

The Mechanic 151

Chapter 151: A Small-scale Beast Attack

There were some wild beasts spotted around the Green Valley Ville, and they had been causing problems for the town. Before Han Xiao came, Balsas had used some small sums as a bounty to incentivize the refugees to hunt down the beasts. Slowly, he had noticed something strange: the refugees would be able to hunt down the wild beasts without any casualties. After some observation, he found out to his surprise that these refugees seemed to have revival Espers and would never really die.

Balsas was shocked. It might have been normal for one person to have the revival Esper ability, but it would be a different story for an entire group. Could it be that this ability could be spread, just like the werewolf tribe in myths, where one's saliva carried the mutated genes and could turn a normal person into another of their kind in one bite?

After some observation, Balsas was excited to find out that the refugees were easily satisfied by small incentives.

If I can get these strange refugees to work for me, their revival trait will make for a formidable army! I won't have to fear anyone from Black Pine anymore.

Even though these refugees have revival abilities, they had limited combat strength. Balsas had asked them about their origins, but their answers were mostly gibberish. Despite some unresolved doubts about the refugees' background, Balsas decided it was alright to go ahead and trade with them for their services.

He was about to take action when Black Phantom arrived and was warmly welcomed by the refugees. Balsas was alarmed.

Is Black Phantom here for these refugees too? Does he know about their ability as well?

Black Phantom was not someone to mess with, so Balsas decided to stay put and observe for the moment. However, an accident broke out—the beasts residing near the town attacked.

Countless wild beasts came from the jungle and caused the ground to rumble.

Gray Devil Wolves made up the majority. Their fur was charcoal gray, and they were as big as wild buffalos. There were also giant purple-scaled pythons that were ten to twenty meters long, slithering among the wolves.

Beasts in the wild were common, and they were a threat faced by every town. Balsas commanded for the town to be locked up without hesitation and asked his soldiers to ready the machine guns on the watchtowers to fight the beasts. Players that were left outside the town became the buffer zone for them to hold off the beasts. Balsas was glad that he had refugees that could be sacrificed at no cost.

Mature Gray Devil Wolves were about LV 20. They pounced into the crowd and ripped apart a player in two to three bites.

You have started emergency quest [Protect Green Valley Ville]!

Besides the normal players, Han Xiao received the emergency quest, too. However, to his dismay, the reward was at a newbie standard at only a few thousand EXP. Han Xiao watched with great interest at one side as the players fought against the beasts.

Balsas realized that Han Xiao had crawled to the top of the town wall while he was not looking and was watching the battle intensely. Balsas was alarmed. Black Phantom was able to silently crawl up the wall when so many people were staring down at the town wall; this meant that he could silently creep up on anyone he wanted to as well. Indeed, he was living up to his reputation as a skilled and accomplished assassin.

The players gave it their all to protect the town. The situation was bloody and violent. The players were not in complete defeat only because of the aid from the town's machine guns. Han Xiao closely watched the players' performances. Green Valley Ville consisted mainly of players from two classes—Esper and Mechanic.

He saw many different Espers: Attribute-boosting, Superhuman Strength, Stamina, Speed, Instant Healing, and elemental controls, which included skills such as gathering rocks or fortifying armor using rocks. There was a plethora of Espers, but most were low-level and short-lasting. They were dealing some damage to the wolves, but only a few Esper players were more notable.

The fight between the players and the beasts was a rough one, so some players were live-streaming the battle on the forum.

Han Xiao narrowed his eyes. He decided to join and end this battle quickly. With that, he jumped off the wall.

Activating his electromagnetic hover-boots, he moved as if there was ice under his feet. He dived into the battle like a bolt of black lightning, zooming through the battlefield, straight to a relatively smaller Gray Devil Wolf, which was old and had little fur left. It was the leader of the pack, and Han Xiao noticed it when he was observing just now.

Han Xiao decided not to snipe these beasts. Sniping would limit the area damage, and he had limited ammo with him. It was the perfect chance for him to see what he could do with his LV 50 attributes against these LV 20 beasts.

Beasts were common on Planet Aquamarine. When fighting against beasts in large scales, he would not dive in alone. It would be extremely dangerous because it would be exposing him to high frequency attacks from all sides.

The herd of beasts in Gray Valley Ville was very small in numbers. With only thousands of wolves and snakes, Han Xiao could afford to show off his attributes.

A few strong-built Gray Devil Wolves immediately surrounded the Wolf King. With the howl from the old Wolf King, its guards pounced toward Han Xiao.

Han Xiao was clad full-body in his magnetically controlled retractable armor. He raised his arm to block off the sharp claws of the wolves, and the clashing sound was resounding. He was fighting off wolves, which were four to five times larger than him.

He had 69 points in his Strength attribute, way higher than the LV 20 Gray Devil Wolves. His fingers dug into the flesh of a wolf's claws and threw the wolf over his head and onto the floor like a ragdoll. But unlike a ragdoll, the wolf landed and created a dent in the ground, whimpering.

Players who saw this scene were shocked. The scene was very impactful. It was as if a dwarf was throwing a normal person over their shoulders.

Han Xiao was elated to find out how strong his body was. His fists landed on a wolf like a pile driver with solid thuds. Every punch was filled with power that dealt damage right into the wolves' lungs. A wolf was flung away, but it would get up and lunge again, only to be flung away once more. The place that was hit would be marked with a deep purple bruise.

The wolves began to crowd in to protect the Wolf King. Han Xiao's view was filled with wolves that were attacking him with claws and fangs from all angles. The retractable armor clashed with the sharp claws, and sparks were flying. Han Xiao could barely hold the weight of the wolves off from all sides, let alone move.

It's indeed very difficult to kill and get through the beast crowd. Han Xiao changed his plan and activated the Repulsive Force Generator, which sent a pushing force out and flung all the surrounding wolves into the wolves at the back.

With his path cleared, Han Xiao pushed with his foot and turned up the speed of his hover-boots. Wind was howling as he approached in the Wolf King at high speed. He blocked off the ferocious attacks from the Wolf King, grabbed the wolf's head, and twisted it, throwing it to the ground. He pressed his knee tightly against the wolf's stomach and pressed on its head with his left hand. Clenching his right fist, it landed right on the wolf's head. The Wolf King's head was crushed after a few punches. Blood spilled everywhere.

Every time he punched, the power surging through his muscles, tendons, and bones was like a tight bow that stored great strength. It was greatly satisfying to feel at ease and in control of such great strength.

A Wolf's critical region was their stomach, but Han Xiao preferred attacking the head more.

After a few punches, the Wolf King was only a few breaths away from death. The wolf pack was howling and had all abandoned the enemies to attack Han Xiao. A huge pack of wolves piled on top of him like a small hill. Han Xiao was pressed against the floor.

The pungent wolf smell filled Han Xiao's nostrils, and his face became scrunched up. He was almost choking. His sharp sense allowed him to identify the components of the smell.

Wolves' urine, soil, sweat, dried excrement, and... Eh?

Chapter 152: A Melee Mechanic Is the Best

Pushing on the ground with both hands, he managed to support the weight of the huge pack of wolves on his back. Each wolf weighed at least eighty kilograms. While it was very taxing, Han Xiao finally spotted an opening and quickly tumbled out, simultaneously pulling out a hand grenade from his clothes and tossing it underneath the pack of wolves.

Boom!

A muffled sound erupted, and fragments of the grenade shot out with the flames caused by the explosion. The pack of wolves howled mournfully as fresh blood gushed out from their bodies. Han Xiao's armor was also splattered red. Staggering as he stood up, his hand brushed past his side as he brandished a foldable machete that had undergone many modifications. It was newly improved and could be said to be a royal-edition.

Han Xiao nimbly sprinted through the pack of wolves, his blade slashing through his enemies, bringing waves of fresh blood along his path. The venomous poison spat out by the purple-scaled python could not catch up to his footwork. With a flash of his blade, he sliced off the snake's head. The blade wound where the snake was decapitated was as smooth as a mirror, with fresh blood spurting continuously as the headless snake convulsed uncontrollably on the floor.

All the wild beasts rushed toward him. Purely by borrowing the speed from the Skating Shoes and the defense from the magnetically controlled retractable armor, he could single-handedly massacre the flock of beasts. The players were left to the side-lines as they could only stare in shock and bewilderment as Han Xiao killed every beast that came his way.

He was a Mechanic, so how did he end up in a melee close-range fight?

The players' eyes were all drawn to Han Xiao's elegant fighting style. It was undeniable that he was really suave. He was redefining the way most of them viewed Mechanics!

It turned out that it was not true that Mechanics could only fight long-distance. Their close-quarter combat skill was also of note and could be very aggressive. Also, they had a clear style of close-quarter combat that was distinctly different from pugilists.

Frenzied Sword finally came online as he arrived at the outskirts of the town, out of breath. Seeing the situation with the wild beasts, it was also his first time watching Han Xiao display his skills. In that moment, he felt that he had found his guiding light. This was exactly the fighting style that he loved! One can tell just by looking at his ID!

Choosing to follow Han Xiao was definitely the best decision! Frenzied Sword could barely suppress his excitement; he really did make the right choice back then!

Not only Frenzied Sword, but a lot of other players were influenced by what has been going on in the forums. Players who were contemplating on whether to change classes began to take interest in Mechanics again.

After killing however many wolves and snakes, Han Xiao's field of vision suddenly cleared. He realized that the wolf pack was gradually withdrawing amid whimpers, and the group of purple-scaled pythons fled as well. Soon, the wild pack of beasts had all retreated, leaving corpses strewn across the floors, soaking the ground in bright-red blood.

He exhaled a breath and wiped off the traces of blood left on his armor. With his stats, dealing with such low-level beasts would leave them completely crushed. He still had forty percent of his stamina left.

Mechanics rarely fought their enemies by close-combat. However, doing this occasionally did make him feel refreshed. Rather than using a fighting style that relied on sniping, which would lead to an instant death with each shot, this kind of real fist fighting feeling was much more suitable for destressing.

Green Valley Ville's guards came out to clean up the battlefield, carrying the dead corpses of the wild beasts back to the town as food supplies. Han Xiao rejected Bashas' repeated invitation. Under the eyes of the excited players, he returned to his original position indifferently, pretending to rest as he closed his eyes.

The interface indicated that the mission was complete. Also, he killed over a hundred beasts, obtaining more than 20,000 EXP points in total. As his own level was much higher than his massacred targets, the EXP points he gained would be cut down by a lot, but no matter how small it was, it was EXP nonetheless. The almighty Mechanic Han would not mind it at all. The main purpose behind this fight was to test his current reflexes and to have a clearer understanding on his physical caliber. Only by doing that could he take care of smaller details in future battles and perform at his best. Another reason was that he wanted to continue to show off a Mechanic's abilities. He realized that Esper players often showed off their coolest abilities, but new Mechanic players were still a minority. He guessed that Mechanics would become a class that would be questioned, so he wanted to shift the players' focus from Espers by showing them how Mechanics could be great players too.

Opening the forum, Han Xiao realized that there were players who had uploaded a video footage of the fight just now. The title was shocking.

"Overpowered! Mechanics can actually fight like this!"

The recording showed Han Xiao almost single-handedly conquering a wild-beast fight. The visuals were very impactful. In the past, he had mainly used sniping, killing his enemies in one shot, or used his turrets' and rovers' high firepower, but he had never showed off his individual fighting ability. This time, he highlighted this, and the real-time comments and replies mostly conveyed shock and amazement.

But he realized that below the post, there was a reply that was manually pushed up. Looking at the ID, it was Luzman. His tone was as harsh as before.

"Black Phantom is indeed very strong, I won't deny that, but Mechanics are really trash. Look carefully at the start of the video. Espers are the central force when fighting with wild beasts, and those players who advanced to become Mechanics can only sit at the side and fire aimlessly without a single use for them.

"I presume this clip was probably recorded by a Mechanic. Other than the Mechanics who can be idling at one side, I guess no other players would have this kind of time in an actual fight..."

"Also, stop sharing Black Phantom's videos, this asshole wants to trick me into becoming a Mechanic again!"

As he continued down the post, the replies split into those who supported Luzman and those who disagreed with him.

Han Xiao smacked his lips. He was a little annoyed. Luzman held onto that point and had been smearing his reputation. This would be a hindrance to his business. The players' attention was drawn toward this discussion. His display of abilities seemed to be less impactful now. With Han Xiao's rich experience in discussion, with one look, he could tell that Luzman was a keyboard warrior who posted derogatory comments everywhere to trigger fights online.

Scratching his head, Han Xiao did not really have a good solution to this. This was a discussion that would obviously come up, just like picking between sweet tofu or salty tofu. As long as nobody restricted it, there was no way to stop others from commenting online.

But I'm only an NPC now. Even if I showed off my abilities, it isn't enough to get more people to believe in Mechanics. There isn't anything else that I can do either; it's not like I can go in front of the players and shout 'I'm actually a player'... Han Xiao felt helpless.

The NPC template was his secret that he did not want to disclose. From the perspective of a player though, seeing an NPC shout "I'm a player" would only cause them to feel curious and amused. Not many would believe it to be true, and most would think that it was an easter egg or a character design, just like Deadpool.

There were some simulation games in the past where fictional characters inside would say that they knew of the players' existence, but who would believe it to be true? Those who really did believe it had already been corrected by Yang Technologies.

The smell of blood had yet to fade away. Frenzied Sword, who had run over from a distance away, attracted the attention of the players. Galaxy Times had announced his movements, and Frenzied Sword had gained some short-lived fame. He was recognized in a moment.

The players around them began whispering to one another, looking in envy.

"Isn't that the professional gamer mentioned by the program? He has a picture on the promotional ad."

"He really does have a special relationship with Black Phantom."

"I want to unlock a hidden quest with the Black Phantom, too."

Frenzied Sword waddled over to Han Xiao's side.

Han Xiao regarded this player, who had some potential, well. It was alright to embarrass Frenzied Sword in front of NPCs, but he did not have the heart to do so in front of the crowd of players. No matter what, Frenzied Sword was also a professional gamer, and his image was very important.

Han Xiao randomly assigned some regular mission. When Frenzied Sword received the mission, his face was overcome with disappointment.

"Collect materials? That's so boring. You might as well tell me to dance."

Han Xiao's lips curved up. Habits were indeed scary.

Just then, a player walked over. The ID above his head read 'Laughing Blade'. He asked, "Frenzied Sword?"

Once Frenzied Sword saw this person, his face fell as he dryly replied, "It's you. So, you're here to play Galaxy as well. Why aren't you playing Knight anymore?"

"Haha, it's not challenging enough," Laughing Blade said half-mockingly.

Some players recognized Laughing Blade.

"Isn't that the professional gamer, Laughing Blade?"

"I heard he was one of the top three players in Knight; he even won two championships before."

Laughing Blade enjoyed the players' surprise thoroughly. His eyes hid feelings of condescension as he looked at Frenzied Sword.

In the past, Frenzied Sword had also been a professional gamer in Knight. In official competitions, he had suffered countless defeats to Laughing Blade, and his fame was far from that of Laughing Blade.

Laughing Blade saw the rewards assigned to Frenzied Sword on Galaxy Times and realized that his old opponent was better-off than him. Feeling green from jealousy, he intentionally came to stir up trouble. After a few words, he pretended to ask casually, "Since we've met, let's have a PVP duel. I'm an Esper, what about you?"

"... Mechanic."

Frenzied Sword was slightly hesitant. Even though he was under Han Xiao's mentorship, his current Mechanic abilities were very unsuited for battle. Subconsciously, he wanted to reject the duel.

Unexpectedly, Laughing Blade suddenly said, "Since we've known each other for so many years, let's have a friendly duel. You can't possibly reject a small request like this, or do you look down on me?"

Frenzied Sword was speechless. Those words made it hard for him to reject. There was no need to have a falling out with someone in the same industry over something small like this.

Laughing Blade laughed coldly in his mind. He had said that because he was afraid that Frenzied Sword would reject the deal. He wanted to have a duel with Frenzied Sword only because he had gained some popularity on Galaxy.

Once he obtained some fame, it made him easy to become someone else's prey.

If he were to defeat Frenzied Sword, he could probably tone down the latter's popularity. For a professional gamer who had attended a program to be defeated by him, he could become a little more famous as well.

Laughing Blade was very confident. He felt that an awakened Esper was quite strong. His elementary application was a rock-earth fusion armor that was suitable for defense. It was strong against pistols, so he felt that his chances of winning were quite high.

Even if he were to lose, he could test the gap between them. Anyway, at this point, they would not die. Laughing Blade felt that this deal only had benefits to him, and he would not have any losses.

Also... he looked toward Black Phantom, who was standing at one side, his gaze lighting up.

If Frenzied Sword can unlock a hidden quest, I'll give it a try too!

Chapter 153: Controlling Behind the Scenes

Han Xiao watched with interest from the side. *Laughing Blade? No impression of him. Probably not important enough in Galaxy.*

Frenzied Sword would eventually become a Legendary player in the future, but right now, he was bowing his head to Laughing Blade. This scene left him feeling nostalgic. For some reason, it brought him back to those days in the past, when he first started. Back then, there was a point in time when his power-leveiling business was dwindling. To find other ways to get income, he had entered a small office to help them mine gold to earn some rewards. That office often forced him to work over-time and cut his pay. Asking them about pay would only elicit answers that were nothing short of excuses.

The office's boss took advantage of being a business owner. When Han Xiao asked about his pay for the ninth time and started arguing with him, the boss told him that if he wanted to continue, he could; if he was not going to continue, he could just scam. If he continued to complain, then he would PK him until his level reached 0.

What else could Han Xiao do, he was also very exasperated. All he could do was to use his main account to show the boss why the business was doing so well. For a few weeks, he massacred all the players in the office till it suffered heavy losses and was on the verge of closing down. Then, he earned a reasonably large amount of reimbursement in exchange for his emotional losses.

In-game blackmailing was not illegal.

Aye, the happy times are gone, there's no turning back. Han Xiao puffed as he smoked. As he overcame his obstacles, he could only appreciate it now because of his past experiences.

Frenzied Sword could only accept Laughing Blade's request. Currently, he was LV 11, way ahead of average players' levels. Other than a Mechanic's repairing and reinforcement skills, he could only use basic shooting and fighting skills.

Han Xiao had complete understanding of Frenzied Sword's fighting abilities. With a flash in his eyes, he called out to Frenzied Sword. "Come here."

Frenzied Sword was a little confused as he followed orders accordingly. Han Xiao took off his thermo-electrical incisor gloves, secretly giving them to him.

With a look at the gloves' stats, Frenzied Sword's breathing stopped for a moment, his face overcome with shock and surprise.

"I'm only lending them to you; you have to return them." Han Xiao erased Frenzied Sword's unrealistic hopes.

Frenzied Sword was still very touched. It was the right decision to suck up to Han Xiao, he could even receive such a benefit! *Is it because he's afraid that I'll lose, making him lose face?*

Putting on the gloves, Frenzied Sword had a greater sense of confidence. Standing fifteen meters apart from Laughing Blade, both of them braced themselves, getting ready to attack.

Nearby, players began crowding around to watch the show. They were mainly curious about Frenzied Sword and wanted to see the difference between a professional gamer who had his name reported on the system and a regular player.

“Even if he is a professional player, he should be about the same level in these early stages.”

“With only a few basic abilities, he probably can’t show off his mechanic abilities as well.”

“I think there’s an advantage in these early stages. Maybe he’s practiced fighting before in real-life, or he’s someone who was in the military. After all, the controls here are so realistic.”

The players murmured to one another.

With a low cry, Laughing Blade made the first move, launching himself forward. With every step, the sand on the ground wrapped itself around his calves and snaked up to his body, forming a sandstone armor covering his body.

His pistol can only fire at most five shots, and my abilities can definitely hold him off. As long as I close the distance between us, he’s definitely finished! Laughing Blade thought.

The players were all new. The level of their control was only at a level where they understood how to use the skills and what they did. Laughing Blade’s decision was correct, but Frenzied Sword’s reaction gave Laughing Blade a shock. Instead of moving back and using the pistol to kite him, he rushed forward instead.

Both people quickly collided into one another. Without thinking twice, Laughing Blade sent his fist, which was wrapped in sandstone armor, flying toward Frenzied Sword, and Frenzied Sword met his fist with his black-gloved palm.

Could this glove be special equipment?

Just as Laughing Blade had this thought, he suddenly experienced a series of burning pains. Stunned, he realized that his health points were reduced to zero in that moment.

His vision turned black as he immediately died.

From the start to end, this duel only lasted three seconds!

On the battlefield, only Frenzied Sword remained. The wind blew up the edges of his clothes. Expressionless, he truly resembled a solitary professional at the top of his game.

The surrounding players watched, dazed, unable to react.

“Was... was that an instant KO?”

“That’s way too fast!”

“Too overpowered! No wonder he could get on Galaxy Times!”

“Could the secret quest really have given him such a huge lead over the rest of us?”

Everyone was a new player. Technically, their battle power should have been about the same. Using a pistol, it would take at least four or five shots before one would die, and Laughing Blade's Esper ability obviously strengthened his defense. Some players remembered Laughing Blade's performance during the wild-beast attack. When he was surrounded by two gray wolves, he was still able to hold them off. But when he fought with Frenzied Sword, he died instantly just by meeting fists with him?

What kind of godly attack power was this?

Everyone stared at Frenzied Sword's glove, envy showing on their faces.

"That is high-level equipment!"

"Mechanics can make something like that? I thought they could only make guns!"

"I really want one too..."

Not long after, the revived Laughing Blade ran over, his face looking dark as he said unhappily, "Didn't we agree that it would be a friendly battle? How could you... you..."

He originally wanted to say how could he have killed him, but he felt that saying it would be too shameful.

Having defeated an old opponent, Frenzied Sword only felt refreshed from being able to settle all the discontent from the past as he chuckled. "Sorry, I didn't know you were so vulnerable."

This sentence made Laughing Blade so angry that he could feel the heat rising up from his chest.

Calling me vulnerable for dying?

It was a complete loss for him. Dying once cost him a lot of EXP. Laughing Blade was very upset. He initially thought that once the duel reached a certain point, they would end it, but he did not expect to be an instant-killed, not to mention he could not even blame Frenzied Sword. He was so distressed that he could feel his heart tightening up over this horrible situation.

After the crowd around them had left, Frenzied Sword obediently returned the gloves to Han Xiao, hesitating as he asked, "Han... Black Phantom, are you selling these gloves?"

Han Xiao looked at him from the side of his eye, opening up the shop listing as he added "thermo-electrical incisor gloves" at a fixed price of 80,000 with a reputation of 15 points. This set of gloves was a prize that he had seized from Rose Militant. After learning the basic knowledge upfront, he had instead experimented to create the blueprints to create the thermo-electrical incisor gloves. By spending some EXP, he could make one on his own now.

Frenzied Sword was instantly motivated. Excitedly, he clenched his fists. This close-combat equipment designed for Mechanics was his favorite. "I can't afford it now, but I will be able to, sooner or later!"

Then, Laughing Blade suddenly inched closer. His gaze lit, he stared at Han Xiao and asked, "Black Phantom, I heard you're enemies with Germinal. I want to join you."

In this time frame, the discussion board had all sorts of different guesses as to how one could trigger the Black Phantom's secret quest. They thought that as long as one showed their intention to become Germinal's enemies, there was a chance that they could trigger Black Phantom's secret quest. Many players were guessing the phrase to trigger that. In his short time in Green Valley Ville, Han Xiao had heard several of such guesses and had rejected them all. This led the players to a final conclusion—it was all about possibility when one was trying to trigger Black Phantom's secret quest.

Laughing Blade was also trying his luck.

Han Xiao raised an eyebrow and said, "Oh... You seem to be not bad."

There's a lead! Laughing Blade grinned in surprise.

Frenzied Sword's heart fell. Getting nervous, he could feel a strong sense of discomfort welling within him for some reason.

"But you don't seem to be up to par yet." Han Xiao suddenly changed his words as he waved, rejecting Laughing Blade.

Laughing Blade had not even finished his breath and was left speechless for a while. His expression was annoyed. With his heart full of jealousy toward Frenzied Sword, he muttered to himself in anger, "This guy is really some lucky dog."

Frenzied Sword heaved a sigh of relief, regaining his composure.

Han Xiao almost laughed aloud upon seeing Frenzied Sword's reaction, as if he were a guy who had almost been cheated on...

Pfft, what kind of description was that? What would that make me? Han Xiao tossed aside this crazy idea.

On the interface, quite an amount of EXP had accumulated. For players in Green Valley Ville who intended to change their class, they all would have completed that by the next day. Han Xiao would prepare to leave after that.

While he was collecting EXP, someone recorded Frenzied Sword and Laughing Blade's battle and uploaded it onto the forum.

...

Luzman was a player who came from Big Horn Village. By luck, he had managed to get into the phases of beta-testing and had been saving his money before he switched his class. He wanted to join the strongest class.

When it was time for public testing, he saw Black Phantom's battle and was captivated. Hurriedly, he wanted to switch to become a Mechanic. Other players tried to complete tasks to improve their relationship with Black Phantom, but Luzman could not wait. He used his money to gain five reputation points with Black Phantom. From the five basic knowledges that Black Phantom taught, he learned [Basic Weaponry Knowledge] as he liked this name the most.

But Luzman quickly realized that Mechanics were not as strong as Black Phantom made them out to be. After losing continuously in the duel, he felt that he had been cheated; this class was way too weak! But he could not bear to abandon his beta-testing account and had asked the customer service if he could change his class, but that was of course not possible, leaving him infuriated.

What a waste of having this opportunity to enter the beta test! This account is useless now!

Luzman had been extremely frustrated. Going onto the forums, he had put up posts everywhere, regardless of topic. He had planned to thoroughly bash the Mechanic class by repeating how trashy it was and let all of the players know that Mechanic was a trashy class!

Players had debated after his comments. Initially, Luzman had been satisfied with what he saw. That was his original intention. He had also enjoyed the feeling of his words being taken seriously by others.

Chapter 154: Alumera's Searcher

Scrolling through the forum, Luzman realized that he had been tagged. He clicked into the post, and there was a video of Frenzied Sword and Laughing Blade dueling, and people were gloatingly asking him to explain himself.

Luzman had recently gone crazy hard on mechanics on the various forums. His stance was not the most annoying thing; him posting everywhere was what annoyed people the most. He constantly forced people to read his post as if they were not already aware of his comments. This behavior made him loathed by everyone.

"@Luzman, a Mechanic has killed an Esper. Why don't you come out and explain?"

After watching the video, Luzman immediately retorted, "This is just a rare instance. That Laughing Blade did not know how to play at all!"

"Ha, you've suffered consecutive duel losses, but how did someone else win? Just admit you're a rookie, Luzman."

Luzman stifled his anger and replied, "Frenzied Sword has triggered a secret quest. He was more advanced in rank and equipment; there is no point in battling!"

"Do you mean the equipment given by NPCs isn't enough? Then what for are you doing missions for? Taking rewards for what? Collecting money for what? Just admit you're a rookie and stand still when being scolded!"

Damn it! Luzman was fuming, he straight away came back. "What I said about Mechanics being weak was none of your business!"

"Then why are you posting that everywhere? Think before you speak, won't you?"

Luzman was exasperated. "Damn you, can you stop barking? Are you that low for you to come and be scolded by me!"

“Finally, your true colors have shown. You’re a troll, stop acting. You chose this profession on your own, how can you say you were cheated? This is hilarious, who do you think you are? Why would the gaming company cheat you? Were you looking for your sense of existence everywhere?”

“I would not have chosen Esper if the Black Phantom did not lie to me!”

“Oh, it wasn’t my fault; it’s the world’s fault. Nobody pointed a gun at you, forcing you to choose your class, did they? Are you that dumb to push the blame to an NPC? If you regret it, open a new account, and stop posting everywhere, you brat!”

“Son of a b*tch...” Luzman was seething.

At this moment, an official message appeared on Luzman’s screen.

It was detected that you frequently used insulting terms, hence your forum account will be banned for three days.

Luzman was stunned. *What the hell!*

He was unable to reply. Naturally, the players on the forum soon discovered this and gloated at him.

“Haha, banned for cursing, aren’t you?”

“This is great.”

“Let’s go, he is clearly a troll.”

Luzman could only read and not reply. He was indignant and sullen, itching to smash something.

...

“That’s interesting.”

Han Xiao finished reading the forum’s comments, and his fingers were itching to reply, but sadly, he could not. Thinking back when he was on the forum, he loved to watch people getting into a catfight; that was a great pastime.

However, there were some people who got really angry because of the catfight; these were the people who were too innocent. *If you are unable to win an argument, just treat it as something to do for fun. Everything on the Internet is pointless; it is all virtual and will not affect you in real life.*

Han Xiao had also once been a despised power-leveler. He had been bashed by other players. When there was nothing to do, he could get into a catfight and treat it as something to lighten up his day.

Looking at the lively players on the forum while he himself could only be a spectator, Han Xiao felt very lonely. He missed the days when he was involved in a fiery verbal sparring... even though he had always felt that the term ‘verbal sparring’ was filthy.

Looking at the time, it was nearing dusk, and the battlefield had been cleaned up.

Han Xiao heard an engine from afar; he raised his eyes and gazed into the distance. There were a few off-road vehicles speeding across the muddy road. Green Valley Ville opened its gates, and Balsas was standing beside the gate to welcome these few vehicles with respect.

A thought flashed through Han Xiao's mind. *The vehicle has an Alumera crest.*

...

When the off-road vehicle drove into the town, armed guards got off the bus and guarded a man who was dressed exquisitely.

Xiao Jin, the second leader of Alumera, had sent the emissary Xiao Rui to South Continent to find the Germinal Bounty, Zero. More than half a year ago, the Alumera family had realized that the appearance of this Zero was exactly the same as the missing Han Xiao, so Xiao Jin sent people to look for him. However, they had ended up empty-handed for a long time. Xiao Rui was the leader of the search team.

Balsas was extremely deferential toward Xiao Rui. He led everyone into the main house. The table was set with drinks and piping hot, fragrant barbecued meat. There was a cross-sectional cut on it, and the texture of the skin looked like a wave of an ocean. There was a hint of pink in the middle of the reddish-brown flesh. It was clear that the meat was tender even without biting into it. It was Gray Devil Wolf's meat that had been collected two hours ago, and it was extremely fresh. Other dishes included some vegetables and mashed potato-like crop.

In this rogue town, the expenses of the dishes were considerable, and Xiao Rui was very satisfied with Balsas' hospitality.

The group sat down around the food, and Xiao Rui, who was covered in dust, scoffed down the food. He ate three pieces of barbecue meat in one go and only slowed down after he swallowed them. He wiped his mouth and said calmly to Balsas, who was waiting at one side, "I will rest for a few days in your territory and continue to find that damn bastard."

"I'll get someone to prepare the rooms," Balsas replied. "Let me know again of any requests."

Xiao Rui's status in the family was higher than his, hence Balsas' posture was awfully low.

"Okay." Xiao Rui was pleased with Balsas' attitude. He decided to stay for a few days more in Green Valley Ville. He had spent this last half a year searching for news of Zero in the South Continent, and he had enough of this aimless searching; it was a form of torture.

Ever since Han Xiao's disappearance, the family thought that he was dead and did not take it to heart. However, after finding out that he had become Zero, everyone was shocked. Alumera did not wish to provoke Germinal. Thus, to find out what exactly happened, Xiao Jin assigned him to bring Han Xiao back to the family for questioning, yet the target had not been found after six months.

Xiao Rui was filled with resentment toward Han Xiao. It was all because of this 'regenerated' guy that he could not enjoy his life in comfort at his family's headquarters.

He had met Han Xiao a few times before; he was weak and hopeless. If not for him being Xiao Jin's biological son, he would have been sent to clean the toilets. Xiao Rui was an orphan adopted from a

war, and there were many orphans like him under Xiao Jin. All of them grew up competing with one another, and each racked their brains scheming to improve their status. Hence, he was extremely envious of Han Xiao as he did not have to struggle as much.

Initially, when he heard that Han Xiao had died, he was secretly very happy during his funeral. He knew that his adopted brothers felt the same way even though they were grieving on the outside.

The first impression Xiao Rui had of Han Xiao made it difficult for him to link Han Xiao and the Zero that was talked about on the Dark Net.

Why didn't you just die and leave me alone? Why must you give me so much trouble? Xiao Rui had grumbled on more than one occasion. He looked at Balsas and chatted for a while before asking casually, "Is there anything going on recently in this town?"

"Yes, those refugees outside..." Balsas told him about his findings.

Xiao Rui was surprised. "There's actually such a weird crowd? You have to report your findings to the family."

"I know... There's something else. Black Phantom is also resting in this town. His reason is unknown; he claims that it was on the way."

Xiao Rui's heart skipped a beat. "Black Phantom is here, too?"

Recently, the Dark Net's killer list had been updated. Black Phantom's rank had risen to seventh, and he was very active. To know that this legendary killer was nearby, Xiao Rui was somewhat uneasy.

"We'd better not provoke him," Balsas replied.

Xiao Rui was undecided as he knitted his brows together in a deep frown. He turned and saw Liu Cheng, his expressionless personal bodyguard who was right behind him. This eased his nervous mood.

Liu Cheng sensed Xiao Rui's gaze and reassured him indifferently. "Don't worry. Even if we face Black Phantom, I can still protect your life. He can't do anything to me."

...

The sun was setting.

Ever since the off-road vehicles entered the town, Han Xiao had felt a change in Green Valley Ville. The town's look-out had kept a close watch on him, as if they were worried about his activities. From this small detail, Han Xiao was fairly confident that the person on the vehicle that had entered the town was an important character.

"I don't have a deep impression of Alumera's family. It seems like they were not a special group in the original quest... Oh, I've recalled. I think in the secondary quest of 'The Power Struggle of Vagrant Warlords', this family was the one of the strongest powers. Yes, this secondary quest and Bennett's refugee quest had a partial conflict. The vagrants and I did not have a lot of interactions, don't think it will affect this quest."

Han Xiao had been eyeing Bennett's quest for a long time. He did not know when it started, but with his good relationship with Bennett, coupled with the positive notes from the Dark Net Organization, as well as his Universal Reputation, there was a high chance that he would be invited by Bennett to participate in the refugee plan, and that would be Aquamarine's second main quest.

Chapter 155: Fruit of Face

As a participant in the main quest mission, the mission Han Xiao would receive should be quite different from the other players', and he was very excited.

Alumera seemed like an indirect enemy. Han Xiao rubbed his chin and muttered to himself, "We'll see when the time comes. There isn't any cause for concern now. This is just a small territory."

The interface showed that he had accumulated more than one million EXP. Aquamarine had nineteen novice villages. Excluding the six on Andrea Mainland and not counting Big Horn Village and Green Valley Ville, this meant that Han Xiao still had eleven chances of earning from teaching mechanic skills to those who switched to the mechanics class. This was more than enough for him to rise till LV 60, after which he could then go to some dangerous places, collecting rare abilities, skills, and machinery. Hence, it was rumored that 'max level is the beginning'. Although he did not have a rank limit imposed by the version, the quality-price ratio to continuously increase his rank was not the highest.

Since Han Xiao possessed a huge channel of EXP, he used it extravagantly to improve his skills.

Talent points could not be used carelessly, but EXP did not really matter.

He straight away upgraded three skills to the highest level; [Flaming Will], [Overload], and [Moving Snipe]. These three combat skills were all important, and the explosive power was upgraded once again. If [Flaming Will] and [Overload] were to start at the same time, it was even possible for the Ghost sniper rifle to take over two thousand HP. The three skills were fully upgraded, and they brought along three talent points. His accumulated talent points were 24 now, and he saved them so as to not use them unnecessarily.

With the remaining EXP, Han Xiao fused his knowledge together and randomly obtained new blueprints. Fortunately, the fusion this time around was quite good.

[Sunworm Portable Flamethrower], the flame had continuous damage. The important point was that it had a small volume but a large range of impact. It could be carried with you or loaded as a small component on a vehicle or robot.

A player who took the role of patrolling in the town suddenly dashed over and shouted in fear, "I found an army. They are approaching, and they have triggered a mission!"

The players of Green Town Ville became restless and all went to check out their interface.

Han Xiao's brow jumped momentarily. He actually received a mission too!

You have triggered a random mission, [Invasion of Green Valley Ville].

Mission summary: Green Valley Ville, which is controlled by the Alumera family, is very close to the inhabited land, Black Pine, Lu Cheng's territory. There has been continuous friction between them. Now, Lu Cheng's troops are once again invading Green Valley Ville. You can choose to help the Alumera family protect Green Valley Ville or help Lu Cheng attack. Please choose your position.

Mission requirements: Tip off Balsas and protect Green Valley Ville. Otherwise, you can choose to join Lu Cheng's troops and attack Green Valley Ville.

Note: Once you have picked a side, you are not allowed to switch.

Mission rewards:

1. By protecting Green Valley Ville, you will receive 12,000 EXP and 3,000 Aquamarine Dollars.
2. By helping Lu Cheng compete the attack, you will receive 10,000 EXP.

I actually received the novice mission as well?

Han Xiao broke into laughter. He did not care about this small reward, but Lu Cheng, who was mentioned in the mission, caught his attention. If he remembered correctly, Lu Cheng was Old Man Lu's son, a South Continent vagrant who was a big warlord.

Old Man Lu's four blueprints could only be obtained from Lu Cheng. An idea came to Han Xiao's head, and he immediately made a decision. As long as he got to interact with Lu Cheng, he would then be able to know when the secret quest would begin.

As for those four uncommon blueprints, he had been eyeing them for a long time.

I will observe for a while, see if the leader is Lu Cheng himself or his subordinate. Han Xiao took out his sniper rifle and oiled it. He idled around and appeared as a sharp contrast to the busy players around him.

This urgent mission resulted in the players taking action, some of them immediately chose to protect Green Valley Ville, which offered a higher reward, and went to tip off the guard. There were still some players surveying the situation first.

Balsas received the information and jumped out of his lover's bed in shock. He hurriedly threw on his clothes and arrived at the town's lookout tower with quick steps. The observatory was built with stones and bricks, and the top was spread with weeds as a ceiling.

"Damn it, the bastard of Black Pine came again!" Balsas cursed with a pair of gloomy triangular eyes.

Green Valley Ville was just one part of Alumera, and Lu Cheng was actually a local vagrant warlord from the South Continent. His power was even more tremendous. Lu Cheng's headquarters were in Black Pine, and Green Valley Ville was located just dozens of miles away. Lu Cheng had eyed this strategic location for a long time and tried to invade several times. No one had expected him to launch an attack today.

Xiao Rui arrived beside Balsas and pointed at the dense mess of surrounding players and assured him, "Don't worry, don't we have cannon fodder?"

Balsas' eyes lit up. With this bunch of unbeatable eccentric refugees, they were able to counteract Lu Cheng's military advantage!

Balsas called the assistant and ordered, "Go tell that bunch of refugees outside that I need them to ward off Lu Cheng's army. As long as they completed my mission, everyone will receive money."

"Don't give too much," Xiao Rui added on. "Their lives are worthless."

"I understand." This bunch of refugees were the best cannon fodder; they were the trump card to defeating Lu Cheng. Balsas let out a sinister smile.

Luck is on our side!

...

Lu Cheng sat in the middle of a war chariot and looked serious. This unit had more than sixty off-road armored vehicles equipped with machine guns and rockets, followed by hundreds of fully-equipped elite soldiers. They were all trained and qualified soldiers; one soldier could fight at least three enemies, and the soldiers knew how to work together in different formations. They were not a common vagrant of the mob.

Lu Cheng had been coveting Green Valley Ville for a long time. There was a strategic mountain pass between this town and his land, Black Pine. Once he seized the town, there would be no worries in the future.

"We must capture Green Valley Ville this time round."

The troops were getting closer to Green Valley Ville. Lu Cheng soon noticed the crowd surrounding the town; they wore ragged garments, like a group of refugees, guarding the town.

Lu Cheng's face immediately darkened, and there was a trace of anger in his eyes. "What a despicable bastard to use refugees as cannon fodder!"

He ordered the military fleet to park a distance away from the town, just outside of the firing range of the machine guns. The smoke and dust quickly dissipated. The ruts left on the muddy road exuded a burning smell, and the heat from the friction somewhat contorted the air.

The players who chose to protect the town all held onto their weapons tightly and waited on high alert. The cold armored vehicles and the compressed gun barrels made many people nervous. They swallowed their saliva with unease. Beads of sweat on their foreheads were reflecting light under the sun.

Many observing players had some doubts. Were they not allowed to choose their camp? It seemed like that they would begin fighting any minute now, and they might have no time to choose a side.

“Balsas, are you thinking of blocking my gunfire with these pathetic fellows?” Lu Cheng took out a megaphone, and his voice travelled out. Everyone in the town could hear his voice clearly. “My men are able to tear them to shreds easily, do you want me to paint your territory with fresh blood?”

Balsas emerged above the wall and smiled coldly.

Lu Cheng frowned and looked at the group of shabbily dressed refugees. He calmly offered, “I’ll give you the opportunity to leave now. There is no need to die here.”

The refugees were restless for a while, but he realized that they did not waver despite that.

“Are these people unafraid of death?”

Lu Cheng was astonished. He realized that there was not the slightest bit of fear on this bunch of refugees’ faces. He hesitated to give the command of attack.

Balsas faintly guessed the values of this group of refugees; what they cared about the most was profit instead of their lives. Seeing Lu Cheng hesitation, Balsas was very proud of himself and was rather scornful of Lu Cheng’s indecisiveness. He ridiculed lowly, “What an excessive tendency to clemency.”

To be apprehensive toward endangering the refugees’ lives would only hinder his battle; Lu Cheng’s choice appeared awfully stupid in Balsas’ eyes.

Balsas grinned evilly and was about to order the refugees to counterattack when he suddenly realized that there was movement from the side-lines.

Black Phantom!

Han Xiao stretched his back and strode unhurriedly to the center of the confrontation. He instantly caught the attention of both sides and the players. He crossed his arms and called loudly, “Give me some face. If you all want to go to war, do it tomorrow!”

His voice was as good as a loudspeaker. Everyone was taken aback.

“Why is he intervening?” Balsas immediately swallowed back his almost released order.

Lu Cheng froze, sizing Han Xiao up, before exclaiming hoarsely, “Black Phantom? Why is this fellow here?”

The commanders of both sides were afraid of the consequences, so they ordered the troops to lay down their weapons. The tense atmosphere of confrontation dissipated immediately.

The players were bewildered. They were not very familiar with Aquamarine’s background. From the mission brief, it was known that Balsas and Lu Cheng were warlords of influence. Black Phantom gave out an order on his own, and the two warlords with armed forces immediately feared the consequences. This roused the players’ curiosity.

With one sentence from Black Phantom, he was able to halt the war. He was able to make the two warlords overlook their feud, who exactly was he?

Just how high was his status to dare say the phrase ‘give me some face’? The most terrifying thing was that the two warlords halted immediately; how much weight does he carry?

Then the players noticed something else. These NPCs all recognized Black Phantom. Exactly how big was his reputation on the planet? Could it already be to the point where he was able to cut in anywhere he went?

Is this Red-Hair Shanks' legendary ability, Fruit of Face¹?

Bun-hit-dog, who was secretly videoing the scene, was thrilled. This kind of news material was exactly what he wanted.

Chapter 156: One More in the Support Team

“Retreat, set up the camp!” Lu Cheng took a deep look at Han Xiao and swept his eyes across the refugees. He let his troops pitch a camp in the distance and eyed covetously.

The players became restless. Some players who had yet to choose their side were surveying the situation. It seemed like the Green Valley Ville's side had a higher possibility of winning.

The sky became dark.

Han Xiao walked over to Lu Cheng's camp, and the guards hastily raised their guns when they saw him approaching.

“Relax, I just want to have a short discussion with your leader,” Han Xiao assured them.

The guards continued to hold on to their guns and did not allow Han Xiao to enter the camp.

At this moment, Lu Cheng heard the commotion and walked over. “Let him in.”

If Black Phantom wanted to kill him, there was no need to inform him. It seemed like he had other intentions. He permitted the guards to make way and lead Han Xiao into the newly built tent. Frenzied Sword followed after Han Xiao.

Lu Cheng sat down casually, not worried that Han Xiao might threaten his life. With his hands clasped under his chin, he remarked, “The famous Black Phantom actually appeared in this small place. I don't know the reason of your intervention—I don't think Balsas is qualified to hire a killer of your status—so what is your purpose of visiting me?”

Han Xiao got straight to the point. “I'm here to help you.”

“Help me?” Lu Cheng became suspicious. “We have not met before.”

Han Xiao casually made up a reason. “You are more likeable than Balsas.”

Lu Cheng felt strange and paused before commenting, “Balsas ... He's a despicable fellow. He actually let the refugees act as cannon fodder. I really don't understand, why did this bunch of refugees disregard their lives? What benefits did Balsas give them exactly? Could it be that he detained their family to threaten them? I gave them an opportunity to live, yet they don't want to leave.”

“They don't have much combat strength, why don't you just crush them? With your armed forces' strength, it would be a completely one-sided massacre.” Han Xiao half-smiled.

Lu Cheng's face was blank. He declined to comment and changed the topic. "Black Phantom, I don't know you, and I don't know why you want to help me. What do you plan to do, kill Balsas? I believe this is an easy task for you."

"No, I don't want to kill people," Han Xiao said perfunctory.

Lu Cheng's lips twisted. *A killer said he did not wish to kill people? This is more ridiculous than saying a navy can't swim!*

"Then how do you plan to help me?"

"You are concerned about the refugees. I can help you resolve that."

Lu Cheng raised his eyebrows. "You can convince them?"

"Perhaps."

"... Then what do you want from me?"

Lu Cheng did not believe that a legendary killer, who was a stranger, would help for free. He was certain that the Black Phantom had a motive, but he did not understand what the Black Phantom fancied from him.

"I don't need a reward."

Lu Cheng's eyes darkened, and he stared at Han Xiao's eyes. What he saw was a dense fog, and he was unable to penetrate Han Xiao's thoughts. Generally speaking, if one did not want a reward, it meant that the person harbored other intentions and bigger ambitions.

Silence.

Frenzied Sword felt lost as he was listening to their conversation, but that did not hinder him from sensing that the atmosphere had become rigid, and his nape somewhat tightened.

After two minutes of deadlock, Lu Cheng did not say anything at the end. He nodded and said slowly, "Then I'll count on you."

...

Han Xiao petted Frenzied Sword's shoulder while walking out of Lu Cheng's camp, saying, "I've things for you to do."

You triggered the mission [Disseminating of Information].

The mission was to disseminate the information of Black Phantom joining Lu Cheng's camp, using reputation as a form of reward. The greater the number of people who came to know this information, the higher the reward would be, and players were surprisingly counted in as the head count. Frenzied Sword did not doubt him and diligently went to disseminate this piece of information in Green Valley Ville.

Perhaps the ordinary players would be amazed to encounter this type of real-life interaction mission, but Frenzied Sword had gone through Han Xiao's baptism of love, and hence was not shocked at any kind of mission anymore.

"Next up will be to see how much influence I have," Han Xiao said.

Frenzied Sword was really efficient, and perhaps because he had a bit of a fame now, the news spread through words of mouth quickly. Very soon, it had spread throughout Green Valley Ville. Then there was a huge commotion among the community of players.

"If we choose Green Valley Ville, does it mean we'll become enemies with Black Phantom?"

"How is it possible to beat him!"

"Is this a mission guide?"

The players were panicking. The image of Han Xiao ferociously killing the beasts was still deeply etched in their minds. Becoming enemies with Black Phantom would be equivalent to courting death. The situation of the mission was immediately turned upside down. The chances of Green Valley Ville winning had become an all-time low.

Also, choosing to protect Green Valley Ville meant that the players had to attack Black Phantom. That would result in a decline in their likeability with Black Phantom. That was too big a sacrifice for such a small mission. If they were to fight for real, should they attack him or not? If they did not attack him, how could they protect Green Town Ville? This was a thorny problem.

The players who had chosen Green Valley Ville were gloomy. They felt they had no chance of winning. If they want to complete the mission, they could only join Lu Cheng's camp, but they were unable to re-elect their camp.

Bun-hit-dog was very decisive; he was the first to advance to Lu Cheng's camp. The mission was second; his main objective was to capture more of Han Xiao's acts.

The guards had received Lu Cheng's orders and allowed the refugees to pass. Bun-hit-dog successfully joined Lu Cheng's camp, and Han Xiao, who was observing at one side, narrowed his eyes as he noticed Bun-hit-dog.

This ID seems familiar... Isn't he a video master? Han Xiao remembered Bun-hit-dog's ID; he was a rather famous video master uploader. He had done many seasons of the Galaxy series and was very well-received.

At this moment, Han Xiao had another idea...

Han Xiao strode out and stopped in front of Bun-hit-dog.

"You made a wise choice; I feel that you have potential. Do you want to become my temporary assistant?" Han Xiao asked.

Bun-hit-dog's eyes became as big as saucers. He was stupefied. Did he just trigger the secret quest?

He never had any extravagant expectations, but he did not expect himself to come upon it!

This is life; you might not get what you want, yet what you don't want could be gifted to you. This is too unexpected. Bun-hit-dog was suddenly frozen on the spot.

There was an uproar among the observing players.

“He had triggered Black Phantom’s secret quest!”

“How did he do it?”

“Was joining Black Phantom all it takes?”

“This mission was actually a chance to trigger a secret quest?”

Realizing this, the players who were still observing wasted no time in joining Lu Cheng’s camp. They were enthusiastic, joining the camp like a refugee tide. The camp was filled with players in an instant. It was overcrowded and jam-packed. The guards were stunned; they were unsure whether to chase people away or not.

The players who were done choosing their camps impatiently went to find Han Xiao, wanting to trigger the quest. However, they were faced with rejection.

“Why can’t we?”

“Is it only restricted to the first person who joined the camp?”

That was the most possible guess; the players who were a step slower wanted to bang their heads on the ground. The pain they felt was as if they were notified of striking a lottery to only be told it was an error.

They had the chance of being the first, but this chance was snatched by Bun-hit-dog, just like that.

A step slower, a golden opportunity missed!

The players were full of regret.

Han Xiao brought the overly-excited Bun-hit-dog to one side and casually issued five reputation points. He secretly planned on how to make full use of Bun-hit-dog.

Bringing along a player who was a game video maker also meant that he was bringing a reporter along. He could then have a channel to disseminate news to players freely. He could choose to give players some news selectively based on what information he wanted the players to know.

After experiencing the baptism of information explosion, controlling the public’s opinion was equivalent to holding a weapon. He was able to defame the opponent, guide the public’s opinion, and shape his image to his benefit.

Looks like my manipulation is getting more and more high-end. Han Xiao was elated. He compiled an accompanying mission that was generous in rewards and gave it to Bun-hit-dog. Next, he took out a mobile that could be used to contact him and handed it to Bun-hit-dog as well. He urged Bun-hit-dog a million times not to lose it, so Bun-hit-dog nodded repeatedly and gripped the mobile seriously.

He had two accompanying players, Bun-hit-dog and Frenzied Sword. The limit of Han Xiao's mission was adequate.

After advancing the second time, the limit to what he could reward players increased from three hundred to five hundred per level. This also meant that at LV 40, the increment was at around twelve thousand, but after the advancement, it had doubled to twenty-five thousand. Now, the total value had reached up to fifty thousand.

Han Xiao did not think of any news to disseminate, so he first gave Bun-hit-dog his contact as it would inevitably be of use in the future.

Now I have three players that I fancy: Frenzied Sword, Maple Moon, and Bun-hit-dog. The strength is slightly low, I'd need to expand my support team. Han Xiao was thinking ahead. He would rather focus on quality than quantity; he was destined to walk the elite route. If he was able to take in China's past experts then he would have profited. However, he felt that this possibility was rather uncertain as those ultra-good players all had some strange personalities.

Having only gone to two novice villages so far, he still had ten more waiting for him. Thus, Han Xiao had tons of opportunities left to choose his men.

Chapter 157: Nemesis!

Balsas arrived hastily at the lookout tower and saw a large number of refugees flooding into Lu Cheng's camp. He was flustered.

This bunch of refugees are abandoning my town? How did Lu Cheng subdue them?

It was at this moment Balsas realized that this special bunch of refugees valued profit over anything. The only reason they were easily manipulated by those small profits was because they had not yet been offered bigger benefits. Balsas thought that he was in control of the refugees, but that was just wishful thinking!

I'm doomed... Balsas was frantically running around in circles. These refugees were his trump card against Lu Cheng, and now that Lu Cheng had them, his advantage no longer existed.

Suddenly, he felt something was amiss. Lu Cheng should not have known any special aspects of the refugees!

At this moment, his assistant ran over panicky and reported the news of Black Phantom helping Lu Cheng.

This news was like a thunderbolt hitting him; Balsas was stood motionless in shock. He could not imagine being enemies with Black Phantom as he knew he would die miserably. Every superhuman that died under Black Phantom's gun was a reflection of his own end.

Black Phantom was of a legendary rank; why would he help Lu Cheng suddenly?

It must be because of Black Phantom that Lu Cheng was able to subdue the refugees. Why does he have so much influence on the refugees? Balsas then recalled that Black Phantom had mentioned he was only passing by.

Liar!

Balsas had the idea of retreating. If Balsas retreated along with the armed forces, there was a high possibility that Lu Cheng would not pursue and attack.

“The battle hasn’t begun, and you’re already thinking of running away. Have you forgotten the Alumera family’s rules?” Xiao Rui arrived at the lookout tower, stood beside Balsas, and frowned.

“But that’s the Black Phantom! Also, half of the refugees have betrayed us...”

“Alumera would never withdraw from a war. Get your men ready for battle.” Xiao Rui’s voice was firm and full of righteousness.

“There’s the Black Phantom though...”

“My bodyguard, Liu Cheng, will prevent him from participating in the battle.”

Liu Cheng, who was standing behind Xiao Rui, stepped out blankly. His calm, confident manner soothed Balsas’ nerves.

Balsas clenched his teeth and hesitated for a while before making a firm decision and calling his assistant. “Mobilize everyone and kick that Black Pine bastard all the way back to his home! We have some of the refugees with us at least; we still have a chance at this battle.”

“Yes sir!” The assistant hurried went to convey the order.

There were only three people left on the lookout tower. Xia Rui turned his head and said lowly, “Prepare the vehicle in case the guards fail. We must ensure that we are able to retreat. Don’t worry, we are on the same side, the family’s side. I’ll vouch for you that we had went all out for this arduous battle.”

Balsas heaved a sigh of relief; having some support steadied his heart. He was afraid Xiao Rui would let this news get to him, but it seemed like he was still rational. Leaving the soldiers of Green Valley Ville behind to resist, this would delay Lu Cheng’s troops and aid them in escaping, and it would also be easier to account to the Alumera Family.

...

In the early hours, the sky was dark, and a thick fog had seeped in.

Green Valley Ville’s guards were waiting atop the wall behind their machine guns in their bunkers. Through the wall fencing, they saw piles of sandbags in position and supporting machine guns. If they broke through the city gates, the battle would begin.

“They have decided to defend till their death, so a fierce battle is unavoidable. Fortunately, the number of stubborn refugees has decreased greatly.”

Lu Cheng put his binoculars down and let out a sigh.

He did not want to massacre the refugees, and Han Xiao had done him a huge favor. Lu Cheng was flabbergasted at the fact that Han Xiao seemed to have such influence on the refugees. It only took him half a night to solve this difficult problem.

As for the refugees who remained in Green Valley Ville, Lu Cheng had given them a chance, and there was also a limit to being benevolent.

“Attack in twenty minutes.”

Lu Cheng gave out a command and took advantage of the time that the troops needed to prepare to find Han Xiao to express his gratitude.

“It was all thanks to you that we managed to solve the issue of the refugees.”

Han Xiao smiled in response.

There was no free lunch in the world, and the more Han Xiao did not mention a reward, the more Lu Cheng felt uneasy. He paused before saying in exasperation, “I really feel that there’s nothing on me that such a character like you would be interested in.”

This sentence was caught by Bun-hit-dog, who was standing at the side. He sensed the hidden meaning.

This kind of character? Another clue relating to Black Phantom’s identity.

Bun-hit-dog thought of a vague outline for the first episode.

“We’ll discuss again after the war ended. These refugees will fight for you,” Han Xiao replied.

“The refugees are not soldiers, and I’m not Balsas; I’ll not let them throw their lives away.” Lu Cheng shook his head.

“Even without your command, they’ll still participate in this battle.” Han Xiao lowered his voice.

Are these people lunatics? Do they not fear death? Lu Cheng expressed his suspicions. However, the time for battle was approaching. He had no time to inquire more. He hurriedly went to command his troop.

Following the fleet of vehicles, a fierce battle began. Gunfire tore the darkness apart; Lu Cheng’s troops launched an intense attack on Green Valley Ville. The soldiers based on the wall and the vehicle carrying machine guns and howitzers were shooting across each other, and the battlefield was flooded with the sound of engines, machine guns, and screams of agony. The night sky was illuminated with the blaze of every exploded grenade and pervaded with the smoke from the guns.

The players also began their fighting at close quarters, Green Valley Ville’s players had clear commands from several small guilds’ leaders. While the players on Lu Cheng’s side lacked cohesion, they had a large number of players.

Han Xiao observed at one side as the situation did not require him to intervene yet. Lu Cheng had a high chance of winning.

Suddenly, a shadow traversed across the battlefield and made a beeline toward Han Xiao along the battlefield's edge; an artillery shell's flame and bullets landed on Han Xiao's body, yet he was not at all injured.

"Black Phantom, I'll be your opponent!"

Liu Cheng rushed over with giant strides.

"I can't even mind my own business now?" Han Xiao grudgingly took out and fired a machine gun. Three bullets hit the space between Liu Cheng's eyebrows, heart, and lower region of his body, but there was no expected blood splattered.

The moment when the three steel bullets hit Liu Cheng, it seemed that the kinetic energy suddenly disappeared. The bullets bounced off Liu Cheng's skin, and the might was not even as good as a slingshot. Light blue smoke showing the damage dealt could be seen floating above his head.

-0!

-0!

Han Xiao clearly saw the moment when the warhead hit, and the target's skin rippled with fine corrugation. After which, the bullet lost its kinetic energy.

His eyes darkened.

Kinetic energy absorption?

The interface showed Liu Cheng had reached LV 44. The level was not as high as Han Xiao's, but Liu Cheng's ability was very tricky. It was the natural defense against a kinetic energy weapon, and this happened to restrain his machinery.

Han Xiao was unlucky. He just had to meet an enemy who was able to restrain him.

With kinetic energy absorption, one could dissolve the various power exerted on the body. If the power could not breakthrough the ability's support limit, the power would then be absorbed and transformed into the opponent's power. Using physical property to attack was ineffective toward this kind of ability. To deal with Kinetic Energy Absorption, using either quantity or mental form to attack was the best choice. The support limit of this type of ability naturally depended on the level and strength. Unfortunately, in general, the support limit would always exceed the combat capability of the same level.

Liu Cheng stopped a few meters away from Han Xiao and said coldly, "Black Phantom, this battle is unrelated to you. Mind your own business."

A legendary killer was eyeing covetously at edge of the battlefield, so Liu Cheng took the lead to prevent the Black Phantom from participating in the battle.

Han Xiao's response was simply two bullets going for Liu Cheng's eyes, and they had resulted in zero damage still. The warhead fell to the ground disappointedly, Liu Cheng's eyes did not even blink. He was not harmed at all and said indifferently, "You're Dark Net's top killer and the Blood Pact Society's trump card. Others may fear you, but not me. I'll give you a word of advice, stay away from this battlefield."

“The Dark Net? Blood Pact Society? What power is that?” The observing Bun-hit-dog had an idea and hastily stored these two important keywords in his heart. He was finally seeing the tip of the iceberg of Black Phantom’s mysterious origin!

Han Xiao’s mind quickly filtered through his equipment at hand. Coming up with a preliminary plan, his feet slammed onto the ground and the Electromagnetic Hover-boots lit up. The exerted power made him recoil rapidly. He touched his waist swiftly and pulled out two Berserk Eagles. In a quick move, he changed to a Hayme bullet and opened fire. The bullets hit the side of Liu Cheng’s feet, and poisonous gas began to rise and pervaded the air.

Liu Cheng detected the poisonous gas and frowned. He held his breath and charged in large strides. While he was traversing through the battlefield earlier on, he had absorbed a large amount of kinetic energy from the crossfire. The kinetic energy shot out from the bottom of his feet as he dashed toward Han Xiao. With every step he took, his footprints formed big pits. He was like an unstoppable tank as he caught up with Han Xiao. He gathered an enormous amount of kinetic energy and directed it at Han Xiao’s chest.

Bang!

As if having a head-on collision with a mad rhinoceros, his body flew out uncontrollably. The remaining power was unstoppable, and he even knocked down and killed several players who were so unfortunate to be in his way.

Chapter 158: Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

This blow made Han Xiao seemed pathetic. However, his Magnetically controlled retractable armor managed to reduce the impact. Hence, it only took 50 HP. He had close to three thousand HP, which was quite good among the other mechanics of the same rank. The power of Liu Cheng’s released kinetic energy was not very strong, but it could easily cause repelling and flying effects, and that was the annoying part.

The interface displayed the insidious effect of the poisonous gas. The Hayme bullets were effective, but Liu Cheng’s HP and resistance were not low too. He could still explode kinetic energy and rapidly get out of the poisonous gas cloud. It was unrealistic to use poisonous gas to deal with Liu Cheng. The effect of using high-explosive bullets was slightly better, but they were the same as the Hayme bullets, unable to win by just using them. Han Xiao did not give chase as the ammunition he had was limited, and there were only three magazines with high-explosive bullets left.

He took a deep breath to increase his blood oxygen content. He stomped his feet and stopped recoiling from the impact. A deep trail could be seen on the ground. He put both his guns away and put his hands in a stance to ward off the charging Liu Cheng with his iron fists. The kinetic energy of Liu Cheng’s iron fists almost smashed open Han Xiao’s stance.

Liu Cheng’s kinetic energy was able to amplify power, and Han Xiao was vulnerable in terms of power.

An artillery shell exploded nearby; there was a glare, and both men were intertwined in a fight, one attacking and one guarding. This posture resembled a paper-cut silhouette drawing, disappearing in a flash.

Liu Cheng roared and slammed his fists onto Han Xiao's head. The kinetic energy of that action caused a tremor in the air. Han Xiao was beaten to the extent that his head became crooked and his cervical vertebrae cracked bone by bone. He grabbed Liu Cheng's shoulder and refused to let himself fly out because of the impact of that hit. His other hand started the thermo-electrical incisor gloves and aimed it toward Liu Cheng's eyes.

"High temperature?" Liu Ching quickly raised his head in alert. The glove glided across his cheek and left a burn, exposing his flesh. The burn stung his nerves, and in that moment, Lu Cheng exploded the kinetic energy within his body, causing a tremendous force to push Han Xiao out.

Han Xiao panted and removed the mud that was splattered all over his face. Firearms were useless, and this cost him a chance of surprise kill. In addition, it would only enable the opponent to absorb more kinetic energy. However, he still had other types of weapons such as flames and poisonous gas that both could kill and injure.

Fortunately, he is unable to absorb such energy. Otherwise, I really would not know how to subdue him.

Liu Cheng covered the burn on his face, glanced fearfully at Han Xiao's gloves, and immediately turned around to run off in another direction.

Han Xiao froze, and his expression changed suddenly. He hurriedly gave chase.

On a war vehicle, a soldier who was controlling machine guns saw a figure rapidly approaching. He instinctively turned the muzzle around to aim at the figure, and the compressed bullets were hitting the target. However, he was stupefied at the discovery that the target, who should have been shot into a sieve, was unscathed. The warheads dropped onto the ground one by one!

"Don't hit him!" Han Xiao yelled.

It was a pity that the reminder came too late; the surrounding war vehicles fired at Liu Cheng, who absorbed all the kinetic energy. Both of Liu Cheng's eyes were bloodshot, and the amount of kinetic energy was almost overflowing. Liu Cheng's muscles were twitching like those of an agitated mouse. He turned around, and the ground that he had stepped on exploded into a big hole. His whole body flew as if it was an exploded artillery shell.

This was the combined kinetic energy of a thousand bullets!

This speed is too fast for me! Han Xiao's eyes blurred, and he could not avoid it in time. The impact was like hitting a moving train. The scenery in his line of sight fell back quickly, and he resembled a baseball that had been hit for a home run, flying tens of meters. He landed and bounced countless times before falling into a ditch along the sides of the road. His body was covered with mud, and finally, he crashed into a war vehicle, overturning it, before stopping.

He felt really dizzy, and his whole body ached.

Magnetically Controlled Retractable Armor's durability dropped by 132 points!

You received 241 points of damage!

The enemy knew how to bring out the advantage of his ability, which in turn made Han Xiao suffer a small loss.

Liu Cheng... I did not hear of his name in my previous life. To think he would be so troublesome to deal with. Ah, he is a Crouching Tiger, a Hidden Dragon; I mustn't underestimate him... Han Xiao eyes turned cold as he entered into combat concentration mode, spat out a mouthful of blood, and leaped up once again to fight Liu Cheng.

Enveloped in the flames of war, the two fought fiercely on the battlefield. Bullets whistled passed the ears, and flames illuminated the horizon again and again. The area around the two became free of bullets. Soldiers dare not attack Liu Cheng again, but Liu Cheng could always knock himself against the gun muzzle.

This battle is greatly disadvantageous for me.

Han Xiao's eyes flashed. He abandoned Liu Cheng and rushed toward Green Valley Ville. Just like a shadow, he disappeared in a flash. Avoiding the firing by Green Valley Ville's guards, Han Xiao glided up the wall with a few steps, opened fire with both of his guns, and killed the guards wantonly.

Bullets penetrated each and every person, and blood was splattered everywhere.

Liu Cheng was alarmed and hastily pursued him.

Green Valley Ville was the fundamental point of conflict. Han Xiao had understood this point and immediately adopted the tactic of avoiding the enemy's strength and attacking his weakness. Hence, he did not continue to fight Liu Cheng painstakingly. Unless Liu Cheng did not want this town, Han Xiao would only be led by his nose. In the moments between his fight with Liu Cheng, Han Xiao thought of a strategy!

After changing the magazine, he shot down a few more guards. There was suddenly a huge gust of wind behind him, and Han Xiao twisted his body to avoid it. Liu Cheng swept past a few inches away. Having missed the opportunity, he punched the wall and smashed a huge piece off it. Broken bricks and stones spilled over the ground.

Liu Cheng's body became sluggish, as if he had fully exhausted his kinetic energy.

Here's my chance! Both of Han Xiao's hands aimed at Liu Cheng's head, the high heat from the thermo-electrical incisor gloves warping the air.

Liu Cheng did not show any signs of being flustered. Instead, there was a glimpse of accomplishment.

"You got tricked!"

The strong kinetic energy was surging again, and there were no signs of exhaustion; that was just a feint. This was a long-awaited killing strike that contained eighty percent of his kinetic energy. He soared, and with amazing swiftness, he lifted his knee to knock onto Han Xiao's chin. Once hit, the impact would smash half of Han Xiao's face and fracture it.

Han Xiao flew off the wall with his head tilted up.

That didn't feel right! Liu Cheng was shocked; his knees did not have the feeling of striking a concrete object.

Han Xiao had been vigilant. Just now, in the flash of light, he had used the Electromagnetic Hover-boots to retreat. He was only gently scratched by Liu Cheng's knee, and he was hardly injured.

While he was in midair, he withdrew his Berserk Eagles, aimed at Liu Cheng's eyes, and opened fire.

This attack was fruitless. Liu Cheng went stiff for a moment. He could not escape, yet his face did not change. He knew this bullet was ineffective against his ability.

Bang!

When the bullet was about to hit his eyes, the bullet lost its kinetic energy as usual. However, the warhead suddenly burst out a dazzling glare.

Liu Cheng covered his eyes and let out a blood-curdling scream. His vision was a vast expanse of whiteness. The stinging pain in his two eyes affected his brain's sense of equilibrium.

Flash bullet!

Oh, the thought of it taking effect right on his eyes, what a sweet feeling!

Han Xiao had been mulling over this attack for a long time!

Han Xiao's hand reached out, and with the help of the wall's chink, he climbed up the wall once again. Taking advantage of Liu Cheng losing his vision, this was the best timing to launch [Overload] and [Flaming Will]. Han Xiao's hands suddenly pressed on Liu Cheng's face. This time around, the attack was definitely the best!

Even if [Flaming Will]'s face was as black as before, the damage later on would still be off the charts!

-423!

-423!

The damage might have seemed worse than the sniper rifle, but the Thermo-electrical Incisor Gloves relied mainly on continuous damages. It was already considered formidable for a sudden explosive force that was able to reach this level. Liu Cheng was not like Han Xiao; his HP was only around two thousand. It easily reduced to eighty percent in just a short while, and the damage was still flooding the interface!

The burning smell was pervasive. Liu Cheng yelled bitterly and got up. He hurriedly exploded his kinetic energy and pushed Han Xiao away. Liu Cheng's face was severely burned and beyond recognition. His face was a mix of burnt flesh and red blood.

Liu Cheng's eyesight was damaged, and the light and shadow in his vision was distorted. He could barely identify a direction as he fled, staggering, with his teeth tightly clenched.

Han Xiao promptly gave chase, and Liu Cheng's heart sank. He was hoping that Black Phantom would attend to the battle and not chase after him. Fleeing was hopeless; he knew that he would not be able to escape death. He fulfilled his last duty as a bodyguard by holding up Han Xiao. If Liu Cheng died, the Alumera family would surely take good care of his family.

The two of them were soon a distance away from the battlefield, and they pursued each other into the woods.

Chapter 159: Family

About ten minutes later, Liu Cheng slowed down and fell to the ground. He had depleted his accumulated kinetic energy. He turned and realized that Han Xiao was following behind like a demon.

"Kill me."

The burn on Liu Cheng's face was a tragic sight as he gave a pained smile.

"I don't need you to tell me that." Han Xiao's face was apathetic. He opened wide his palms and grabbed Liu Cheng's head, his fingers penetrating his skull.

He only let out a turbid breath when Liu Cheng finally stopped breathing.

He was a formidable opponent, almost causing me to suffer a defeat.

He took one last look at Liu Cheng's corpse and activated a high-explosive bullet to protect his body from scavengers. After which, he followed the sound of gunfire and returned to Green Valley Ville's battlefield.

The battle was even more intense. Green Valley Ville's gates had been blown up, the armed tanks were hurtling past the streets, and machine guns were exchanging fire. Green Valley Ville's residents had secured their doors and windows, covered their ears, and were trembling in their houses. Lu Cheng's troops were conscious of the ordinary residents and had avoided them.

Since Liu Cheng had dragged him into the battle, Han Xiao decided to get the battle over quickly. Han Xiao set off to find Green Valley Ville's commander. He searched for the person giving commands, but he soon realized that no one was giving any commands.

There were vehicle trails on the ground on the far end of Green Valley Ville that hinted to the whereabouts of Balsas and Xiao Rui.

They've escaped?

...

The off-road vehicle travelled along in the gloomy forest, and the sound of gunfire in Green Valley Ville gradually became dimmer. Xiao Rui, who was in the back seat, could see the flames behind them peeking through the trees.

“Liu Cheng has died...” Xiao Rui clenched his fists and pressed them on his knees. He could barely restrain his trembling.

Liu Cheng had served the family for ten over years. He was loyal and devoted. Furthermore, he was the best fighter among the family’s ranks. He had many stunning military accomplishments. Xiao Rui had always considered him a strong supporter—to think that he would die at the hands of Black Phantom!

Xiao Rui originally thought that even if Liu Cheng were unable to stall Black Phantom, he would still be able to retreat. However, even though he did not manage to catch Liu Cheng’s last words in the earphones when Liu Cheng was escaping, he knew his supporter was dying!

Balsas and four other armed bodyguards were in the vehicle. Balsas was looking rather nervous.

“Black Phantom is a monster. I told you earlier not to provoke him! You just refused to listen!” Balsas was sweating profusely.

Xiao Rui’s complexion was ashen. “Don’t talk rubbish, at least we’ve escaped!”

“He won’t catch up with us, right?” Balsas repeatedly looked at the rear-view mirror, his heart pounding.

Xiao Rui gulped. “Lu Cheng is currently attacking Green Valley Ville, and the guards in the towns will help us stall the enemy; he won’t have time to chase and kill us.”

He had just finished speaking when a ghost-like figure appeared in the rear-view mirror, tailing the vehicle like a shadow. Everyone in the vehicle was so shocked that they screamed!

“He’s here!”

“Go faster!”

“Accelerate all the way, and don’t let up!”

Everyone in the vehicle was panicking; the off-road vehicle resembled a runaway stray dog, frantically speeding up. They managed to shake off Han Xiao for a moment, but this was not the time to feel relieved. The vehicle somewhat slowed down, and the black-colored ghost, which resembled a hostile force that was difficult to get rid of, appeared in the rear view mirror once again, just like a pressing King of Hell.

Everyone’s adrenaline soared, their hearts practically jumping out of their throats. They were so nervous to the point where their bodies went stiff all over. The horror movie-like atmosphere finally triggered the driver to make a mistake. In the state of panic, the vehicle rolled down the slope and fell to the bottom.

Xiao Rui’s head was spinning as he struggled to climb out of the window. Suddenly, a pair of boots that flickered with blue lights appeared in his vision. He looked up and saw Black Phantom towering over him, looking at him indifferently.

“Don’t, don’t kill me...”

Bang! Bang! Bang!

The gunshots sounded repeatedly. Xiao Rui was so frightened that he shut his eyes and discovered that there was no pain. He opened his eyes and realized that the four bodyguards had all been shot and killed—only Balsas and himself were left.

Xiao Rui shivered. He knew that he had to remain calm in this situation. However, his fear of death made it impossible for him to calm down. His frightened emotions were like tides, flooding his heart again and again, so much so that he did not dare look directly into Han Xiao's eyes. "Black... Black Phantom, spare my life. I can give you tremendous returns."

Han Xiao's eyebrow jumped. The reason he had kept Xiao Rui was because Xiao Rui was sandwiched between the bodyguards. Hence, he reckoned that he was an important character.

Balsas regretted having a conflict with Black Phantom but regretted listening to Xiao Rui's opinion more so. He raised his head and looked straight in Han Xiao's eyes. "You're a liar, you had already united with Lu Cheng. You absolutely were not just passing by!"

Whatever Black Phantom had said—that he was not interested in looking for trouble—was all a lie!

Han Xiao stroked his gun and chuckled. "If I said this was a coincidence, would you believe it?"

"Landing in your hands, I already know I won't be able to live. Kill me!" Balsas suddenly grew a backbone and shook off Xiao Rui's hand, which was pulling at his shirt's hem anxiously.

"I don't know if you're really asking for death or deliberately displaying your strong-will, but as you wish."

Bang!

The bullet penetrated Balsas' temple. He fell, and the pool of blood gradually expanded.

Han Xiao's eyebrow shot up. It looked like Balsas was not pretending; he really had given up all hope and wished for a quick death. For this type of warlord who operated outside the city, even if he was usually afraid of death, when he was truly confronted with it, he would accept it calmly.

There was someone, on the other hand, who was way weaker. Han Xiao looked over and Xiao Rui was so terrified that he did not dare breathe. His face was pale, and his back was drenched in cold sweat.

Han Xiao squatted and used the gun barrel to tap on Xiao Rui's face. "You don't wish to die?"

Xiao Rui frantically shook his head.

"Give me a reason."

"I... I can give you a lot of money. I can refer you to the Alumera family!"

"Do I look like someone who needs that?" Han Xiao pointed the muzzle at himself.

Xiao Rui swallowed his saliva in alarm as he racked his brains and pondered if there was anything that could move Han Xiao. Han Xiao's eyes were sharp, and he suddenly caught a glimpse of Xiao Rui's full and bulging pocket. He reached out and fished out a stack of bounty slip. It turned out to be a wanted poster for Zero—him.

Why is this Alumera man carrying with him my bounty slip?

Han Xiao raised his eyebrows, played with the paper in his hands, and stared at Xiao Rui silently. Xiao Rui finally saw something that aroused his interest. Xiao Rui immediately felt refreshed and hurriedly spilled everything he knew frankly.

“Han Xiao? Zero? Alumera family?”

After hearing the information, Han Xiao stiffened.

He did not know that his original self came from the Alumera family!

“... You didn't lie to me, right?”

Xiao Rui shook his head repeatedly. Black Phantom appeared to be interested in Zero; he did not care about the reason, all he knew was he now had a chance of survival. Hence, he did not dare conceal anything and struggled to take out a computer in the vehicle to pull up several photos.

The photo showed Han Xiao's younger self before he was taken away by the Germinal Organization. There was concrete proof in all kinds of photos from the Alumera family. Han Xiao did not doubt his identity.

So, this means I have a step-father and a bunch of brothers and sisters?

Han Xiao's feelings were complicated. He had always thought that he had not a worry or a concern in this world; he did not expect to have these connections.

Alumera was his family. Han Xiao took one look at Xiao Rui. *This person is my family, too?*

Alumera family, the North Continent's biggest warlord. The second leader in command, Xiao Jin, was my original body's biological father. Their family was considered powerful...

Han Xiao pondered in silence.

Xiao Rui's heart was nearly at his throat; he felt like he was a convict waiting for his sentence. This was the longest one minute of his life.

“You can leave,” Han Xiao faintly said.

Xiao Rui did not dare to believe it. He stood up, trembling, and ran two steps away in the opposite direction. He turned his head and saw an aloof Han Xiao. Only then was he ecstatic.

His life was saved!

He did not carry any thoughts of revenge. He did not want to have any further interactions with Black Phantom at all. He stretched his legs and ran for his life.

Suddenly, there was a sharp pain at the back of his head!

Xiao Rui lost his control of his body. He fell with his face down, resembling a dog eating its poop. His pupils dilated, and his face looked bewildered.

What happened to me?

So cold...

This was Xiao Rui's last thought in this world.

There was a deep bullet hole in the back of Xiao Rui's head, and blood was spilling out.

Han Xiao put the Berserk Eagle back in his holster, his face emotionless. After thinking for a bit, he had still decided to kill Xiao Rui.

Alumera was the connections that Han Xiao's original self had, but that unfortunate man had already died. Han Xiao was Han Xiao, not another person. Even if the old Han Xiao had remaining blood relations, Han Xiao would not treat the Alumera family as his family. Anyway, the old Han Xiao had been killed by his big brother.

He would not inherit the relationships that the old Han Xiao had. To him, the Alumera family was a bunch of strangers, and it was none of his concern.

I'll kill when there's a need to!

Perhaps Han Xiao could get some support from the Alumera family by using his original identity, but with his current position, he did not need to yield and rely on this kind of power.

The most important point was that he did not wish to do it this way.

My family... is not in this world.

He lit the corpse on fire, turned around, and left. The blazing flame pulled his silent shadow longer and longer.

Chapter 160: Xiao Jin

In the headquarters of the Alumera family...

"Green Valley Ville on the South Continent was ambushed. We have lost that territory. The last message from them was an hour ago. Liu Cheng died in the battle, Balsas and Xiao Rui have retreated as well. No news has been heard from them yet. I think they may be in trouble."

The exquisite crystal wine glass was smashed to the ground, and red wine splattered onto the expensive hand-made Ordina carpet, leaving trails of red roses. Darryl, the leader of the family, was breathing noisily as though he was a bear. His body was bulky like a bear, too, hence his nickname—the Alumera White Bear.

This was Darryl's study. He was rather violent by nature. His bookshelf was not for books but for displaying all kinds of guns. Firearms, ammunition, daggers, swords—his miniature arsenal collection.

"Who attacked our people?" Darryl snarled.

In front of the desk was a well-dressed, middle-aged man. He was wearing something similar to a suit, but with minor differences in some places. It was way more refined and exquisite. He was wearing a

gold-rimmed glasses, and the gold-plated chains of the glasses hanged on his ear. If one overlooked the muscle under his clothes, this person was an archetypal scholar.

He was Alumera's second in command, Xiao Jin.

Xiao Jin held the tablet with one hand and said, "There are two of them. One is the big warlord of South Continent, Lu Cheng."

"I have heard of his name. Gather the armed men in South Continent! An eye for an eye! Alumera will seek this revenge!"

Darryl patted the table and asked, "Who might the other person be?"

"He's the assassin from the Dark Net, Black Phantom."

"Bring him to..." As he said these three words, Darryl's tone changed and came to his senses. "How did we end up provoking him?"

Darryl was very wary about Black Phantom, a legendary killer. He knew it was best not to provoke lone rangers like him. While the Alumera family was big, they were most fearful of legendary killers like him. If he wanted to start a mad killing spree to assassinate the middle-class of the Alumera family, it would be impossible to stop him.

Although Darryl was impulsive by nature, he knew who not to provoke. Dealing with Lu Cheng was an effortless decision; Lu Cheng's forces were entangled in South Continent, and he was not going to affect the Alumeras' influence in the North. Black Phantom, on the other hand, was different. He was a lone ranger who could travel up to the North. He had even slain Liu Cheng. Whether the Alumera family's top forces could even hurt the Black Phantom was still a question in doubt.

Furthermore, Black Phantom's movements were erratic. There were not many reports on him through the intelligence network, and without an expansive intelligence network, they could not track him down. In addition, the organization he belonged to was in fact the world's largest intelligence network. If they wanted to target someone from the Dark Net Organization and requested help from the Dark Net itself, it would be ridiculous. Darryl was eighty percent sure he would be called a fool.

Therefore, becoming enemies with the Black Phantom was certainly an unwise decision. Darryl could only suppress his anger and find other excuses. "Investigate the reason the Black Phantom is intervening. Don't provoke him just yet."

Xiao Jin agreed with an expressionless face. It was hard to know what he was thinking about.

Darryl had always been an impatient man, and now that he was frustrated. He pointed to Xiao Jin's face and ordered, "Go deal with your son's business. The war is coming. I don't wish to deal with any sort of Germinal's business at this time."

Xiao Jin adjusted his glasses and said, "He's my son. Once I find him, he will come back obediently."

...

Day was about to break, and the gunfire in Green Valley Ville was finally coming to an end. The remaining enemies had all been killed.

When Lu Cheng had conquered Green Valley Ville, he ordered his troops to clear the battlefield and restrained them from harming any residents.

The worried residents who could not sleep for the entire night rushed to the streets and listened to the new master of the town, Lu Cheng, in the square. He promised to safeguard the residents' lives and property.

For the [Green Valley Ville Invasion] task, players who had chosen to protect the camp had all failed and were feeling dejected.

The battle last night had been very intense, and many players wished it had been longer.

Han Xiao also gained some experience from the task. He held his arm and leaned against a house to wait for Lu Cheng to complete his speech. He had Frenzied Sword and Bun-hit-dog by his side.

Frenzied Sword was in bad mood as he was not able to keep Han Xiao to himself now. He was upset.

Bun-hit-dog went over to Frenzied Sword and said, "I know you. You were featured on Galaxy Times. You are a professional gamer."

"Oh." Frenzied Sword reacted coldly.

"Have you always been following Black Phantom?" Bun-hit-dog was curious.

Frenzied Sword did not want to bother with Bun-hit-dog, but as a professional player, he had to take note of his image, and he should not be too cold. He nodded.

"Do you know his origins?"

"His real name is Han Xiao," Frenzied Sword replied. He came to realization immediately and turned around to see if Han Xiao had heard him. He relaxed. "He used to serve Star Dragon. I'm not very sure about the exact details, but I do know that he is acquainted with someone in the camp called Stardragon Strategic Defense Department."

Bun-hit-dog's eyes lit up. The video he wanted to make would be an investigation about Black Phantom's origin. Frenzied Sword had been his longest follower. He was likely to know things that others did not. He was impressed. He said in a light-hearted manner, "Let me introduce myself. I am a game video producer..."

Frenzied Sword stared blankly. He only recalled now, that Bun-hit-dog's ID was rather familiar. He was the producer of the series "XX Adventure Diaries". When he was playing Knight in the past, he had come across Bun-hit-dog's Knight Adventure Diaries as well. He was a small yet famous video maker.

"It's you!" Frenzied Sword collected himself up. When he received Bun-hit-dog's friend request, he immediately accepted it.

Only status and fame would bring one recognition. If he was a plain and dull player, Frenzied Sword would not even have bothered. Things were different when one was famous.

"I'm preparing to focus on Galaxy and start a series. I'm intending to place Black Phantom as my focus in my first episode. I would like to know more about this person's origins. I hope you can provide me with some material. You could appear on screen together with me to do a series as well."

Han Xiao never talked about his origins, so Bun-hit-dog decided to change his focus onto Frenzied Sword.

"Alright, sure," Frenzied Sword replied. This was a win-win situation. A professional gamer appearing on the program was bound to rise in reputation. This would be good exposure for him.

Listening to the two discussing behind him, Han Xiao did not stop them. Frenzied Sword had limited knowledge about him. Such information could be disclosed and made known, and this would only make more players curious. He wanted to reveal the information bit by bit. This was precisely his intention in bringing Bun-hit-dog along.

After assuring the residents of Green Valley Ville, Lu Cheng handed over the affairs to the deputy and went to Han Xiao's side. "Black Phantom, thank you for your aid. If not for you, I would not have conquered Green Valley Ville. If only Balsas didn't escape..."

"Oh, I killed him."

Lu Cheng's face went blank, and he felt a tight squeeze on his heart. "I am very grateful, but do... you really not want anything?"

Han Xiao chuckled a little and changed the topic. "Have you discovered the unique aspects of the refugees?"

Upon mentioning this, Lu Cheng was delighted. "This group of refugees can all die and then resurrect. It's simply amazing! I thought they were simple ordinary people. This world is so big, and it seems like nothing is impossible!"

Lu Cheng originally did not plan for the refugees to join the battle. But as the players took action, he soon realized that they had the special ability to resurrect. He was shocked, and he figured out what Han Xiao had originally meant. These helpers were just too special. He had looked down on them. Now he knew why they were not afraid to die. That was because they simply just do not die.

Bun-hit-dog, who was by the side, felt that something was strange. *Refugees? Are they actual players? Why would the NPC think that the players resurrecting is strange? Won't an NPC not be bothered with that?*

Han Xiao pulled Lu Cheng to the side. He did not want other players to hear what he was going to tell Lu Cheng.

"Black Phantom, do you know the origin of these refugees?" Lu Cheng curiously asked.

"I'm not too sure," Han Xiao replied, "but I do know that they are very diligent. They are extremely profit-driven. Didn't you destroy Green Valley Ville? You need these people to rebuild the place. These refugees are the best laborers you can find. You can use them to your liking."

"But some refugees were against me before. They are my enemies..."

“Their assistance to Balsas was not a loyal and faithful one. You can treat them as mercenaries.”

When he said this, Lu Cheng understood it. “I can try... You really don’t know what happened to them? They can all resurrect, is it just their special ability? We don’t know where Balsas found this group of people.”