre the barge's attack forces and destroy the land vehicles that were on the boat. The second was to take control of the boat. As Hsela's backup troop did not arrive as planned, the infiltration team was not in a good position. They were falling into a difficult battle.

The Germinal Organization's plans were affected, causing their progress to slow down. The Germinal executive officers set out to counter Stardragon's infiltration team.

Zhang Wei's team was struggling to get the upper hand on the barge. Suddenly, a strong gale came rushing over without warning, like a ghost. The team's internal alarms rang on high alert as they hurried to dodge it. However, they still could not dodge the shockwaves of the wind. A strong wave of dizziness overcame them.

Clenching their teeth, they looked toward the direction where the enemy was standing. There, they saw Hila whom they had once crossed swords before.

Hila had a cold expression. She still remembered she had once fought the Stardragon soldiers. Last time, she had taken a small loss because of them. Remembering that, her killing intent was more murderous than before. Both of her hands emitted a dim, gray light, as if they were balls of mysterious, sinister energy that could suck them in. Furthermore, it was continuously growing in size. It would be hard to imagine how frightening the next blow could be.

Hou Yue had a pained expression on his face as he held up both his guns with the intent to aim. But with a light sneer from Hila, her voice carried forth an overwhelming psychological suppression from the Necromastery ability. As if he had taken a hard blow, Hou Yue staggered backward as his nose spurted blood.

Hila did not even spare him a look as she turned her gaze to Li Yalin. Her killing intent was clear. This was the special female assassin that had used the Lightweight Mechanical Arm; she definitely knew Zero's whereabouts!

Li Yalin had a look of steely determination. She pulled out her Foldable Machete as she lunged toward Hila fearlessly. As the pugilist in the team, she had to initiate battles.

Hopefully I can last the first bout. Li Yalin quietly clenched her jaw. As long as she could hold out till Hila's next attack, she had confidence that she could close in to restrict Hila's movements such that she would not have time to release another one of those psychological attacks. Even though Hila's abilities were strong, she was only using the attack on a superficial level, and every release required build-up to release the skill.

"Naive." Hila remained expressionless. Flipping both her palms, she was about to use the highly-concentrated Necromancer's abilities to shock Lin Yalin into an idiot.

However, the next second, a sudden large wave of power surged toward the side of her ribs, causing her to fly off sideways as she collided into the side of an SUV, and her ribs throbbed with pain.

Hila was in so much pain that her face turned ashen. With a deep heave, the Necromancer's power on her hand suddenly dissipated. In her shock, she turned to look at the source of the attack.

There was a van driving along the shore, staying alongside the boat. From the driver's window seat, a sniper was hinged on the window as a black-gloved palm held onto this deadly weapon with its muzzle releasing thick smoke.

Han Xiao cocked the gun, and another smoking bullet was released from the muzzle. He sat in the main driver's seat, and the smart-chip system in the van began driving on autopilot. Driving at a constant speed, it drove alongside Germinal's boat. When they reached the valley, he had spotted traces that Stardragon might let Germinal troops off the hook. So, Han Xiao drove to the lake beforehand; his target to capture the Germinal executive officers.

He spotted Hila in an instant, then he saw Zhang Wei and the others. Slightly taken aback, he did not expect this coincidence. Seeing his former teammate fall into danger, Han Xiao did not say anything else before pulling out Red Falcon and firing. Hila's defensive air barrier was weakened to a large extent, and its penetration abilities dissipated, turning into momentum that pushed her away.

The interface displayed Hila's abilities. After one year, Hila had leveled up from LV 30 to LV 40, and Han Xiao was at the same level as her. He could see her stats, and her two strongest stats were Mystery and Intelligence. Her abilities were described as well.

[Necromancer's Power]: Dictating death and capturing souls.

Potential Rating: S

Outsiders could only see the description of the ability. Only the master of the ability could see the specific effects and the extent that it was developed.

Through her basic knowledge, where she used her genes to develop her ability, more applications for her techniques could be obtained.

Even though Hila's ability potential was high, she was only at LV 40 now. Her strength had yet to be completely used to its fullest potential, but Han Xiao did not have any interest in Hila's battling methods.

Hila's special abilities seemed to lean toward attacking, but actually, it was actually a versatile ability. From Hila's abilities, he saw several textbook specialties as well.

[High-speed Fusion]: Grim Reaper's power is able to heal flesh wounds—Under regular circumstances, +500% health regeneration speed. While using energy, +1000%–2000% health regeneration speed

[Vitals Immunity]: Scent of death supports your life—Vitals are immune to critical attacks

[Soul Disregard]: Dictators of Death fear nothing—+20% resistance to negative effects, +30% psychological resistance

[Ignore Sudden Death]: Death is like the wind, always by your side—Will not receive any fatal attacks. When health points are lower than 1%, a special status effect will be obtained

Han Xiao was helpless; these abilities made Hila practically impenetrable. No, it should not be described as impenetrable, but rather like a cockroach that would not die no matter how much one hit it, unless one used an extremely strong attack ability to finish Hila off.

Oh, I forgot, she was even immune to instant death. Forget it, I'm probably better off just taking a nap...

Han Xiao shook his head.

As expected of the future big boss, the number of her abilities is almost as high as Bennett's. The only difference between the main roles is just luck.

Hila, the hardest person to take on, was the first person he had met, but Zhang Wei's team had fallen into a difficult situation. Since he had the means to help out, he naturally would not stand aside and not lend a helping hand. After all, they had fought together side by side before.

Taking advantage of Hila's distraction, Li Yalin closed in and slashed at her. Hila, as she staggered back in pain, was infuriated by Han Xiao's sneak attack. Meanwhile, her wounds' recovery could be seen by the naked eye. However, her being on the boat meant that she could not take out the sniper on the shore. After all, she did not specialize in speed and could only use a vehicle as a barricade against the sniper.

Yet, once Li Yalin, Zhang Wei, and the others found an opening, they instantly engaged in battle with her, forcing Hila to move out of position, exposing her to Han Xiao's sniping view.

Even though they did not know who the sniper on the shore was, they knew that he was evidently there to help. So, Zhang Wei's team took the initiative to launch a cooperative attack.

This strategy was very effective. Hila's movements were instantly restricted, and with the sniper's uncanny ability to find openings, he managed to stop her from counter-attacking at the right moment every time. This synchronized perfectly with Li Yalin, Zhang Wei, and the others' movements. Hila realized that she had actually fallen into a situation where she could not retaliate at all. Thus, she could only stay on the defensive, dodging every attack.

But from Zhang Wei and the others' perspective, it was a ray of light for them. Originally, the team of four had created a battle strategy. But after Hou Yue received heavy injuries, it rendered him unable to fight and left a hole in their teamwork. But that sniper was able to patch up that gap. At every critical moment, he managed to fire a timely shot to assist them.

It was as if he was someone who had a solid grasp of their fighting style.

Who was he?

Li Yalin and Zhang Wei began to have such thoughts.

Hou Yue, who was still suffering from dizzy spells, could only fend off regular soldiers. Watching Zhang Wei and the others coordinate with the sniper, he suddenly felt as if that sniper was actually a real team member of theirs, and it was he who was only an outsider.

"Hila is held up?" Lin Yu furrowed his eyebrows. Looking toward the van at the shore, he squinted. "Black Phantom? What is he doing here?"

They were almost at the end of the estuary. Just slightly ahead of them was the sea. Lin Yu was in dire need for Hila's abilities to deal AOE damage. She definitely had to get out of that situation. He ordered, "Ugar, get rid of Black Phantom."

Ugar had already boarded the ship. Overwhelming with his dark purple aura and without any further orders, he was about to lunge toward Han Xiao, who was in the van. But suddenly, he sensed a wave of energy from someone with pugilist powers that were equal to his. When he turned to look, a middle-aged Stardragon special agent had just stepped onto another ship. His fists, wrapped with a flaming-red aura, slammed into the side of an SUV that was parked on the deck with a force comparable to a steam hammer.

That car instantly deflated as it flew out like a bullet shell. Along the way, it collided with a few of Germinal's soldiers and another two cars as they simultaneously flew off the ship.

That fist was as strong as a missile!

Chapter 142: Teleportation Is a Double-edged Sword

"Division 13's trump card!" Ugar's face was solemn, and he no longer cared about Han Xiao. He was locked onto the middle-aged man. Both were powerful martial artists, and as their eyes met, it was as though a bomb just exploded.

Both of them were fuming, and their fists collided like two streaks of transverse lightning striking the sky. The scene seemed to freeze while the sky roared. Ripples could be seen on the surface of the river.

"What a chill!"

Martial artists specialized on controlling their own spirit, and it specialized on training body energy.

Division 13 had played their trump card. Lin Yu had no choice but to send out Ugar, who was at the same rank, to fight back. Exasperated, he ordered, "Renette, go get rid of that Black Phantom."

“Easy,” Renette uttered.

As an assassin with a teleportation ability, Renette believed he was the nemesis of all snipers, even if it was Black Phantom. With a snap of his fingers, the tired Black Phantom would be gone from this world.

Renette had always seen himself as an artist.

The next second, black mist flashed, and Renette was nowhere to be seen. All of a sudden, he appeared in the driver’s seat of the truck and was going to stab the sword through Han Xiao’s head.

“Teleportation?” Han Xiao was alert and immediately activated the full body electromagnetic armor.

However, the sword was unable to reach even his armor. Frenzied Sword had reacted quickly. He had rushed to block the sword for Han Xiao and died on the spot.

Both were taken aback. Eyes filled with bloodlust, Han Xiao reacted within seconds. He grabbed Renette by his hand using one arm while he activated the thermo-electrical incisor gloves on his other hand. Amid the buzzing of the electricity, he slapped the gloves onto Renette’s face, and immediately, a burning smell filled the air.

“AHH!”

The shrill scream was ear-piercing!

Renette was in crazy pain, and he teleported straight back to the ship. As he tried to move his arm, he realized that Han Xiao was grabbing onto his arm. Han Xiao was also brought onto the barge.

Han Xiao moaned angrily and just would not let go of Renette’s face. With his five fingers penetrating Renette’s skull, the damage dealt was increasing at the speed of waterfall. The pain was so unbearable that Renette let out painful beastly cry, and his expression changed. Han Xiao abruptly raised his other hand and gave him a violent slap. The strength of that slap was over fifty points and instantaneously smashed Renette’s brain into a charred lump of meat.

You’ve killed Renette (LV 46).

You’ve gained 60,000 EXP.

Target was 6 levels higher than you. Energy expended: 82%

You’ve gain additional 49,200 EXP!

[Second Advancement]

Progress: 2/3

Han Xiao panted, trying to catch his breath. *Teleportation is indeed powerful but can be weak too. He is suitable to be an assassin, but he thought my weakness was close range attacks.*

Teleportation was not a bad ability. If the Superhuman was careful enough, they could be unbeatable. In fact, there were small differences in various teleportation abilities. For instance, when one teleported, could another be brought along as well? How big was the range? Was it within visible range, or was it anywhere one could think of? What kind of teleportation was this; was it imagination, or was it the recombination of matter? Was the energy consumption constant, or did it depend on the distance travelled? Was it purely just traveling from place to place, or could it be aggressive too?

It was all in the details. These were the death-causing reasons.

In the past, he had encountered other characters capable of teleportation, such as a guy with recombination of matter type of teleportation ability. Once he crashed into a battleship's ionizing shield, he would instantly dissociate into powder. One with the imagination type of teleportation ability would teleport all over the galaxy and ended up overexerting his energy and become weak. Renette's teleportation seemed to be a mix between imagination and recombination of matter. When he grabbed hold of another person's body, the other party would also teleport together. This belonged to contact type of teleportation and could be dangerous once one was trapped in it.

His sniping seemed to be the reason that led to Renette's death. This was also an idea that Han Xiao liked to mislead the others. When assassins thought that close-range attacks could kill him, it usually led to their own death. This disguise instantly tricked one teleporter. If it was a normal battle, Han Xiao knew that he would be helpless against Renette.

Han Xiao stood up and finally understood the situation he was in. First, he got brought onto the ship by Renette, and then Germinal troops were all around him, with their weapons all pointing at him and preventing his escape.

Completely surrounded!

Han Xiao's eyes froze as he covered his chest with his hands.

"Fire!"

Endless bullets drowned Han Xiao.

All of a sudden, with Han Xiao in the center, a strong invisible force was released. Enemies and vehicles within the range of twenty meters all flew out and fell into the river. This area became empty.

Han Xiao was the only person left behind. His chest was not covered by the electromagnetic armor, revealing a palm size big precise device tied to his chest. The device was creaking, and slowly, it became softer, eventually coming to a stop.

Field Repulsive Machine

Type: Extraordinary Machine

Quality: Green

Energy Capacity: 110/150 (requires charging)

Effective Range: 20m

Effect: Releases a strong repulsive field and pushes away and objects in the range

Cooldown Time: 6 minutes

Remarks: Get lost

After experimenting for two months, Han Xiao had obtained a variety of blue prints and had already started to suit himself up.

Han Xiao pulled out his two third-generation Berserk Eagles, activated his Electromagnetic Hover-boots, and jumped onto another ship.

Since I am here, I might as well kill some people!

With Renette's blood on his body, Han Xiao started his killing on the barge.

The Berserk Eagles had bullets coming out of them non-stop, and because the recoil was too strong, he was unable to move his wrist. The bullets penetrated through every single Germinal soldier, either through their chest or head shot, leaving the floor full of corpses. It was just like a dark movie, whereby no one could stop him.

Soon enough, he arrived on the ship with Li Yalin.

Han Xiao's willful actions soon caught the attention of everyone.

Lin Yu was furious. Renette, that idiot, did not just get himself killed but had even brought the monster onto the ship. Their ship was about to leave the estuary, and yet he still made such a mess!

"Quickly, get rid of that Black Phantom!" Lin Yu demanded. As their commander, he could not attack easily. If he did, there would be no one left to observe the battle.

Hila had long discovered Han Xiao, and she was already full of anger. She clapped her hands and created a mental shock to deter Li Yalin and the others. She took a deep breath and gathered all the power of the corpses, turned, and screamed at Han Xiao. She used all the gathered power on Han Xiao, and the air rippled like a sound wave.

This was like an exploding bomb in the brain!

A sudden pain hit Han Xiao. It felt as though someone was using a spoon to stir all around his brain. The sky in his sight seemed to be tilted as he lost control of his body and stumbled to one side. Feeling nauseous, the veins on Han Xiao's temples seemed to jump vigorously as if they were going to explode.

You have suffered 211 mental damage!

You are in a dizzy state!

With my intelligence characteristic providing me with a mental defense, I still suffered 200+ damage! If I did not have [Low-Level Strengthened Life], I could have lost almost one fifth of my HP!

On a technologically-advanced new planet, Hila's combat strength was scary!

Bearing the pin-pricking pain in his head, Han Xiao whipped out a gray grenade from his waist and threw it out. His accuracy was compromised, and the grenade landed ten meters away from Hila.

Hila thought that this was the side effect from him being dizzy and did not pay attention to it. She decided to return with a more impactful one, but out of the blue, the grenade detonated. There was no flame nor shrapnel, only an ear-piercing high-pitched sound that rushed directly into her eardrums.

Hila's brain started hurting, and she felt the world was turning, too.

"You can make people dizzy, so can I!" Han Xiao gnashed his teeth.

Burst Grenade: Uses high frequency sound to disrupt the eardrum.

Range: 50m

Effects: causes one to feel dizzy

Magnitude of affects determined by Endurance.

Chapter 143: I Will Recognize You Even If You Turn into Ash

Stunning enemies was a tactic commonly used by psychics. Their strong willpower resistance was their strength. However, burst grenades would cause a sense of dizziness at a physiological level because it caused ear fluid imbalances. Therefore, despite the strong willpower resistance psychics possessed, endurance was key in this case. That was the biggest weakness of all psychics, leaving them defenseless.

Hila immediately suffered damage from the attack. Agony was all over her face as she stumbled from one side to another like a wave.

No matter who Hila was, during a battle, she only had one identity—enemy! Han Xiao knew no mercy and continued shooting coldly. The bullets landed all over Hila's body. Eventually, when the bullets ran out, he set the Electromagnetic Hover-boots to the highest power, and before Hila could retaliate, he kicked Hila. She flew up into the air, knocked onto the railing, and finally fell into the river.

The river was stained with blood as Hila's body sank. Han Xiao did not believe that Hila would die so easily, and there was no news on the interface. He expected that after all these attacks, Hila would be able to recover soon enough, but there was no need to worry for the moment.

This enemy is so difficult to kill; I can't just tackle her right now.

As this thought flashed through his head, Han Xiao then had time to think about Li Yalin, a team mate from the past, who was now looking at him with shock.

"Black Phantom?" Zhang Wei asked carefully. He could not help but feel a sense of familiarity.

Zhang Wei did not seem to not recognize him, and that was great. Thinking about the feud between the Germinal Organization and Zero, it was best if he continued hiding his identity. Han Xiao's eyes sparkled and heard Li Yalin suddenly yelling, "Han Xiao?"

"Han Xiao? Who is that? I think you've got the wrong person."

"It's you! Stop pretending! I could recognize you even if you turned into ash!" Li Yalin gnashed her teeth.

Damn, how did she recognize me? Based on my polished acting skills, how could I still be exposed?

Han Xiao was dumbfounded.

This young lady is really unpredictable!

Members of the troops were stunned. They were doubtful about Li Yalin's judgement, but at the same time, they were a little convinced. At that moment, Han Xiao, who was in full black, holding Berserk Eagles in both hands, suddenly revealed his own face.

"Oh, that's what you actually look like..." Zhang Wei murmured as he finally understood why Han Xiao had always worn a mask in the past.

In the past, when they were working together for Division 13, Han Xiao had always worn a mask. Members of the troops never saw what he looked like and never knew Han Xiao's true identity. At the moment, they thought that the face they saw on the facial simulator was Han Xiao's actual face. They had expected him to be quite handsome.

No one expected that the famous Black Phantom would turn out to be a former comrade. Everyone was puzzled; had he been that strong in the past? Why didn't he show that, and why did he want to leave Stardragon to become an assassin? The higher-ups seemed to have acquiesced, too.

Wait, he became the Black Phantom of the Dark Net Organization, and the higher-ups were so ambivalent about it; was this actually a secret mission?

"You got it wrong. No time for nonsense now, the enemies are here!" Han Xiao said sternly.

Li Yalin raged. "It's no use even if you deny!"

Right! The higher-ups must have sent him for a secret mission; that's why he cannot reveal his identity! Could it be that Stardragon is going after the Dark Net next?

The crowd was unknowingly forming a misunderstanding about the situation.

The conversation ended quickly. On the battlefield, everyone could only suppress their doubts and focus on dealing with the enemies. It was a fierce battle between Stardragon's commando squad and Germinal Organization's troops. Superhumans were found all over the battlefield, launching attacks with their powers. A symphony of cries of agony and gunshots played through the battle.

A Germinal executive headed straight for Han Xiao. Han Xiao pointed toward the executive with his hands forming a pistol and signalled to the Stardragon team to join forces against the enemy. Zhang Wei and his team naturally had no objection and started fighting by his side.

As the Germinal executive rushed over, his body suddenly swelled up like a balloon and transformed into a four-meter-tall white beast. The white beast started running on the deck like a wolf, and his heavy body caused the deck to vibrate. He opened his big mouth and pounced over. This action was full of elegance and strength.

Transfiguration was a common branch from the Esper family. They could take different forms—some weaker, and others stronger. The forms they took on could be so strange that they could even be out of the imagination. It was said to be related to evolution and various gene mutations. Some would transform into an alien creature while some would transform into wild beasts. This Esper branch appeared most commonly on planets that were magic based. This trait could be passed down through blood inheritance or be acquired through training.

Science and magic formed different civilizations, and there were differences in the understanding of certain things. In addition, their methods of experimentation could be different, too, and each had its own unique points in terms of advancement.

The great white wolf hopped around the deck as it tried to attack. Han Xiao, Zhang Wei, and two others joined forces to try to takedown the wolf. Han Xiao felt it was no one of his business. He allowed Zhang Wei and his power suit to act as the tank while Han Xiao stood at the side and tried to launch some sneak attacks. Sometimes he would use his thermo-electrical incisor gloves to slice a piece of meat off the wolf.

Hou Yao also used his Berserk Eagles, and his action was swift as the coursing river. Initially, he was proud of himself. After witnessing how skillful and minimalistic Han Xiao was and how he would never miss a single bullet, Hou Yao felt like he was making a fool of himself.

You really live up to your name, Mr. Black Phantom, such dexterity in handling double guns, Hou Yao admired secretly.

He had joined Zhang Wei's team mainly because he had received the orders from the high-ups, and he had never ever heard of Zhang Wei's team being able to produce good results. To his surprise, the extraordinary Black Phantom had actually been part of this team in the past.

The great white wolf was beaten up badly. Realizing that it was beyond its ability to retaliate and other executives were unable to help, it turned and fled the scene. Han Xiao had already expected this, and right then, he fired his Berserk Eagles at the great white wolf's eyes, activating the [Flaming Will].

This time, the damage was increased by 3.2 times!

Boom!

The great white wolf's eyes exploded, and it groaned in pain as it fell onto the deck. The whole barge shook for a second. Zhang Wei immediately dealt another blow. With his ammunition emptied, Zhang Wei's arm armor extended into a golden sword. He leapt as his exoskeleton provided him with the energy and latched onto the great white wolf's body as he slashed it violently many times.

The others came forward to help and eventually killed the great white wolf together.

Just then, the backup troops finally arrived at the port and let off a signal flare to signal for them to retreat. At that moment, Zhang Wei turned and asked Han Xiao, "Han... Black Phantom, do you want to leave with us?"

"No, thanks." Han Xiao waved his hand.

"Alright, thanks for your help, I'll remember this. Stardragon will also remember this!"

Zhang Wei's speech had a hidden meaning. Together with his troops, he turned and leapt onto the assault boat. Lin Yalin stared in Han Xiao's direction.

As members of the Division 13 were withdrawing, Han Xiao activated his electromagnetic skating shoes and jumped onto the shore. He rushed for the truck that had been following him around automatically, jumped into the driver's seat, switched it to manual driving, and left the shore speedily.

Hila, who was wet through and through, climbed onto the ship. Fighting off her dizziness, she glared at the departing truck. She was always the one treating people like that, but this time around, she had actually had a taste of her own medicine.

"Black Phantom, I will remember you!" Hila eyes froze as her body healed quickly.

The Germinal troops arrived at the port and released a torpedo, causing the sea mines to explode. With the water exploding, they successfully entered the open sea.

Hesla's navy also came by and was not reconciled to not giving chase. Both ships were restricted by each other. In the midst of the firing the cannons, the Germinal ship sank.

Based on the battle strategies, the Germinal's forces broke free from the attacks and escaped.

However, based on the damages suffered from the battle, Germinal lost seventy percent of their troops while Hesla's losses were less than ten percent of what Germinal had lost. With that being said, victory was definitely not Germinal's.

Although they had not been able to stop all the Germinal forces, both nations were able to achieve the battle objective of damaging the enemy.

All in all, the winners of the battle were Stardragon and Hesla.

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Through the window, Han Xiao glanced at the sea. As the destruction from the sea battle slowly went out of sight, he shook his head.

"The battle is over."

Han Xiao glanced at Frenzied Sword, who seemed to have revived and was sitting beside him, and wrote him a mission with no requirements. Frenzied Sword had taken a stab for him, and thus, he would give him some EXP even if he did not need to.

The description of the mission was actually the reward for taking a stab for Han Xiao, and that made Frenzied Sword surprised. His action was purely voluntarily as he thought it was okay for him to die but Han Xiao must not. He did not expect any reward, and he became even more determined to protect Han Xiao.

After giving the reward, Han Xiao turned to his own interface and grinned from ear to ear.

[Second Advancement]

Progress: 3/3

The great white wolf that he had fought against with Zhang Wei was a LV 45 character. As it was a joint battle, the additional EXP obtained was little. However, the requirement for advancement could be said to have been completed, which meant...

I can advance!

Chapter 144: Reward and Impact

Han Xiao was right in the middle of a battlefield. He decided that it was not an appropriate time for his advancement.

I should get out of this battlefield first.

He decided to look through other information first, such as the results from [Tedramira River Battle]. His final evaluation was a B. He had 450,000 EXP on hand, which was far more than what he had expected, and he had millions of EXP accumulated on his interface as well.

[Fall of the Germinal]—the progress of that level A mission had increased by two percent, and the improvement for automated destruction was even better. The evacuating Germinal troops had been a large force made up of many different troops from different settlements. Therefore, when Stardragon and Hesla crippled the evacuees, he also took a share.

The total gain had reached twenty-one percent. This meant that he had completed the requirements of this quest. The Southern Continent could not offer him any further improvements. He could go to the Western Continent and the Northern Continent next to anticipate a large battle like this again. Then he could earn more EXP. After that, he would have to go to Germinal's home base on Andrea Mainland.

There would still be more gains he could reap in the future. So, Han Xiao would not cease [Fall of the Germinal] so quickly. Since the minimum standard was twenty percent and he had already completed the task, it gave him some confidence. This meant he could try and get a higher rating the next time around since he was no longer in a hurry to complete the task.

Based on his experience, the ratings from A-level missions would be higher. The reward was special this time around and not limited to experience, skills, expertise, talent points, special equipment, or even direct rewards of attribute points.

Han Xiao arrived at the location where the Dark Net helicopter was stationed. The driver was on standby as he moved the useful machinery up onto the helicopter. He then blew up the truck without leaving a single trace behind.

The truck had cost him a sum of money, but since he had an abundance of funds, he did not feel the pinch at all.

As the saying goes, it is easy to enter the luxury lifestyle when you're poor, but it is way more difficult to go back to a pauper kind of lifestyle when you're rich.

Han Xiao was very fortunate to step on the wealthy path. The market was huge, and he need not worry about money anymore.

"Everyone says that a man turns bad when he becomes rich, and that is so true," Han Xiao mumbled as he smoked a few cigarettes before getting onto the helicopter, instructing the pilot to take off.

The wind from the rotors was strong, forcing Han Xiao to squint.

...

Waves raged on the dark sea surface, and the smell of blood filled the air.

Breaking away from their pursuers, the Germinal fleet sailed in the boundless sea. They turned on anti-detection to prevent themselves from being discovered by the satellites.

There were many satellites orbiting Aquamarine, and many were from the previous civilization who had fallen. These satellites had been taken in by the Six Nations, but some of them had fallen into the hands of other forces. Some became public satellites for some hackers, and others became space junk.

Each ship had been charred by explosions, and the repairmen were busy fixing them, riveting the steel plates and repairing the damaged mechanical components one by one. The rest of the personnel were cleaning the deck and washing away the blood stains.

Breaking through the blockade made them suffer heavy losses, including the lives of 17 executives. Han Xiao alone had killed three. When Lin Yu was reporting back to the commander, he emphasized on these statistics.

Black Phantom's intervention surprised the commander. It turned quickly into anger as the commander started to feel like the Germinal Organization had seemed to turn into a tiger without teeth. Anyone dared to bully it. At the same time, it also increased his hatred for Zero.

He had disrupted the plan that they had laid out laboriously and also put the entire organization in grave danger. The commander remembered his conversation with Zero before he escaped from the lab. It angered him more whenever he thought of how this traitor managed to fulfil his promise.

The commander then made people add Black Phantom to the watch list as he had no energy to focus on a small assassin at the moment. The main problem on the commander's mind was the next step of the plan for the organization.

All the sub-bases of three continents had been evacuated. Now that they had lost the ability to be proactive, the Six Nations had no more reservations, and it was likely that they would seize this opportunity to start the war. The commander did not wish to see this happen as it would bring about critical damage to the organization. He needed time for the Germinal Organization to recuperate. They had to eliminate Zero, who could see into the future.

Germinal had been in Andrea Mainland for a long time, and if the six Nations were to start a war with them, there was no other choice but to leave the mainland and fight from the sea.

Release the Intercontinental Nuclear Bomb? Not to mention that there are civilians living on Andrea Mainland, Germinal also had anti-missile facilities. If they were forced to their wit's end, they could just set the nuclear bomb off and destroy the world... mutually assured destruction. Of course, that would be his last choice; he could not keep that as a trump card. Even if he were to use this as a threat, the Six Nations would never allow Germinal to continue to grow.

Maybe Red Maple, Ordina, and Hesla would come to a compromise at different stages and start to launch sneak attacks behind the scene, but the rash fool from Theseus and the madman from Raylen would not hold themselves back. They would likely reject any form of compromise and would only launch more aggressive counterattacks. They were not afraid to get destroyed together with Germinal if it had to be.

In the original plot, the four continents were the battlefields for the Six Nations. The secret sub-bases bound the Six Nations and affected the war to a huge extent. Only by having luck on their side, would they have been able to break the stalemate.

When the war got fierce, Germinal troops suffered many defeats and were hugely crippled. As there were not many armed forces left of Germinal, some politicians in the Six Nations perceived their goals to be reached and were voting to compromise. From their perspective, the goal of destroying Germinal had been achieved, and the Six Nations had suffered losses too. They had chosen to allow the Germinal Organization to stay on Andrea Mainland. After all, that was a place where no one wanted to be. Although it was impossible to remove the roots, it could prevent their resurgence.

Any hindrance to the Six Nations had been removed. The Germinal Organization had lost their powerful threats to the Six Nations, such as killing of civilians and destroying cities. Only the Andrea Mainland base camp was left for them, and the Six Nations could combine their powers into one, making the situation for Germinal worse than it already was.

The most urgent task at the moment was to divert the attention of the Six Nations, not allowing them to have time and resources to start the war. The commander gave this thought some thinking again, but he could not think of better ideas.

"Commander, Base 13 has something urgent to report. It is regarding a recent successful test subject from the [Genetic Improvement Plan]. This is the observation record." An assistant handed him a report.

The moment the commander heard the words 'test subject', he felt a headache. He was stunned when he looked at the report.

The assistant then said, "Cases like this did not just happen on one person. As you can see on the following list, this phenomenon seems to have occurred on a large scale, and it is spreading like an infectious disease."

The commander stayed quiet for a while, looking as if he was digesting the information. He then made a sneer under the mask.

"There are weird phenomena, but it seems like luck is on our side. The Six Nations will have to start worrying now."

...

In a room on the boat, the light was dim and kept blinking. Hila took off her black combat uniform and faced the mirror to count the number of wounds on her body. The most obvious one was a bullet at the side of her rib, and the dark blood clot that had formed was terrifying.

Hila was expressionless as she rubbed the wound to reveal her tender flesh.

She looked at the mirror and remembered how her skin used to be smooth and fair with barely any scars. Unlike now, she had so many marks of serious injuries on her body.

Hila lowered her eyelids, and her long lashes covered her eyes. She put on her clothes again and went out to stare at the sea silently.

She had to live and wait for the next battle.

...

Zhang Wei and his team took the plane back to Division 13. Other than Zhang Wei, who had to write the report, the rest of the team closed their eyes as they were overwhelmed with fatigue from the battle.

"Say... how did Han Xiao become Black Phantom?" Li Yalin suddenly opened her eyes with a confused look.

"What, Brother Xiao is Black Phantom?" Lin Yao was taken aback as he had not been involved in the battle and did not know about this matter.

Zhang Wei then explained the story to him.

Lin Yao was flabbergasted and could not help but ask, "You couldn't have recognized the wrong person, right?"

"I could recognize him even if he turned into ash!" Lin Yalin coldly laughed with confidence.

"Are we not going to look for him and bring him back?"

"He was embarrassed when he left. He must be on a secret mission. I will ask the higher-ups when I report to them," Zhang Wei said as he shook his head.

Lin Yalin could not help but add, “Do help me ask when he is intending to repay me as well...”

Zhang Wei was lost for words.

“Little Lin Lin, you do not seem to be hurt.” Di Susu, who was in the same plane, came over. Li Yalin’s face suddenly slammed down as she turned her head, ignoring her.

Di Susu was not bothered. She pushed the shy Lin Yao aside and sat down beside Li Yalin. With a playful smile, she moved closer to Li Yalin. She then moved further away hurriedly as if Di Susu was the source of a virus.

Di Susu loved Li Yalin’s face of discomfort. She laughed, turning her eyes away, and asked, “Are you guys talking about Black Phantom? I met him once in the past and heard he took part in the war as well.”

Chapter 145: The Road to BOSS

Li Yalin’s eyes lit up. She was very certain that Black Phantom was Han Xiao. Curious about what happened to him after he left Division 13, she looked past her annoyance with Di Su Su and asked her eagerly, “What was he doing when you met him?”

“At that time, his code name was still Mr. Black, a Scorpion-level assassin, who was involved in a defense mission in Seagull City with the leader of the Dark Net.”

Li Yalin pumped her intently for more information. “Have you heard anything else?”

Di Su Su raised her eyebrows. “Why are you so concerned?”

“I’m curious about him,” Li Yalin explained. She felt that there must have been a deeper reason for Han Xiao becoming Black Phantom. He would not have exposed his identity easily.

Curious? Oh no, that would usually be the first step to the beginning of a love story. We must kill that possibility in its cradle. Di Su Su’s eyes froze but her smile remained. She said slowly, “Oh, I got some information about Black Phantom from a female assassin with codename Golden Fox...”

Five minutes later, the listening crowd was staring with glazed eyes, trying their best to process the huge amount of information.

Lin Yao trembled with fear. At some point in time, Lambert stopped wiping his blade.

Lin Yalin mumbled under her breath, “No wonder he had no physical urge when he was touching me...”

Hou Yue swallowed dryly and told himself that he would hide away if Han Xiao ever returned to the team.

“When you meet him next time, be careful.” Di Su Su chuckled, got up, and sashayed away, leaving the group staring at one another.

Zhang Wei coughed. “He is our teammate after all. Don’t discriminate against him.”

Everyone nodded hesitantly in agreement.

Zhang Wei coughed again as he continued to write the report. However, the news was unsettling. He could not ease his mind to focus fully on his report but pushed on nonetheless. As soon as he was done, he got up to look for his Commanding Officer. After submitting his report, he requested to speak to the Secretary.

After a few minutes of waiting, his request was approved, and the video communication was put through. The bald head image of the Director of the Secret Service appeared on the screen. Zhang Wei went straight to the point and said, "We saw Han Xiao."

The Director of the Secret Service was surprised.

Since the last tip off, Han Xiao seemed to have vanished from the face of earth. He could not be contacted no matter how they tried. Although Division 13 had stopped their search for Han Xiao, they were still very curious about his whereabouts.

The Director of the Secret Service said in a serious tone, "Go on".

Zhang Wei phrased himself carefully and explained how they had discovered that Black Phantom was Han Xiao.

The Director of the Secret Service had initially thought that Zhang Wei had seen Han Xiao with his own eyes. Little did he know that it was only a speculation without hard evidence. He stared blankly for a moment before he muffled a chuckle and replied, "You... must have confused the two people."

How could Black Phantom be Han Xiao? One was a super assassin in the Dark Net Organization with an extraordinary level of combat capability. Although Han Xiao had demonstrated his capability previously, he was far weaker than Black Phantom. This guess was just too far off the mark!

The Director of the Secret Service was really amused. He almost blurted out that Han Xiao was Zero, but he stopped himself. The bureau had tight confidentiality rules that prevented him from disclosing Zero's identity to others.

Even though Han Xiao's whereabouts were highly erratic and unpredictable and the Germinal Organization was greatly undermined, hence there was probably not much of a need to conceal Han Xiao's identity, rules were rules.

After all, Han Xiao had been known as a field agent all this while. Concealing his identity could reduce the risk and lessen the trouble. Even though the Germinal Organization knew that Zero was liaising with Stardragon, they had not been able to find Zero all this while. Thus, the Director thought there was no need to let Zhang Wei in on this information.

Zhang Wei had never seen Han Xiao's real appearance, so he could not have found out that Han Xiao's true identity was Zero.

"Um, regarding Han Xiao's real identity... He cannot be Black Phantom."

Zhang Wei stared blankly. He thought, perhaps, that this was a hidden message from the Secretary, for him to stop being nosy about this issue. So... Han Xiao was most likely sent out by the higher-ups on a special mission, which would explain why he needed to conceal his identity.

"I understand," Zhang Wei replied with a knowing nod.

The Secretary was puzzled.

What do you understand? Strange...

...

Stardragon's Division 13 sorted out all the reports and intelligence information and handed the final document to the Seven-Seat Committee. The Committee held a meeting to sort out all the important issues that needed to be discussed, and finally, there was only the issue regarding Black Phantom left on the table. All six knew Black Phantom's reputation on the Dark Net. The discussion was more focused on how they should treat Black Phantom.

"He offered a helping hand, but it could have been at the Dark Net's request or because of his own personal decision."

An elder knocked on the table top and said slowly, "The Dark Net came to us previously. They are going to start the shelter program, so they are requesting our aid. So, this should be a friendly gesture from them."

The members nodded in agreement. The Dark Net had always remained a neutral party. If this was a sign that they are leaning toward the Six Nations, it would definitely be a good turn of events. The Seven-Member Committee quickly concluded that it would support the Dark Net's shelter program and approved their request for material aid. This was their opportunity to return the favor and win them over.

After the meeting was over, Gu Hui and Elder Gao pushed open the heavy door of the conference room and walked down the quiet empty corridor side by side, discussing a separate issue in a hushed voice.

"Have you gotten any other news about Han Xiao?"

"He has not been seen ever since he gave us some intelligence two months back."

Gu Hui shook his head. Han Xiao was the person who provided the information. Division 13 was eager to get in contact with him again, but he was not picking up the calls nor answering any messages. As if he had vanished off the face of the earth, he was completely off the grid. No one was aware of his whereabouts or his plans.

Gu Hui's heart sank as he recalled Han's scrupulous nature.

Please don't be wreaking havoc again...

As for Zhang Wei's speculation, Gu Hui had only heard from the Director of the Secret Service who briefly mentioned it. Without any real evidence, he would not be too bothered. How could Black Phantom be Han Xiao? His looks and combat capability were just not comparable.

Zhang Wei did not know Han Xiao's real identity, so he was blindly guessing, but Gu Hui was aware that Han Xiao was Zero. Their intel was asymmetric; that was probably why it caused a misunderstanding.

...

Information was updated on the Dark Net, and some of the information regarding the Battle of Tedramira River was circulated out. Most people were worried about the volatility of the situation, as if the dark clouds of war were looming on the horizon once again.

The information contained news of Black Phantom's involvement in the fight. Many forces were very concerned regarding the actions of this super assassin. It was apparent that Black Phantom was an extraordinarily powerful Mechanic. There were quite a number of powerful Espers and Pugilist, but Mechanics with high combat capability were rare. Black Phantom should be added to that short list of powerful Mechanics.

"He still made a high profile move."

Bennett sighed with profound resignation and sipped his herbal potion that was meant to suppress his wounds.

Out of the blue, Wang Yuan received a call. His face lit up with joy and exclaimed, "Stardragon has promised material aid!"

Bennett was surprised. That was not a small sum, but Stardragon had agreed to it so readily. He asked, "What did they say?"

"Well, they said they are very grateful for our help."

Bennett frowned in puzzlement. "Help? What did we do?"

On second thought, Bennett realized that Stardragon must have thought that they had sent Black Phantom. Black Phantom was seen as a representative of the Blood Pact Society, and his actions were inevitably labelled as representing the Dark Net Organization.

Bennett was at a loss, not knowing whether to cry or to laugh. Black Phantom had unintentionally done him a favor. He would definitely not clarify this wonderful misunderstanding. "Well, I guess I owe him a favor then. Oh, what did Hesla say?"

Wang Yuan pushed his black-frame spectacles. With a flash of contempt in his eyes, he snorted, "They are still pushing away the responsibility."

Bennett shook his head. He had long known Hesla's way of doing things, and only Stardragon was easier to talk to. If he really wanted to dig out some material aid from the five other stingy nations, it would not be without some long, tedious negotiation.

"With Stardragon's assistance, the initial resources are more or less enough. Let's start the shelter program as soon as possible. The war will break out any time now. The sooner it is implemented, the more people we can shelter."

...

Sleepy Winter and his group finally completed the Camp-destroyer series mission [Battle of the Tedramira River]. Their evaluation was naturally low, but because it was a Super-Level mission, the EXP they had gotten was considerable.

They should have been very happy with the results, but whenever the three of them recalled Frenzied Sword's performance, they immediately felt that the reward from the mission was just too meagre. Comparison always made it worse. The feeling of being far behind someone just felt horrible, not to mention that they had in fact started out at the same time. Rainy Kim was rather calm, but Sleepy Winter and Twinkle Fried Rice were really fed up.

Thinking about it again and again, Sleepy Winter finally sent a chat request to Frenzied Sword.

"Frenzied Sword?"

"Sleepy Winter, why are you looking for me?" Frenzied Sword asked in a humble voice.

"I just wanted to ask, did you trigger a secret quest? We saw you on the battlefield..." Sleepy Winter sent out the video message.

"Oh, you guys were there, too?" Frenzied Sword was surprised.

Why does this tone feel so annoying? Sleepy Winter coughed dryly and chatted half-heartedly before asking about Black Phantom. The video showed Black Phantom in action. Sleepy Winter was well aware that Black Phantom was an advanced figure who had been seen around Big Horn Village, and he was very curious about how Frenzied Sword came to know him.

Frenzied Sword kept beating around the bush and refused to talk about the main topic. Sleepy Winter knew that he was unwilling to share information about the secret quest, and he could only bid farewell and hang up the communication sullenly.

"Did he say anything?" asked Twinkle Fried Rice.

"No." Sleepy Winter shook his head. He was in fact a little envious of Frenzied Sword, but he knew secret quest was something that came with luck. Then, an idea came to his mind.

"Why don't we try speaking to Black Phantom?"

...

The sky was turning bright near the horizon. It was dawn.

At Han Xiao's request, the helicopter landed on a hilltop in the wilderness. Han Xiao asked the pilot to stand by, and stepping off the plane, he took a deep breath. The fresh air invigorated him.

After flying through the night away from the Tedramira River, he was getting ready for his Advancement when Frenzied Sword dropped offline.

A player going offline is akin to disappearing. That gave the pilot a shock. Seeing that Han Xiao's expression had remained unchanged, he suppressed his shock.

Different players had different peculiarities. Although the world had all kinds of Espers that made everyone well accustomed to abnormalities, over time, more and more people would realize the peculiar nature of the players' community, and there would definitely be some interesting developments. Han Xiao could not wait to see this happening. Then he could validate some of his guesses.

Putting aside these thoughts, Han Xiao focused his attention on the interface—the requirements for advancement had been met, so a level-up would mean an Advancement.

He looked at the EXP that he had accumulated over the past two months. Minus the EXP that he had used up for skills improvement and integration of blueprints, he still had a full 6.1 million EXP left!

Finally, a second Advancement! Han Xiao was secretly leaping in joy. His progress had been as fast as a rocket, especially since he had gotten a huge channel to reap EXP after the players appeared!

After this Advancement, he would officially become the top figure on Aquamarine, and this was only the beginning. This meant that he could set foot in areas that he had previously found to be too dangerous, to acquire those rare Abilities and Skills. Quests that could trigger dangerous situations, Abilities, Skills, and Equipment—all that would have a huge impact on his combat capability.

He was already halfway there to becoming someone like Bennett and Hila who could take on BOSS Level Quests with their template Abilities.

Advancement!

Han Xiao entered his EXP.

[Mechanic (Trainee)] Level-Up LV 5

+50 Energy, +1 Dexterity, +1 Endurance, +4 Intelligence!

Attained 3 points Unassigned stat points!

Attained 1 Talent Point!

You have completed your second Advancement.

Endurance and Health points ratio increased to 1:20!

Chapter 146: Skyrocketed!

After the Advancement, Han Xiao's health point conversion ratio increased from 1:15 to 1:20. It was obvious to him that his body was stronger. He could feel a ball of energy down in his abdomen, invigorating him.

This second Advancement did not unlock as many skills as his first Advancement did. His first Advancement had felt like a complete rebirth, while this second Advancement was way smoother a process than his first one.

Though not explicit as a description on the interface, Han Xiao noticed that his perception had become more acute. The world was more vivid in his eyes.

If he had to describe how the Advancement felt, it would be 'natural'. He could feel the breeze flowing around his limbs and smell the mix of particles in the air. His senses were amplified by several notches.

The second Advancement was a prerequisite to unlock many skills, and of course, the most obvious benefit was that he could upgrade to LV 60.

He had plenty of EXP on his interface, so he need not stay at his current level to accumulate EXP. He could first take [Night Stalker], which was at Lv.6, to its highest level. This would bring him a total of 30 Dexterity, 20 Strength, 10 Mystery, as well as 10 Talent points and 20 Unassigned Stats points.

Han Xiao then assigned his EXP to [Mechanic (Trainee)], a main class with an upper limit of Lv.15. As he progressed, it took more and more EXP for a level-up. He had used up a significant amount of EXP to level it up from Lv.5 to Lv.10.

His level skyrocketed by tens of level and rose directly to LV 50!

As his Energy exceeded one thousand points and reached Energy Level 6, Han Xiao received additional milestone rewards.

+6 STR, +8 DEX, +6 END, +10 INT, +400 Max. Stamina, +8% Machinery Quality, +8% Production Speed, Energy Stats Strengthened

As one's Energy Level grew higher, the bonus addition became more significant. Levelling up to Lv. 6 was a significant milestone. He could receive a new bonus addition of Energy Stats Strengthened that made the benefits of his attributes more prominent. To a Mechanic, Energy with magnetic properties could be used for producing and utilizing machinery. He could increase the speed, improve the quality, and amplify the power more easily. The actual effect would be far more useful than the numbers on the interface looked.

Mechanics were not like Pugilists or Espers who would require huge amount of Energy. In the beginning, additional Energy might not be very useful to Mechanics, but once he had the ability to utilize his Energy in this manner, his strength as a Mechanic would be more apparent.

[Mechanic (Trainee)] reached Lv. 10. To level up further, Han Xiao would need 800,000 EXP. Han Xiao had around 1,300,000 EXP left on his interface. He decided to save half of it as a backup to integrate blueprints and upgrade other skills.

In the last two months, he had occasionally upgraded some important skills, such as [Sniper], [Moving Snipe], [Continuous Gliding Shots]. Not forgetting his blueprints, his core [Magnetically Controlled Retractable Armor] was already at Lv 5. He was already donning on a new set of armor where his Stats were strengthened. He had also upgraded blueprints like [Ranger Robot], [Low Level Smart Chip]. These blueprints were the ones that were relatively useful.

Han Xiao took a look at the Skill List and entered his EXP into [Flaming Will] and [Fine Intensive Modification]. These two Skills had better value for EXP. After his EXP dropped to half of its initial level, Han Xiao stopped the upgrading process. These two skills were each upgraded by two or three levels.

He had accumulated thirty-eight unassigned stat points, and he threw all of them into his Intelligence stat. That was the crude yet simple manner in which Mechanics upgraded themselves.

After all this was done, his combat effectiveness soared. Without even relying on his equipment, his Energy Rank reached the standard of 12,000 Ona!

Level: 50

Attributes: 69 STR, 94 DEX, 82 END, 200 INT, 11 MYS, 6 CHA, 1 LUK

Health: 2,970

Energy: 1,230 [Lv. 6]

Power Level: 1213 Ona

Grade: D

[Take on your equipment. You can be a Boss level figure on this planet if you work hard.]

Han Xiao was very satisfied with the growth in his strength. Intelligence had become his strongest stat—it had reached two hundred points! He could be way more productive when he utilized his machinery now.

With the speed at which he was gaining EXP, he would rise to LV 60 in a very short period of time. This was the upper limit for a second Advancement; he was at the top among the version 1.0 players.

My combat capability now, combined with my mechanical equipment, means that I am among the top few fighters in Aquamarine.

Even at LV 50, my Stats are very strong. That is partly because of my expertise and partly because my main vocation is at a high level. This means I can take care of most superhumans without too much difficulty.

I can count on my machinery to help me win, but my expertise and skills are too limited. I'm just too far off from someone like Bennett.

Han Xiao had been busy harvesting EXP from players, and he would continue doing so, accumulating EXP and gaining exposure to increase his popularity. He would be travelling to the novice villages beyond Andrea to teach the novice players basic skills first, and after that, he could proceed to teaching the [Energy Forging Technique]. Through this, he would accumulate a great deal of EXP. With this, he was confident that he would be able to invest in rare skills and abilities very soon.

Two months' worth of EXP was just wiped out in an instant. It would not have been so easy if he was still his old self. He would have wanted to level up the moment he had gotten some EXP. Now, Han Xiao was not too worried about how he could get more EXP.

Players, they were the biggest market!

[Energy Forging Technique] was his trump card. Once he let the news out, it would trigger a frenzy. In fact, any player that had been through their first Advancement would eventually awaken this skill. But most players are unaware of this. As long as he imparted this skill to a player below LV 20, he would be able to harvest a huge amount of EXP.

But there was a condition; he needed to raise his profile so that more players could get to know him.

There are two ways. I could take the initiative to find players or create opportunities for players to find me...

Han Xiao stroked his stubble and was deep in thought.

If he chose to look for players proactively, it would be a trip like his recent trip to Big Horn Village. Other than the novice grounds beyond Andrea Mainland, he could go to the Southern Continent, the Western Continent, and the Northern Continent to harvest some EXP.

It did not seem like he had much of an opportunity to get players to come to him on their own. He could release more tasks after his Advancement, but it was still a drop in the ocean if he looked at the entire player community. There was no way he could attract all the players. He had made a good start at Big Horn Village—quite a number of players thought that Black Phantom could trigger secret quests. But that was far from getting enough players to come to him. He needed a more concrete plan.

After the battle, the Germinal Organization had withdrawn its forces from the three continents and gone into hiding. For the time being, the global situation would remain stable. At the very least, there would be no public declaration of war for some time. The tide had changed. Germinal would not declare war. However, on a second thought, the power had now come to the hands of the Six Nations. It might just bring the eminent war to an earlier date. This was not his original intention.

Resigning to his fate, he could only shake his head.

Nonetheless, the situation was not too bad. If the Six Nations went ahead to start a war and destroyed the Germinal Organization, it would not bring any harm to him. With this thought in mind, Han Xiao was relieved. After all, he was not an egotistical person; he had never felt like he could control everyone. What he had always wanted to do was to make full use of his extraordinary foresight to reap benefits from the power struggles between the different forces.

Even though the situation had deviated from its original track, war was still not avoidable. Han Xiao could not help but sigh. He was powerless as an individual to try to revert the situation. Instead, he was embroiled into the maelstrom. However, precisely because he was whirled into the situation, he could seize opportunities that came his way. This was really energizing for Han Xiao.

For any player to reach LV 20, they will take roughly two months... But now, two months is just nice for me to run a trip to all the novice villages, Han Xiao thought to himself with a smirk.

Having hammered out his next plan of action. Han Xiao began to think about another issue—his own strength.

After his Advancement, he was able to move closer to the upper limit of version 1.0. Of course, there was no real upper limit for him. He was more concerned about his combat capability. Ranks were only a part of his combat capabilities. His capabilities would be more dependent on his skills, expertise, and mechanical equipment. It went without saying that Mechanics were more dependent on their equipment than other classes.

Han Xiao was using his sniper without a hitch. Naturally, he did not want to give up on his sniper. However, he felt that it was time to develop a second combat style to deal with the increasingly complex situations that he would be going in to.

Chapter 147: Inspiration for Lightweight Mecha

Mechanics were known for having a wide range of tactics. Just like how saints would never fall for the same trick again, mechanics would never rely on a single set of tactics. To develop new tactics, one would only need to develop new tactics centered around a core gadget, just like how the core of Lurker Sniper Flow was the sniper itself. Using additional tools like electromagnetic skating shoes, special ammunition, stealth ability, and so on could further strengthen one's prowess.

To a mechanic, developing a new battle tactic was a challenging yet fun task. Brainstorming on new ideas and then being able to bring it to life enabled one to achieve a sense of fulfillment, just like role-playing games.

I have quite a few choices, Rovers, Portable Batteries, self-created Mechas. However, the rovers' attributes and intelligence are weak on their own, and besides, due to their large sizes, they cannot be easily carried around.

Moreover, even if the only model is placed into the robot troop, the outcome will still be unsatisfactory. They are way too expensive.

As for the battery... Even though there is a 'Portable' in the name, the pedestal disc is still too large. If I cannot assemble it within seconds, I can't use it with the flamethrower style. Perhaps, I can only use it as a trap ambush...

There's also the self-created Mechas...

Han Xiao had a lot of blueprints that he could use for the armor suit, such as K600 Endoskeleton, Smart Chip, Exoskeleton limbs, Electromagnetic Hover Boots, Basic Storage Cube, and other modules. In addition, he had acquired all the basic knowledges, including Bio-engineering, Mechanical dynamics, Assembly, and Energetics. He had already fulfilled the criteria for creating his own armor.

This was not a bad idea; however, some problems might still arise. For instance, to equip the Mecha, he would first need a support vehicle that could repair and replenish the materials. Prolonged battling could weaken the attack power, just like a problem every guy would face.

Besides, he did not want to run around wearing a tin can, and it would be best if he could fly. He did actually develop a jetpack, but it still needed some adjustments. When activated, the jetpack would fly away without the pilot. If the jetpack was secured tightly, one could experience what a hundred times

the speed of a Ferris wheel would feel like. Han Xiao did not want to try that for the second time, and as such, apart from the small drone, none of his other machines had a flying ability.

Medium scale and large scale Mechas required advance knowledge of [Heavy Machine Modification], and he was only capable of modifying light Mechas. Nano-Muscle Suits were more classic but required advance knowledge of [Miniature Machine Modification].

Suddenly, Han Xiao had a eureka moment and came up with a new idea.

Almost made a grave mistake. Actually, I do not need armor as my tactic core. I can start from the assisting type of light armor, neglecting the firepower and focusing on my personal attributes...

He had an idea. As he recalled the armor he had used or seen before, he thought that basic light armor looked reliable and would be easy to replicate one.

As for robots and turrets, he decided to give up on them since they were inconvenient to bring around, and it was impossible to always bring along a truck. Even with airdrop support, there must be a transport aircraft, and then there was the money... No planes could fly in a country's airspace. Even Fabian Company's planes, which had licenses, had to follow a fixed route, and they were not allowed to fly wherever they liked. It would be alright to fly into the wild, but there would not be stable supply stations in the vicinity, and it would be difficult for airdrops.

As the night faded away, the golden glow of the sun reappeared, turning the sky from pitch black to a light blue.

Han Xiao stretched his neck, and from his collar bones came a cracking sound. He was re-energized and full of enthusiasm, ready for the fresh day. He felt like he could puncture the sky with just one punch.

Of course, that was just an illusion due to his overflowing energy. His senses, after becoming stronger, were also sharper. Han Xiao felt his vision, hearing, and sense of smell had all improved. As such, he was even able to see the details on the rough surface of a tree trunk from afar.

Han Xiao boarded the helicopter and ordered the pilot to take flight.

...

Han Xiao travelled on Dark Net's helicopter and finally arrived at another new village on the Southern Continent after landing several times in between to refill the fuel. This village was also a place where Vagrant Warlords gathered, and it was called Green Valley Ville.

There was a total of nineteen beginner towns for new players' on Planet Aquamarine: five in the Southern Continent, four in the Western Continent, four in the Northern Continent, and six on Andrea Mainland.

Green Valley Ville was a land controlled by the Vagrant Warlords and belonged to the Alumera family.

Alumera, a well-known Vagrant Warlord force with family style management, were headquartered on the Southern Continent. They also had a land on the North continent. In addition, they were in partnership with Theseus. The chief in command was called Darryl Alumera. Anyone with the same last name would be his immediate family member. His other top commanders were all strong players that he had been headhunted to join him, like Second Leader Xiao Jin, Third Leader Bi Qi, and so on. The

force was formed by surviving members of various extinct states, and hence, they were a diverse people.

The Vagrant Warlords called themselves different names, including 'Family', 'Group', 'Financial Group', 'General', and so on. They believed that if they formed groups, they were less likely to be bullied or threatened. When the force eventually became stronger, Alumera took control of the military and became an authority in the wild. Many Vagrant Warlords chose to join them, as after all, the Aquamarine wild was not a safe place for most.

All Han Xiao wanted now was to continue searching for players and earning experience through them. Time was limited; hence, he did not stop after the battles but immediately proceed to new villages to search for players.

There were three scenarios when players went online and offline or respawn. The first was 'same spot' respawn. This required some explanation. When one went offline while being on a moving vehicle, then when one respawned, one would not respawn back at the same location, but one would be respawned back onto the same vehicle. For example, if one was travelling in space, but the location one respawned at was not on the spaceship, then that would be crazy.

The second scenario was respawning at the nearest city. That only applied to respawning players and not for those that were logged in. This meant that if one was killed, one would earn a chance to travel to a city for free, and it was either the city that one wanted or the city that one did not want.

The third scenario was binding to a certain respawn location. However, this required special conditions, including affiliation to camps, special items, or through agreements with NPCs. For example, when one joined a secret camp, one could bind to the camp and select it as one's respawn point, but others would not be able to do so.

Frenzied Sword would come online on the helicopter. As such, Han Xiao had left a phone behind and instructed the pilot to wait. He then trudged through the forest, heading for the Green Valley Ville.

After two hours, the outline of the Green Valley Ville could be seen from a distance away. It was situated at the side of the forest on a flat land. It was fortified and surrounded by barbed wire fence, and there were vagrant warlords patrolling around. As expected, all the players were gathering at the camps outside of the settlement, just like in Big Horn Village.

Han Xiao did not bother to hide himself. The sentry of the Green Valley Ville spotted him from far away and reported right away to the person-in-charge, Balsas.

Balsas was a bald black man, neither tall nor strong. Instead, he was tiny and thin. He had a pair of triangular eyes that seemed gloomy. Upon hearing what the sentry had described, he was shaken. "Sounds a little like Black Phantom."

Balsas took out his computer and searched for Black Phantom's photo. Upon getting confirmation from the sentry, Balsas' expression changed. "Didn't he just interfere with the battle at Tedramira River. Why is he here? I have nothing to do with him."

Just the name 'Black Phantom' alone made Balsas anxious. Even though Green Valley Ville was heavily armed, he still felt unsafe. Balsas then muttered, "Should we approach him and find out why he is here?"

Since Alumera did not have a previous relationships with the Black Phantom, Balsas thought that it would be impossible to clash with the Black Phantom, and there was also no one who had published a wanted notice on Black Phantom on the dark net. Balsas calmed down and called for an assistant. He ordered his assistant to take his place and approach the Black Phantom as he was afraid to do it himself.

When the assistant headed out of the gate and walked toward Black Phantom, Balsas moved beside the big gate and observed through the barbed wire fence. He seemed really careful.

However, Balsas very soon witnessed a scene that shook him. He saw that the villagers living outside were actually excited and friendly toward the Black Phantom, actually gathering around him.

Balsas was surprised. [How do all the villagers know about the Black Phantom?

...

There were fewer players at Green Valley Ville compared to the number of players at Big Horn Village.

When Han Xiao arrived at the players' camp, he was warmly welcomed by everyone. It was so crowded, and everyone surrounded him, obstructing his route.

Through the forum, the incident at Big Horn Village had spread across Aquamarine players, and all other new player villages were envious that new players at Big Horn Village had a chance to switch their vocation. With the unexpected appearance of Black Phantom, all the new players from Green Valley Ville were thrilled.

"Black Phantom is here!"

"We are going to be lucky too!"

A player with the ID 'Bun-hit-dog' was more exhilarated than the others. He was quite a well-known video game graphic designer, and his 'XX Adventure' series, which was humor-based and full of content, had gained him a lot of fans.

Chapter 148: The Wind Rises

Bun-hit-dog saw Galaxy as a potential television series. As there was limited information online about it, he keenly realized the hidden potential and decided to create a series that introduced and explained Galaxy. Moreover, he himself really liked Galaxy as well.

It was inevitable for many to start a series on a popular game. Normally, as long as the content was interesting, the first person that produced the television series would easily gain popularity through the game.

Wandering around a new player village, Bun-hit-dog had yet to find the starting point for his series. The first episode of a series was the most important, and he did not wish to do it carelessly. It would be great if he could obtain some exclusive information that ordinary players could not get easily.

Han Xiao's appearance made Bun-hit-dog feel like his chance was finally here.

Since the Black Phantom was a hot topic on the forums, many people would be drawn to his television series if his first episode was about the Black Phantom. Who was not curious about this mysterious high-level character? He would then be able to ride on Black Phantom's popularity and make the series a successful one.

Bun-hit-dog, who was among the crowd, switched on his video function, panned toward Black Phantom, and started recording. He then added his own explanation and comments into the footage afterward.

Players were clustering toward him due to the event that happened at Big Horn Village, and that helped save Han Xiao some time. Han Xiao thought he might as well not sell any items. After all, he did not bring any with him. Instead, he went straight to releasing the list of skills that he could teach. The only request was to give five reputation points, which meant....

Wish to change your vocation? Give me some money!

"Black Phantom isn't selling anything? Then how am I supposed to increase my reputation?"

"This... Giving him free money?"

Players were stunned and whispers started among the crowd.

Han Xiao was calm and thought he did not want to go through so much trouble in Big Horn Village, since the players all knew that they could advance through him. His offer seemed like he was trying to scam the players, but in reality, it was just a simple deal: 2,500 Aquamarine Dollars in exchange for a chance for advancement. Deal or no deal, it was all up to them to decide.

Compared to the normal route for obtaining basic knowledges, paying 2,500 Aquamarine Dollars was already considered a cheap price.

At the time, Balsas' assistant approached and nervously swallowed his saliva. He was trembling with fear every time he took a step closer, and he was afraid of getting too close to Han Xiao.

"What is it?" Han Xian glanced at him.

"Cough cough, may I know why you are here at Green Valley Ville?" The assistant asked as he braced himself.

Han Xiao took a puff of his cigarette and said, "I'm just walking past here. Don't worry, I'm not here to cause any trouble."

The assistant heaved a sigh of relief and said, "Oh, Alumera welcomes you, and Balsas wishes to invite you into the city so that he can give you a treat.

"No, thanks, I'll just stay here."

Han Xiao declined as it would be inconvenient to communicate with the players once he entered the town. Since there would not be anyone who dared refuse him, he would leave once he had gotten the experience. As such, he did not pay attention to Balsas.

“Al, Alright...” The assistant left hurriedly as his heart raced, and he was dripping with cold sweat. The legendary killer seemed to be emitting a scary aura. The assistant was scared stiff even though Han Xiao was just standing still.

Especially his eyes, they were like those of wolverines wandering around the dark forest. One could get goose bumps just by staring into Han Xiao’s eyes.

This was one of the effects of having Universal Reputation. When dealing with certain forces, there might be additional effects.

When the assistant returned into the village, Balsas asked, “What did he say?”

The assistant then repeated everything that had happened.

“Just passing by?” Balsas frowned and pondered. He suspected that there were some secrets going on between Black Phantom and the refugees outside the village.

After contemplating for a while, he ordered, “Get someone to observe Black Phantom and report to me if anything is weird. Also, go get some information from the refugees outside. I think Black Phantom is here for them.”

On the other hand, all the players had witnessed the conversation between Han Xiao and Balsas’ assistant. A question then arose among the crowd.

Everyone was able to detect and know the name of Black Phantom because they had sensors in place, but why would the Balsas’ assistant know of him too?

Could it be that Black Phantom was a very popular character on the planet?

The players were all still trying to figure out the structure, background, and the power balances on Aquamarine. They were only able to get a glimpse or two of the world through the maps, which was not helpful at all.

Everyone was suddenly curious about Black Phantom’s background.

Exploring the story of the planet and being able to participate in it was one of the joys for this game.

Bun-hit-dog focused on recording the full situation. Hiding his excitement, his instincts told him that this was definitely the best video material. Exclusive information and the identity of Black Phantom could be used as the prelude to the background of this planet.

...

While Han Xiao was getting a windfall in Green Valley Ville, the world situation was quietly changing.

Stardragon, Hesla, Red Maple, Ordina, Theseus, and Raylen—the Six Nations’ wipe out operation against the Germinal Organization had ended, and the subsequent impact was gradually emerging.

The Six Nations had only held three conferences so far. The first was held after the war in the past, when the Six Nations were first formed and the lands were first claimed.

The second conference was held two months after the war. The pollution from the war was affecting living conditions. Since it was a problem regarding the whole planet, all the nations came together to try to come out with a solution.

The third time was five years after the war, whereby the security and defense issues posed by the vagrant warlords were discussed.

The last six ruling nations on Aquamarine did not have a close relationship with one another. If it was not for a worldwide issue, they would never have worked together.

Today, the fourth Six Nations’ conference was held. The topic was about the next step in their plans regarding Germinal and whether they should go to war or not.

The conference was done in the format of a conference call, and the leaders from each of the Six Nations joined in.

In a meeting room in Stardragon Tower, the metal door was locked, and the leader of Stardragon was sitting at the desk. On the other side was a big screen where the other five leaders could be seen.

The corner of the conference room was filled with people. All of them were the elders from the military, and Gu Hui was also among them. The conference had already been going on for two hours.

“So, has everyone decided?”

Ordina’s leader was emotionless in his tone, and no one was able to tell his stand.

The leader of Theseus stood up confidently and said, “I, Raylen, and Stardragon have all agreed to send out our troops. Hesla and Red Maple object.”

Ordina pondered for two seconds. “I give up my vote.”

Everyone looked as if they had expected it.

Gu Hui, who was standing by the side, remained calm. There were two that agreed, two that objected, and one that gave up. He had already expected such results. Theus and Raylen were the toughest while Stardragon had a strong grudge with Germinal, so they would definitely not miss this chance. Hesla and Red Maple were unwilling to waste money on war. It seemed that Ordina was the greatest slimeball, always thinking about other things instead.

The six leaders discussed for another hour and finalized their direction. They all decided that the final decision was to be determined by the military forces of each nation.

The screen turned black; the three-hour meeting had officially ended.

The elders who were listening by the side seemed shocked. During the conference, it was decided that the six nations would conduct a large-scale military operation similar to the previous major war that had

uprooted the political balance. The six nations would move forward and retreat together, attack the Andrea mainland from six directions, and finally destroy the Germinal Organization completely.

War is coming!

Chapter 149: Galaxy Times (1)

The players in Green Valley Ville took a screenshot and showed off the arrival of Black Phantom on the forum, which sparked another round of heated discussions.

“Previously, it was Big Horn Village; now, it is Green Valley Ville. Will he move on to a new location?”

“Is this high-ranking character arranged by the game developer? The times at which he appears feels weird. If he was a mechanic instructor, his whereabouts would be uncertain. Unless he is the planet protagonist who manages the information written on the net.”

“It doesn’t seem like it. I think the planet protagonist and the plot should be related. It is unlikely that we could come in contact so early. Black Phantom should be another type of mysterious character. Since it is difficult to switch vocation, could it be that Black Phantom was sent by the game developers to compensate us?”

“What! Does it mean that in order to switch our vocation, we have to do it now or else we’ll miss this opportunity with Black Phantom?”

The speculation regarding Han Xiao had not stopped, and the commotion in Big Horn Village had not subsided. His popularity had once again been pushed all the way to the top by the players in Green Valley Ville.

Han Xiao read up countless posts about himself with great interest and summed up the impressions that most players had of him.

The first kind—some players thought he was a mysterious businessman who would appear in the early stages to provide benefits to the novices.

The second kind—some thought he was a mechanic instructor.

The third kind—they thought he was an important character who was in charge of handling important tasks. Due to this statement, Han Xiao had to handle a group of players who wished to trigger hidden tasks every day. After reading about Maple Moon’s example, some players thought that by showing hostility to Germinal, they could exploit the hidden quest.

As the statements made by these people were very strange, Han Xiao rejected all of them. However, there were still players who thought they were highly charismatic and chose to explore any backhanded ways to convince Black Phantom. Since there were more female players, the leader of Sky Territory had a post saying that that would be a benefit when they talk to Black Phantom. Han Xiao was then surrounded by female players who were trying to charm him.

Yet he remained indifferent.

You think that just because you have looks, you don't have to pay? Dream on!

However, some players were very arrogant and even tried to attack him. Han Xiao adopted the responsibility to right them of their baseless arrogance. He would kill any of these players once they resurrected to teach them a lesson. The game would only refresh the number of deaths every six days. This resurrection could also be called anti-addiction mechanism, and players who dared attack him would be forced to go offline.

These kinds of lawless players obviously played more stand-alone games. Unlike other players who were more cautious in progressing in the game, they were risk takers. No one took pity with these players. This game had been released globally, and there would definitely be a rare madman who wanted to challenge the entire game world; they were used to it.

One player after another queued to pass Han Xiao their money, and Han Xiao realized the mechanics department had attracted quite a number of players. However, as there was a request for the gifts to be sent directly this time round, some petty players were rather hesitant. As a result, the queue was also rather sparse.

Han Xiao just went with it and browsed through the forum at one side. Suddenly, a new post caught his attention. The topic was Galaxy Times.

The column is released! Han Xiao's face changed as he felt the nostalgia.

Galaxy Times was a sub-column, and the content varied. The column talked about the news on Galaxy, including all kinds of anecdotes, stories from professional players, and analysis of the game process. Han Xiao had once been a follower of Galaxy Times, and he would always have the urge to be the first to watch it. Now that he himself had joined the game, he was unsure if the content would have changed.

In the video, a male and a female host were sitting in front of the camera, like a news broadcast. Behind them was the scene of Galaxy, showing the background of the new planets.

"Hello players," the male host greeted, "this is Galaxy Times, dedicated to sharing first-hand game information. Your gaming career is our top priority."

"The public beta has been going on for ten days, and the players' enthusiasm has not changed a bit," the female host said. "Now let us first review what has happened in the past ten days..."

The first issue of the Galaxy Times was informative, and the next ten minutes was a quick review of the beta players during the ten days, introducing the various planets and the civilization background. Among them, there was a planet with an ancient civilization, where players were mostly wearing armour, carrying swords, spears, and hammers as weapons. Their background looked like a mix of Chinese and Western medieval times. It was obvious this planet was dominated by martial arts and magic. If there was a need to add a subtitle to the plot, it should be 'World Hegemony' and 'I Will Use Your Skull as a Bowl'.

There was also a highly-modern planet called Planet Brighton. The city was like a floating island with ninety-nine towers scattered on the edge of the city, forming a defense, and the main tower in the city center. The large crystal ball at the top of the tower provided magical power to suspend the city.

Occasionally, there would be sightings of a dragon across the sky. New players would have a slim chance of survival in this world as it was very easy to hit the death limit.

Of course, there was an even more difficult way to start, and that would be Planet Winterfrost. The base of the Hell Demon Military Troop was also the only one where players could see the Galaxy Starships. Hell Demon Military Troop's starships were crazy powerful, and this planet was a mix of magic and technology.

The troops themselves had powerful combat power. They could also ride the cosmic creatures into space for a short while, and their level was high. Fortunately, Planet Winterfrost was just a sub-base camp for the troop. Otherwise, the American players who chose Planet Winterfrost as the base camp would not even be able to get out of the novice village.

The richer the resources were for the novice planet, the more challenging it would be at the beginning. In contrast, the difficulty of Aquamarine was moderate, and the technological background was similar to that of many years ago. Unlike other planets where even trash cans on the street could incite the player's curiosity, there were not many surprises on Aquamarine.

However, the popularity of Aquamarine on the forums was rising, and the main reason was the appearance of Black Phantom. He was the first high-ranking character to interact with the players.

The two hosts then turned around and talked about the Black Phantom.

"Next, we'll talk about an incident that happened in Aquamarine, and friends who have been active on the forum all know that Black Phantom is the first mysterious high ranking character to appear in front of the players. The players do not have much information about him. Qiu Qiu, what role do you think he plays in the plot of Aquamarine?" the male host asked.

"Based on the current information, Black Phantom seems to have a high position, and his identity is extremely mysterious as well. Furthermore, he and Germinal are enemies.

"Oh, does this mean he's on the same side as the Six Nations?"

"I am not sure. Perhaps only the developers can answer this question."

"Alright, after listening to this lame joke, let us return to the topic," the male host said. "Speaking of the Black Phantom, he seems to be a mechanic instructor and can expose hidden plots. The latest news suggests that Black Phantom has appeared in Green Valley Ville of Aquamarine. Therefore, friends who wish to transfer to the mechanic class should seize the opportunity. The Black Phantom is by far the easiest way to obtain the knowledge.

"However, there has been a different opinion on the forums recently. Some players who transferred to the mechanics department are starting to regret."

The female host feigned her surprise, "There is such a thing?"

There was a quarrel at this point, and most of the players had been simply choosing their vocation based on which vocation was the strongest. After they had switched to being a mechanic, they found out that mechanics were not up to their expectations and would naturally be full of complains.

Before the topic came to an end with the two hosts, Han Xiao looked at the responses and saw one response at the top. The ID was called 'Luzman'.

Chapter 150: <Galaxy Times> (2)

"I am a beta player in Big Horn Village. A few days ago I changed my vocation to mechanics with Black Phantom. Initially, I thought this is a very strong class, but after switching, I realised that being a mechanic is totally different from what I had expected. The skills are trashy and the equipment are easily damaged, but I could only repair them after I have bought the materials. My gun just died like this! I'm so mad!

"The combat power is rather weak too. One public beta test player who was 4 levels lower than me came up for a challenge. He didn't even have a main vocation, and his sub-vocation was a mere [Hunter]. We fought for 11 rounds, and yet I didn't win any of them at all! For a main vocation to lose to a sub-vocation, while being 4 levels higher, this mechanic vocation is just a pile of shit."

... I was fooled by that video of Black Phantom. Damn I was scammed. Those senior NPCs always have NPC templates as bonuses. Black Spirit is not even a player! His combat power doesn't even have much of a tingle!

... This mechanic vocation is so weak in its early stages. Maybe it would be as strong as Black Phantom's eventually, but you will be starting way behind others from the beginning. It takes even longer to reach the same level as the rest! What's more, the mechanic vocation relies on machineries, and the materials used to make the machinery costs a lot of money. This class is perfect for the local tyrants. If you don't have money, don't even try!

This mechanic vocation has no future, seems like I cannot use this account anymore. I can only restart another account and retrain. What a trash vocation!"

Luzman's response was full of resentment. He had even uploaded videos of him losing in battles. Many people had echoed him in the comments, pushing his post to the top of the responses.

After glancing through other posts, Han Xiao realised that most of the posts had traces of Luzman. That guy copied and pasted the comments so many times. Many others found his resentment to be over the top and they argued with Luzman on the forum too.

Han Xiao narrowed his eyes. This was not totally unexpected. The players would realise sooner or later that the mechanic vocation is not suitable for combat in the early stages. Luzman was the first one and he would not be the last. These grievous people only fell for the trap because they were attracted by his video and had simply chose whichever vocation that was strong. The moment they realise that it wasn't what they had imagined, they would feel deceived and angry.

There were also players who liked the mechanic vocation who ignored these useless arguments and complaints. Some players were in the game for entertainment while others wanted to be the strongest in the game. Luzman was clearly one of the latter.

These negative comments would definitely affect his business, and since there was only one chance to choose a main vocation, players would become more cautious, especially first-time players.

Han Xiao shook his head. He had wanted to attract more players into the pit of mechanic vocation to expand his market.

“Seems like I have to reaffirm players in the value of the mechanic vocation, I can’t just rely on displaying my strength...”

The programme continued running. Off the script, the male MC said, “we have just received the unreleased promo clip on the next version of the game from Galaxy. Do take a look.”

The screen began to play another video. Just as what <Galaxy> had announced, this promo video focused on the battle scenes of each vocation.

The heavy armoured knight appeared full of energy. The tip of his gun emitted smoke, and it hit a group of iron-shielded guards. The crash was loud like a thunder, and bodies were flying all over.

A tribe with horns controlled the elements around them. Flames slithered and wrapped around their body like a snake.

A magician stood in his cloak, and a web of light appeared beneath his feet as he chanted. Light rays of magic shone out from his fingers.

The bald-headed sorcerer used his mind to manipulate objects around him. He released an invisible strike his opponents around him, causing them to fall one by one with their noses bleeding.

The clips were all very realistic. It was gorgeous!

This was only a demo of the promotional clip. Nothing was finalised. The clips were recorded by new players from every planet, and there were only a few clips from senior players for the time being. They barely got together the battle scenes of the five main vocations. The battle scene for mechanic vocation was a clip of Black Phantom in action. Han Xiao was the first advance player to demonstrate his combat power.

There were a several clips showing the jaw dropping scene at Big Horn Village, as well as scenes of the interception battle at Tedramira River. Sniper, rifles, turrets, squadrons, and even the vicious Fury Blade was featured in the clip.

The players was all engrossed in the scenes. They were all exhilarating moments.

“I didn’t know I got selected to be in the promotional video!”

Han Xiao was a little surprised. He still remembered last season’s promotional video. The scene for the Mechanic vocation was just the process to produce a machinery, and most players assumed that it was a more of a support role. Hence, only a few players switched to the mechanic vocation.

According to the first version, the proportion of players in the mechanic vocation was only 9.7%! This promotional video alone attracted tons of interest from the players. Mechanic vocation wouldn’t be as bleak as before. He wasn’t afraid to risk players complaining and regretting on the forum in exchange for attracting more players over.

This promotional video also improved his popularity, and this was much more effective than word of mouth. Han Xiao was overjoyed. He expected his fame to shoot up in no time.

The next line-up on the programme was about professional players. The male MC said, "Within 10 days of public beta, tons of famous e-sports clubs have shifted to the game <Galaxy>, and according to statistics, Esper is currently the most popular one. This class is a lucky draw, if you get a high level skill, it is equal to 10 million lottery tickets! The future is unlimited!"

It is known that the United States, South Korea, France, Japan and Switzerland all have accounts with A-class potential rating, and the various big clubs have offered prices for these accounts, worth millions of US dollars."

The screen flashed wildly. Almost a million US dollars to buy a novice account? It was simply a lottery! Good luck would mean making a fortune immediately.

"Flashing News: The American Devil Club, Sandstorm Club, France Tulip Club, and the Korean Four Star Club have already bought the accounts. They will be used by the club's elite players.

And the God-level players will still be using their own accounts... American elite player 'King and Queen' has changed to the magician vocation and was rewarded with a rare skill through a hidden quest. French elite player 'Lost Angel' has chosen to start at random and he seems to have obtained a opportunity. South Korea..."

Foreign e-sports players all seemed to be performing very well. China's e-sports scene wasn't weak either, but only a few managed to hit the top spots. Champions of many events had long been occupied by players from the United States, France, Japan and South Korea. If you could win a championship, local players would celebrate as though it was a festival. They would be bringing honour to their country.

"Local players are performing rather well. A player by the name of 'Feng Yue' completed the reward pool quest on her own, gaining over hundreds of thousands of experience points, becoming the biggest winner. It is extremely beneficial for her future development. Who knows, maybe the advantages would come snowballing in. This task was related to Black Phantom..."

A dark horse by the ID of 'Fury Blade' was among the professional players. During a meeting at Jiang Cheng club where Fury Blade was at yesterday, they had released a video. It was the battle scene in the promotional clip with Black Phantom, and I believe everyone had also noticed Fury Blade. He seemed to have triggered Black Phantom's hidden quest..."

The clip of Fury Blade was sent in by Luminous Moon. In order to raise their profile, the club had used it for publicity, just when the Chinese professional players were feeling down about their lack of outstanding performances. This brought Fury Blade lots of attention.

"... This would be the end of this week's content, we look forward to seeing you next time! The following are details for the lucky draw. During this episode, how many times was Black Phantom mentioned? Please drop a message to the official account. We will draw 10 people..."

Han Xiao couldn't stop laughing. He then switched off the screen.

Han Xiao's name came up the most in the entire show. The audience had the perception that that everything good had some kind of correlation to Black Phantom:

Black Phantom = Opportunity!

Han Xiao didn't expect that his name to appear on the screen so many times. His plan had some good returns. His popularity rose yet again. And more importantly, after the programme was broadcasted, more players would come aboard to change their vocation, allowing him to earn more experience points.

He did a rough estimate, based on this trend, the number of mechanic players on Aquamarine would likely be two or three levels higher than previously.