

The Mechanic 191

Chapter 191: Hidden Main Storyline (2)

“There’s no rush to return the favor. Just don’t forget about it,” Han Xiao joked.

Every time Bennett owed him a favor, their relationship points would increase. Being in good relationship with one of the main characters on the planet would definitely be quite beneficial.

Triggering a hidden storyline without actively looking for it was clearly one of the benefits it had brought. Bennett’s relationship network was very wide, so one could go through Bennett to get in contact with many others, most of them being strong ones with missions that had a chance to be triggered.

After waiting for a while, Bennett transferred Hannes’ call.

Ka-chin.

They both kept silent after the call was connected. They could only hear the sound of each other breathing.

In the end, Hannes spoke first. “I’m Hannes, we have met last night.”

“Bennett had told me. Heard you need my help. What’s it about?” Han Xiao got straight to the point.

“It’s regarding a secret that was buried in history. We have found some traces of it, and I want to find out about this secret.

Han Xiao was very confused. He had no idea what secret he was talking about.

However, a notification showed up on the interface. Han Xiao could not move his eyes away from it the moment he saw it; he was completely shocked.

You have triggered Planet Aquamarine’s Hidden Main Storyline Grade A Mission [New Era—Origin].

Remarks: This mission will cause unknown and irreversible effects to some events and organizations. Please consider carefully before choosing to accept or reject.

Han Xiao’s eye immediately widened.

A main storyline mission that no one ever triggered!

There were three main storylines in Planet Aquamarine—two of them were the war between the Six Nations and Germinal Organization and the creation of the refugee camp, and another hidden main storyline was triggered by the players, but it was not it!

He had completely no recollection of it, which meant this mission had not been triggered by the players in his previous life!

Hidden main storylines were a special type of mission. They needed an opportunity to be triggered, and they would impact the other main storylines and change the plot in one way or another. Han Xiao had played through many versions in his previous life, and he had read about hidden main storylines on the forum before.

Without exception, they all impacted the main storyline missions of their civilization or planet in a profound way.

The first time Hannes and the guys appeared before the players they were already dead. No wonder no one triggered it.

Han Xiao suddenly realized how dangerous this mission was. Even two people at the maximum level for Planet Aquamarine had died. It would probably be much more difficult than he thought.

Han Xiao's grade A mission against Germinal Organization [Fall of the Germinal] was a branch of the main storyline mission. Players in different organizations would receive different main storyline missions. For the Six Nations, it would of course be to destroy the Germinal Organization, but for Germinal Organization, it was the other way around.

However, Han Xiao's mission was special because he did not belong to any organization but was Germinal Organization's enemy. Thus, the requirements and details were different, but the main goal was the same.

However, he knew nothing about this hidden main storyline mission.

Origin? Does it mean to dig into the history of the planet? In that case, which event's origin is this?

The unknown was feared, yet people were curious about it. Han Xiao felt an itch in his bones—it was the feeling of excitement and anticipation.

He was an extremely long-term player that loved to dig the important factors in 'Galaxy', and this was a secret that no player had found out about!

"Accept."

You have accepted [New Era—Origin].

+10 Relationship with Hannes, Vernina, Garian, and Jiang Yuan.

Hmm? Han Xiao noticed something.

He knew that Jiang Yuan was the last person buried in the grave, but who was this Garian?

Talk to Hannes. Listen to his introduction.

The mission requirement at the moment was only this. Han Xiao was used to it; it was something like an opening cinematic.

“It has something to do with us attempting to kidnap Dorasi last night. He took part in a secret plan some years back, and this secret plan of Maple is one of the leads. There are many secrets in the nation of Maple.

“When you infiltrated the government officials’ mansions, did you feel weird that these officials were protected around the clock, but this doesn’t happen in other nations?”

Han Xiao nodded. “I know about this, the ‘Ulrich Assault’ from many years ago.”

“Yes, Ulrich Assault...”

Hannes described the event in detail.

Ulrich’s position in Maple at that time was similar to a prime minister. He had been attacked at home, not by a few people, but a large group of civilians who somehow had weapons from an unknown supplier. They used gunpowder weapons and burned Ulrich’s expensive mansion to the ground. Ulrich, his wife, and their three children aged around ten years old were brutally slaughtered by the attackers. The entire process was recorded and uploaded online. It shocked the nation and even the entire world.

The reason for this was that Ulrich approved a policy that was basically to remove power and citizen benefits from the civilians and to use it as an investment of a ridiculous project, which was actually a way for Ulrich to put money into his own pocket.

Corruption of the government officials in Maple was known throughout the world, but before the war of the old era had broken out, Maple had been known for their gentle government. They were normal and not a strong nation.

When the old era war broke out, the government implemented policies that were very pressurizing for the civilians. Most people showed understanding and accepted the policies under pressure, and some even actively contributed. The government officials of Maple had tasted the delicious fruit of evil. After the war ended, because of the pressure from the nation losing power after the war, they did not go back to the old easy-going policies. Instead, they continued to pressure the civilians with tax and labor, which was used to recover the nation’s power. Conflicts within the country became worse as time passed by, the gentle society environment disappeared and never returned.

People who were not living the life they wanted were like a spring that was pressed to its limit—the policy Ulrich approved was the last straw.

Then, half an hour after Ulrich was attacked, the special force received a command to kill everyone who took part in the attack. They showed no mercy. The nation was shocked, and this signified as the opening of the change of times in Maple.

If this had happened before the old era war, it would have been a scandal that could cause the complete downfall of the government, but in the new era, where power was left unchecked, the other five nations had no intention of getting involved.

It was already difficult for everyone just to protect themselves after the war. Organizations that protected human rights and power alliances no longer existed.

The structure of the world changed. The balance was broken; economies were close to collapsing; resources and military power became the only standard to measure a nation's power. Maple felt that the civilians' feelings did not matter anymore, so they did not serve the citizens like before. In their eyes, it was time for the citizens to serve the nation.

The old era was over. With everything being destroyed and waiting to be rebuilt, it was a chance to reshape the country, so they chose a radical way of doing it.

The assault that shocked the nation also alerted the government officials of Maple. They decided to retrieve the 'weapons' from the civilians. The government officials had never been this united before—they approved twenty-four strict policies with high efficiencies within two days. The twenty-four-hour protection of the officials was the most basic policy, and there were even insane ones that graded civilians, which led to 'rotten meat' being evicted from the big cities every so often—rotten meat being citizens deemed worthless.

Thus, the effects of the assault went down a weird path. The Maple government announced that the attackers were not ordinary citizens—there was a reactionary group in the nation who planned the attack. Their weapons were the best evidence.

The Maple government listed dozens of lame pieces of evidence. With the justifying excuse of capturing the reactionary group, they started to use force to take back the power that they had given to the civilians, pressure the 'reactionary group', 'deal' with anyone who 'might be a threat to the nation', then lock the information down. They wanted to turn civilians into a completely controlled labor force.

Chapter 192: Hidden Main Storyline (3)

The way Maple dealt with what came after the assault became the biggest scandal of that year, but with strong military power, they completed the reshaping of their country and built a nation with a completely different style. People were classified as a pyramid, except there were close to no ladders between classes. The citizens saw no hope in life; they were just waiting to die.

Those with power were not born with it. Under high pressure, a real reactionary group had formed, but it was not the cold weapon era anymore—the standard of weapons that the nation had was like a wall that could never be scaled. If there was no external interference, it was almost impossible for anyone to overturn and take over the government, and Maple regularly removed 'people who posed threat to the nation'. Thus, the citizens had turned from being terrified to being numb.

The assaults were started by a few violent citizens venting their rage, and it ended in more citizens bearing with the consequences, which perfectly described the case of hitting a rock with an egg. It caused the society of Maple to be reconstructed. It became a dictatorship, and the ones on the top had complete control.

The root of a gentle government changing was war. The high pressure from the war caused the government to collapse under stress, and they had no choice but to direct the pressure to its citizens,

which then got out of hand. This was just like how it was easy to go from being poor to being rich but difficult to go from being rich to being poor.[a][b]

Citizens were the cornerstone of a country. Just like the parts of a machine, when the national machine needed these parts to overload, they would wear out and break quicker than usual and sacrifice the best time of their lives. But as long as they changed the parts to new ones, the machine could still function. The broken parts were replaceable, and the parts that were thrown away became 'vessels of an era'.

Han Xiao was interested. He quite liked the history and stories of civilizations. After Hannes finished, Han Xiao contemplated for a while and asked, "What does this have to do with the 'secret' you talked about?"

"What I wanted to say is that the war had changed a lot of things. I have been through that darkest and most chaotic age. Many were controlled by ideas, missions, and honor and turned into a tool for killing while still thinking they were doing an honorable thing. Only a few woke up from this, such as Bennett, he became a hero, but an era that needs a hero is never a good era. The end of the war was filled with dirty conspiracies that were buried as secrets, and we want these secrets to resurface."

Han Xiao raised his eyebrows. "And what benefit does this bring you?"

"Nothing, but the people of this world have the right to know what they went through and not let these conspiracies stay hidden to become a secret that never gets unveiled. I don't think the original construct of society would shatter within a night just because we got in touch with galactic civilizations, and I don't believe a so-called internal conflict would cause wars. There has to be someone behind all of it."

"Every country has its secrets. It's nothing unusual," Han Xiao said.

Hannes smiled and said, "Since we have come to the new era, the world should also look different, the rules are changing. Why follow the old logic? Also, I owed a favor to someone who has a very strong desire to gain knowledge. He suggested this mission, and I joined in."

Hmm, from his tone, seems like they are anarchists. They died in my previous life. This mission seems rather complicated. Han Xiao stopped asking questions. He considered for a while and decided to join them. No matter what reason they were doing this for, this was a very rare hidden mission, so it would be a waste to reject it.

Hannes requested to meetup. They were both in the same city, so with Hannes leading the way, Han Xiao soon found their safehouse.

They met and started observing each other. Han Xiao looked past Hannes and Vernina, then stopped at Garian. He was most curious about this person.

As he was observing the trio, they were looking at him.

So, this was the legendary Black Phantom.

"You are pretty strong," Vernina said with a calm tone.

"Although we just met today, I owe you a favor for coming to help," Hannes said.

Plenty of people who owed me favors, welcome to the party.

“What do I need to do?” Han Xiao asked.

The three people looked at each other. Garian took out a deck of documents and said, “The evidence is within the intelligence of the past few years. I spent a long time finding a lead. It is very cumbersome, so we need to divide our labor.”

As Han Xiao browsed the documents, his expression finally changed.

[New Era—Origin]

This mission is a series of chain missions. You can complete the targets below.

Ending of the Survivor: In the Blade City of Raylen, find a guy called “Old Devin” and get the incomplete copy of [Sully No.485 Document].

The Key of Misplacement: In the capital ruins of the West Mountain nation within the Southern Continent (Coordinates—), find a misplaced important item [Attachment—Item Appearance]. this was the end result of West Mountain nation’s last research before they were destroyed.

Sealed Past: Control the warlord, Verna, of the Verna Colony on the Western Continent (Coordinates — —). His father was a high ranked military officer of a dead country. There are hidden clues—follow Verna and find the secret.

Mysterious Prisoner: Decades ago, an intelligence agent of Stardragon was imprisoned by a country. That country is already dead, but the intelligence agent was kept in a secret prison that had no guards. No one has found him. Find him or his relics (Coordinates of the ruin — —)

Same Type of Person: A loner who has secluded himself in the wilderness has some very important information. Intelligence shows that he appeared near the tribute valley in the Western Continent. Be careful, he is not a normal person. He was active on the battlefield of the old era. It is recommended you engage the contact with friendliness (Jiang Yuan).

This is the first round of the mission. As long as one of the missions are completed, the mission can be concluded. The amount and completion status of the missions will determine the mission requirements of the next round.

Reward(s) of the First Round: 350,000 Experience. Bonus rewards given as per evaluation of the missions.

Han Xiao raised his brows. The freedom of this kind of mission was very high, similar to the series missions of an organization, but this main storyline was clearly more cumbersome, and it was a chain mission. The completion status of the previous round would affect the mission requirements of the next round.

This mission is extremely open. Every round has different clues that will lead to different endings. Usually, the more targets are completed, the better it is, and the higher the evaluation will be. Han Xiao had completed this type of mission before, so he knew that there were many possibilities.

It was like walking a maze. In order to find the exit, one had to gain as much information as one could, and with the ending of Hannes and the others, this mission posed very high risks.

The rewards of the mission did not bring shame to main storylines. Just the basic reward of the first round was already 350,000 experience, and the bonus rewards were very likely to be items, abilities, or talents.

But the mission was too cumbersome. The location spanned across three continents, so it would cost him a huge amount of time. No wonder it was an A-grade mission. Han Xiao tightened his brows, feeling a little distressed.

“I will try it.” No matter what, he needed to accept it first.

Garian nodded. “I will count on you for these missions. The three of us have other missions.”

Hannes and the rest were all very strong characters from the old era, so their mission was definitely not simple. Han Xiao decided to let the Dark Net help keep an eye on it.

After getting the mission requirements, Han Xiao left the safehouse.

“So, is he trustworthy?” Vernina asked.

Hannes shook his head and then nodded. “We don’t know much about him. Let’s see what he will do for now.”

“The documents I gave him have real and fake information,” Garian said. “It was only one tenth of the clues I had, so it will be best if he can complete them. If he has other thoughts, we won’t lose anything. It is just some unconfirmed intelligence anyway.”

“He is a friend of Bennett, so he should be trustworthy.”

[a]Is this the right way round? I’d have said it’s easier to go from rich to poor than poor to rich XD

[b]Haha I would say so too, I think I was not clear in the translation, this was regarding the transition of lifestyle

Chapter 193: Tease

This hidden storyline seems to have something to do with digging the history. Logically, it shouldn’t result in a big impact, but since it’s the main storyline, could it be that there’ll be some shocking secret that’ll be dug up? Han Xiao thought as he walked on the street.

No matter what secrets there were, it was not his mission, and there were enough chances for him to explore it, but of course, the rewards were the most important part.

Since the mission in Maple was completed, Han Xiao left that very day. The threats that he had issued had resulted in the local intelligence institution carrying out a hidden investigation throughout the city, but because of the 'godly assassination' of a government official, the investigation was very thorough.

Because they were in the same organization, Han Xiao brought Golden Fox and Ghost Blade as he retreated. Ghost Blade was unwilling at first, but the situation was severe, so he had to compromise.

Ghost Blade did not like the feeling of being protected by someone, so he was sulking most of the way.

After successfully leaving Maple, Han Xiao separated from the duo and rushed toward the cargo plane toward Farian without stopping. The players in the novice villages of the Western Continent were still waiting for his arrival.

The forum had exploded. The players that were waiting for Han Xiao panicked and were worried that he would not be coming anymore. They started being superstitious and spammed posts in the forum to pray for Han Xiao's arrival. The posts reached the astonishing number of 300,000. It was so terrifying that Han Xiao was worried that he might be buried in the sea of players.

Some of the players started to play with memes.

"Youngster, did you drop this Black Phantom, this White Phantom, or this Yellow Phantom? Hmm, you're an honest child. To reward you, you can exchange your money to learn skills."

"Shhh, look at what I found, there's a Black Phantom that is different from the others. We can try to capture it. One Black Phantom could provide us with energy for many days. But it is not easy to deal with. We have to quietly close in from its back... Ahhh, I've been discovered. Help, it wants to eat me, run Calvin!"

"Black Phantom used Death Stare. It was super effective."

Finally, after tens of thousands of summons, the Great Mechanic Han Xiao arrived at a novice village. The players waiting for Han Xiao there were countless, much more than any other novice village.

The moment he appeared, players rushed over like an avalanche. People who did not know might even have mistaken them for a locust plague.

Han Xiao looked at the level of the players—they were at an average of level ten. The hundreds of top-level players on the forum have already reached LV 18; Maple Moon was one of them. With the help of the Great Mechanic Han, she had been the biggest winner of the prize pool.

However, other players also had their own opportunities. The number of people at the same level was not small, but most of them were players from other countries on other novice planets. Planet Aquamarine was the base camp of China's esports clubs, but the number of their players at the top of the level leaderboard was the lowest. It was quite a pain for Han Xiao.

Disappointing, come on guys, buck up!

Then, he looked at the countless players in front of him, pondered, and said, "What's the use of leveling up fast? Being able to fight is the way to go."

Hmm, nothing wrong with that.

Only players from big guilds that were climbing the level leaderboard would be rushing their levels without upgrading their abilities. Other players would not be doing the same. Even though leveling up was fast at the start, it would be slower as their level became higher.

With the experience quota, Han Xiao had to think about the missions he gave out. If he wanted to cultivate one player, he could make that player grow at a much higher speed than anyone else, but he would not do that, at least not before the players reach LV 20.

Before LV 20, [Energy Training Technique] had a lot of market potential, so it was extremely profitable.

...

Han Xiao taught abilities as usual, and the players came swarming. Gaining experience points in novice village was also a way of relaxation for him, so he had time to browse the forums.

On the forums, the popularity of Inhuman Phenomenon was over the top, and not only on Planet Aquamarine. Similar situations had occurred on other planets too, and players received different treatments.

On the Wizard Planet, they were researched by the witches and were discovered to have a very high talent for sorcery, which was in fact the learning ability on the player Interface. They then shockingly joined various sorcery academies.

On the Ancient Planet, they were seen as messengers of God and worshipped.

On the Ice Winter planet... Oh, the players in the Ice Winter Planet were the safest. The devil species had no interest whatsoever in their unique characteristic of being able to revive after death, and when the players saw the spaceships of the Space Devil species dash through the universe and breaking apart the meteors surrounding the planet for resources with their gravity capturing devices, they all understood why the reaction of the devil species was so normal.

To the Extinguish Army, the strength of the players was like an ant. Who would care about what an ant looked like?

Of course, there was also the possibility that the devil species were used to seeing the ability to revive. No one knew for sure. It was all just speculation anyway.

The planets above were all very lucky, but Planet Aquamarine was one of the unluckiest planets. NPCs were very fearful toward the players. The players were captured, experimented on, sliced to pieces, and brainwashed—they were treated like slaves.

Players being filled with hatred was a certain, and with the situation on Planet Aquamarine, the players had new speculations.

Black Phantom was probably a compensation from the game company and producers!

“No wonder! That’s why a character like Black Phantom only exists on our planet!”

“Luckily, there is Black Phantom. If we didn’t have him, we would have nothing to play with!”

Seeing comments like this, Han Xiao smiled. His efforts did not go to waste.

As he saw the expression in the players' eyes, he smiled even brighter, looking like a farmer who was looking at his harvest.

The Inhuman Phenomenon on Planet Aquamarine had arrived at a key stage. All the organizations were contacting the players. Some of them were using a soft approach like Stardragon and Hesla; there were also some that went for a colder approach like Raylen and Ordina; other militaries and financial organizations were taking action, too. It was not all bad for the players, at least they had the opportunity to join an organization without having to run everywhere, and that was exactly what the players did, with the Six Nations having most players joining them.

In Han Xiao's previous life, the Germinal Organization had lured in the most players, but now, their bases were all destroyed, and they could only capture players in the local area of their headquarters. It was pathetic—their player count was reduced by approximately eighty percent compared to his previous life.

The Inhuman Phenomenon also led to another change; the players developed a hobby of teasing the NPCs. They became very curious and asked a lot of questions, and they liked to do things that were out of the line, wanting to see the reaction from the NPCs.

Players had a lot of fun, but to NPCs, they were acting extremely weird.

All the organizations did one thing at the same time—they added one line to the Inhuman documents. "Most Inhumans have a mental illness. Their actions are very random, and they might do anything. They cannot be judged with a normal mindset."

Han Xiao did not know to cry or to laugh when he saw this line on the Dark Net. There was another line that made him burst into laughter.

"With research, the Inhumans have gender, but they do not have genitals and reproductive abilities."

The game did not allow players to get naked, and from the NPCs' perspective, it was like their underwear was part of their body, which was very incomprehensible.

Han Xiao was laughing uncontrollably. He could imagine how the organizations found out about this...

Unable to reproduce, which meant that Inhumans were not a new species. Of course, there was a possibility that their way of reproducing was different from what the people on Planet Aquamarine knew about. There were also all kinds of speculations about the Inhumans on the Dark Net, with various emotions like terror, nervousness, and many others.

Han Xiao noticed the once abandoned religion seemed to have rejuvenated. They claimed Inhumans to be messengers sent by God to save the world.

Some players had the thought of teasing Black Phantom. Since Black Phantom was the guider of new players, would he also be shocked like the other NPCs? Teasing an NPC was a fun thing to do.

"Black Phantom, your name is Han Xiao, you served Stardragon before, and you are now a member of the Dark Net, am I right?" a player named Flying Naughty Prawn suddenly said. He had seen the video

from Bun-hit-dog and had an interesting idea. He wanted to expose Black Phantom's identity right in front of him and see what would happen.

There was no way for Black Phantom to know that his identity was exposed. When he saw a stranger stating his true identity, would he be shocked and lose his cool?

Flying Naughty Prawn was staring at Han Xiao while snickering.

Chapter 194: If You Are Going to Scam People, Scam Them for as Much as You Can.

The rubbernecking crowd all looked at Flying Naughty Prawn with respect.

This guy really is a courageous warrior who lives for trouble.

Then, they all stepped back simultaneously. They stood further back so that they would not be splashed by the blood.

Han Xiao knew where Flying Naughty Prawn had gotten the information from. This was an impact of Bun-hit-dog's video. To expose some information and increase the curiosity of the players toward his identity and to increase his fame, this had gone through his consent.

The tiny amount of information exposed was of no importance to Han Xiao. The players were not like the NPCs who had a large intelligence network. Without the key information, it was completely useless to know his real name. Instead, the more viral the video became, the stronger his impact grew.

Therefore, Han Xiao had guessed long ago that there would be players who would ask him directly, so he calmly replied with a "hmm" then kept silent.

Flying Naughty Prawn was confused. It did not go as he imagined. *How is Black Phantom so calm now that his identity has been exposed?*

Does Black Phantom not care about strangers knowing his identity at all?

Or... is Black Phantom's identity actually not a secret at all in areas that players don't know about?

This plan didn't work at all.

Flying Naughty Prawn was very discouraged.

Black Phantom was too steady. It was like he did not have a weakness and could not be teased at all.

The crowd looked at each other, becoming even more curious.

What kind of person was he?

Flying Naughty Prawn did not give up. He continued to look for trouble and asked again, "I want to join the Germinal Organization, do you know how can I do that?"

Everyone knew that Black Phantom was against the Germinal Organization. Thus, he asked that on purpose.

Yooo, are you provoking me youngster?

Han Xiao immediately deducted three relationship points as punishment.

Flying Naughty Prawn's face turned green. *Isn't this reaction too straightforward? That was completely unexpected!*

Han Xiao suddenly had a new idea. With the influence he had on players, maybe he could guide them on choosing a side to join.

So, he paused and said, "A war is going to break out. The Six Nations will come together for an expedition. The Germinal Organization will certainly lose. If you want to commit suicide, do as you wish. If you want to join the Dark Net, I can write a referral letter for you. If you want to join the Germinal Organization, get out of my face."

The crowd got excited, Black Phantom finally had finally given a different reaction, and he had even said information that none of them knew. They started chatting with each other.

"Expedition? The Six Nations and Germinal Organization are going to war?"

"He knows much more than we do. His judgment is definitely reliable."

"Then joining the Germinal Organization would be quite a loss."

The players created a commotion. Only players in Andrea had joined the Germinal Organization. Han Xiao's words would very soon be sent to the forums, and those who were planning to join the Germinal Organization might also change their mind.

He did not want to give up on any chances to harm the Germinal Organization. He had not bothered them for a while, and they seemed to be having a rather peaceful time.

Unacceptable.

Players noticed a keyword in Han Xiao's words. "He said the Dark Net. That's a hidden organization, isn't it? Can he really help us join the Dark Net?"

Han Xiao smiled, opened up the store interface, and added a new item.

[Referral Letter]: Unlocks the Blood Pact Society.

Remarks: The Blood Pact Society is a subordinate hitman organization under the Dark Net.

Price: 250,000 Aquamarine Dollars

"250,000?" The crowd was stunned. This was a sky-high price for them. Nobody could afford it.

Originally, to join the Blood Pact Society, there needed to be a few rounds of mission tests, but Han Xiao had gotten rid of all that. With his relationship with the Dark Net, introducing some players into the organization was a piece of cake.

A few months ago, when Han Xiao bought the Blood Pact Society certificate from Antonio, it had cost 200,000. He had used that as a basis and increased the price by 25%. He felt it was a reasonable price since inflation also needed to be considered.

With such a high price, normal players would not be able to afford, but Han Xiao was not planning to sell a large quantity. He was targeting the pro players from esports clubs who could afford the price with the backing of their guild.

Pro players were the ones who were most willing to become stronger by any means necessary. This strategy would attract pro players, which was beneficial for him in expanding his group of spare tires. Of course, most importantly, it was to earn money.

It's not enough to only have inexpensive and high-quality normal items. There also needs to be a few luxury items with a sky-high price to enrich my store structure, Han Xiao thought.

250,000 Aquamarine Dollars was a price that none of the guilds could afford at the time, but they were rich and could use real money to purchase Aquamarine Dollars from other players.

Now, let's see how many guilds will realize the benefits of joining a hidden new organization.

He was now Fisherman Han, waiting for people who were willing to bite the bait.

...

'Unbelievable, the most expensive item by far!'

'Black Phantom: Germinal Organization will certainly lose'

Posts with such titles appeared in the forums of Planet Aquamarine, and it immediately attracted players' attention. When they saw the sky-high price of 250,000 for the referral letter, they were all shocked speechless.

"Wow, is this organization made of gold?"

"Blood Pact Society, no idea what they do."

"The price is outrageously high. What's so special about this organization called the Blood Pact Society?"

"Anyone had heard of this organization before?"

This person was just asking randomly, but someone unexpectedly replied, "I triggered the mission to join the Blood Pact Society. It is very cumbersome and difficult. The introduction of it is that it's a killer association, and the benefits are still unknown. However, to me, it's not worth it to spend 250,000 just to skip the prior missions."

The outrageous price of 250,000 caused a wide discussion. The average value of a player at the time was about 3,000 to 5,000, so it was not difficult for guilds to gather 250,000 since the number of players was increasing continuously.

However, most of the guilds didn't feel it was worth it, buying an organization referral letter for 250,000 was too luxurious, the situation was not clear yet, they decided to wait and see.

Han Xiao had quite an influence on normal players, but guilds had always been very logical, considering everything with the benefits they could earn. Other players were playing a game; they were running a business.

Compared to the outrageously priced referral letter, players paid more attention to the information Han Xiao shared about the war between the Six Nations and Germinal Organization. They were in an uproar.

After playing the game for a few days, players on Planet Aquamarine all knew that the conflict between the Six Nations and Germinal Organization was the main storyline, but war broke out when nobody expected it to, an expedition even, which proved that the battlefield would be in Andrea. Many players at the time had yet to even join an organization, and their strength was far from being enough to join the main storyline mission.

In the original storyline, war would only break out a few months later, and every continent played a part in the battle. Thus, players from everywhere had been able to join in. But with Han Xiao's interference, not only did the war break out much earlier, it also became an expedition. The impact players had was minimized from what Han Xiao felt.

Most importantly, most of the players had yet to even trigger the main storyline mission between the Six Nations and Germinal Organization.

Black Phantom said that the Germinal Organization would certainly lose, which made many players hesitant to join them, but there were also some players who preferred the evil organizations and wanted to join the Germinal Organization

However, Han Xiao's influence played its part. More players became hesitant. If they were to join the Germinal Organization, there was the risk of getting beaten horribly, then they might as well join the law-keeping organization of Six Nations.

With just one sentence, the Germinal Organization lost many potential supporters.

The influence that Han Xiao had on players grew as he maintained his image, and his position in the players' heart grew stronger.

The things that he said would become important information for the players.

Chapter 195: Bundled Sales Are So Damn Great. I Should Always Use Them.

Han Xiao had seen the impact that the leaked information had brought on the forum. It was just as he had expected it to be.

He had successfully sabotaged the Germinal Organization secretly again, and they did not even know who was doing it and what went wrong.

Doing evil things to the Germinal Organization secretly made him feel really good.

However, the referral letter was not popular. Han Xiao was somewhat surprised, but after he contemplated for a while, he realized the reason behind it. It was because of the current financial situation of the players. Although guilds could come up with 250,000, it was quite a risk for them. If the referral letter did not have a good effect, it would slow their progress down by a huge portion.

The price that he had set for the time being was too high, and the risk of buying the referral letter would only decrease when the average asset level of the players increased. At that time, there would be guilds that would try buying it.

At this price, the first person to eat the crab will take too long to appear. Han Xiao bit his nails and started pondering. The best solution was to lower the price...

That's impossible! Not going to happen!

I could use some sales strategy, giving out other benefits together with the referral letter.

The first thing Han Xiao thought of was giving relationship points as a reward, such as when someone bought a referral letter, he would give some relationship points. Relationship points were the prior requirements of buying high-level equipment in his store—it was all part of the profit chain.

But on second thought, giving relationship points would not be a very good idea. They were maxed at one hundred points, so he had to treasure them. The relationship points that he gave to normal players were ten at most. He did not want the players to get them so easily.

If he used them with the referral letter, one or two points would be too few and unattractive, but giving too many would be disadvantageous to him as well.

What about giving bonus equipment? The moment this thought came up, it was rejected by him. He had to be a qualified businessman, so he should never have such good morals.

He had fused some blueprints recently, but he had not built any of them, so he could not sell those either.

And in terms of drugs, it was not a good time to sell them. Some drugs that gave enhancements based on percentage would have a much bigger market once the players reach a higher level. The pro players who had to compete in matches would be his target consumers.

As he was wavering, a surprise notification appeared on the interface.

[Source of Stone Plague] Completed

Requirement One: Find the source of the plague. Completed.

Requirement Two: Suppress the spread of the plague. Completed.

Requirement Three: Cure all the people who are infected. Incomplete.

You received 60,000 experience, +400 relationship with the Black Pine Colony

Han Xiao stood in place with surprise.

This mission was what he had given to Frenzied Sword and Bun-hit-dog. They had completed it!

It seems I chose well. Han Xiao laughed. Their level was around 15, so this mission would have been quite difficult for them. Although they did not complete it perfectly, it was already a pleasant surprise. Since Han Xiao had not been involved in this mission at all from the beginning, the rewards dropped from the sky!

Wait a minute!

Han Xiao's eyes sparkled.

He was inspired and had another idea of promoting the referral letter!

"Nice one Frenzied Sword!"

Han Xiao laughed. It was just the right time for the mission to be completed. It had inspired him at a crucial moment.

At this time, the players in the novice village were learning [Energy Training Technique] one by one and were swing at the price of the referral letter.

"The flow of time carried everyone forward; the truth of the past has been buried and forgotten by the people who never stopped," Han Xiao suddenly yelled. "I need a number of trustworthy people to help me with some things."

As he was speaking, he distributed the five hidden main storyline missions from [New Era—Origin] that he had just received into new missions: [Ending of the Survivor], [The Key of Misplacement], [Sealed Past], [Mysterious Prisoner], and [Same Type of Person].

[New Era—Origin] was too cumbersome, and it would waste a lot of time if Han Xiao did them himself. Furthermore, it was only the first round.

Han Xiao decided to distribute the targets of the missions and let the players do it. This way, he could save time and get the rewards without doing much. The success of Frenzied Sword proved the idea, and he found out that he could still get the rewards even if the players completed the mission.

Just like the evil capitalists who used benefits to attract others to work for them but still ended up earning the most.

Furthermore, Han Xiao stated clearly that this was a Main Storyline Mission, which would increase his status among the players again.

An NPC that gives out main storyline missions. Damn, he has got to be someone important! was what Han Xiao expected the players to think.

The players saw the mission and froze in place. Then they became overjoyed.

"Main storyline mission!"

"God! This is another main storyline!"

“The rewards are plenty!”

“Quick, accept the mission!”

However, the players noticed that the mission was in gray color, which meant that it could not be accepted.

“Why can’t I accept the mission? Why?”

The confusion was solved within a short period. They soon realized that the missions had a prior requirement—buying the referral letter!

That’s... that’s too greedy!

The players turned furious. How are they going to play 250,000? Who the hell could afford that!

Seeing the expression of the players, Han Xiao smiled secretly. Because of the quota, his Main Storyline Mission could only be given to a limited number of players. Thus, he had to target the elites, so he had decided to attract the pro players. Pro players had large guilds behind them, and it was perfect for promoting the referral letter and making bundle sales.

You want the main storyline mission? Okay, buy my referral letter.

Don’t want to spend money? Then why do you deserve to become stronger?

Pro players were willing to grow through any means; they would never give up the main storyline missions.

Another reason Han Xiao was doing this was that there was a chance for the normal players to fail the mission, which would result in him also failing the missions. However, pro players had higher skills on average, and they had guilds behind them who would help them with the mission. Clearly, they were more reliable.

Those that were rare were those that were treasured. He also added another important line in the mission introduction, which was that there was a chance to earn Black Phantom’s favor. This was an obvious hint that accepting the mission might trigger his ‘hidden storyline’.

Frenzied Sword, Bun-hit-dog, and Maple Moon were not attractive enough as examples. Very few highly skilled players came. Maybe it was because they felt triggering hidden storyline required luck; therefore, they did not take it seriously.

Han Xiao decided to go for a strong approach, to let the highly skilled players see that there was a way with a higher chance to trigger Black Phantom’s hidden storyline.

This is a good strategy. It’s killing two... many birds with one stone. Han Xiao was satisfied.

Even this won’t attract you? I doubt that.

...

The forum had a chat room function. At this time, there was a room with a password that had people joining in continuously, and the notifications kept popping up.

Jade Green Sky entered the chat room.

Jupiter entered the chat room.

Morning Snow Twilight Frost entered the chat room.

Your Mom Collapses When I Cry entered the chat room.

About a dozen people entered the chat room. They were all chairpeople of famous guilds in China, and they formed a circle themselves.

“Is everyone here?” Mountain Rain, the chairman of Drizzling Rivers Guild, spoke first.

“Nope,” Your Mom Collapses When I Cry said.

The chairman of Nine Gates Guild, Three Times Three Equals 9, asked, “Where’s Old Qi? Did anyone invite him?”

“Never mind, he spams all the time. We would never get things done with him joining in,” Cowherd Star, the chairman of Chrysanthemum Guild, said.

“Who opened the chat room? What serious matter are we talking about?” Jupiter asked.

Jade Green Sky cut in and said, “Yo, isn’t this the rich house of esports? I heard you have not been running your God squad well recently. Lousy chairman. When you step down, I will light firecrackers in front of your club doors to celebrate. @Jupiter”

“Fu*k off,” Jupiter snapped back.

Morning Snow Twilight Frost sent a funny smiley face.

“@Mountain Rain, Rainy Kim of your Thunder Storm has been quite active lately and always goes on TV shows. Can you help me ask for a signature?” Your Mom Collapses When I Cry asked.

“One for 3,000, no negotiating,” Mountain Rain answered.

“Damn, are you robbing me? Can you have some morals?”

Cowherd Star cut in and said, “My signature is free, do you want it?”

“Go away, your signature is not even worth enough to be used as toilet paper. I could consider if it’s from lady Yao Yao. @Seven Colors of a Peptachord[a] ¹”

“Stop insinuating. She’s not even here.” Cowherd Star was upset.

Morning Snow Twilight Frost sent a funny smiley face.

“Stop talking nonsense, let’s talk about the matter, I’m very busy,” Jupiter said.

“You? You’re basically a mascot,” Jade Green Sky sneered.

“Go away!”

“Okay guys, I will pull us back to the topic,” Mountain Rain declared. “You guys have all seen the posts in the forums about the main storyline missions from Black Phantom.”

“Yes, we saw it, what are you saying?”

“We should come up with the money together. Then we let the pro players accept the main storyline missions from Black Phantom.”

“You want to share the risk? But only one person can accept each mission.”

“No, what I mean is that the pro players can form a team to complete it. It’s positive competition.”

“That sound pretty good, I will have to ask the expedition group for their suggestions,” Jade Green Sky said.

“I’m in. There definitely won’t be any objections from the club,” Cowherd Stars said.

“I’m fine with anything, smile!” responded Three Times Three Equals 9.

“Haha, I remember the pro players of Guild of Gods is all in Southern Continent. They can’t meet Black Phantom. You can’t play with us @Jupiter. Quickly kick him. He’s a spy here to collect intelligence,” Jade Green Sky mocked.

“You motherfu...”

Jupiter has left the chat room.

Morning Snow Twilight Frost sent a funny smiley face.

[a]Google is suggesting that this should be Pentachord, is that right?

Chapter 196: It’s the Tanabata Festival Tomorrow. I’m upset.

Han Xiao was about done with harvesting the players in this novice village. He smugly counted the experience—he had gotten a huge amount yet again.

However, nobody had bought the referral letter so far, but Fisherman Han was patient—him giving out main storyline missions had already made a storm on the forums. Sooner or later, someone would come.

One last novice village left. Maybe I should delay it a while so that these large guilds have enough time to raise the money, Han Xiao thought.

This time, two players walked toward Han Xiao next to each other. Their IDs were Wind Chaser and Dragon Tail, which attracted the attention of other players. They were rather famous players of the Nine Gates Guild and the Fanatics Guild.

Han Xiao's eye twinkled. *The highly skilled players have finally come.*

"Black Phantom, we want to buy the referral letter," Wind Chaser said.

"Sure."

Wind Chaser and Dragon Tail had received the funds from the guild of their clubs. A team was the face of a club, so as pro players, they were treated well. They took out 250,000 each.

The players around looked at them with envy. They had never seen such a large amount of money.

"Can't believe someone can actually afford it."

"Large guilds are really rich."

"No wonder pro players are stronger than us. If I had such resources, I would be able to go pro, too."

"You think just anyone can be signed by a club?"

"If we rob their money, we'll be crazy rich."

"Don't be stupid. Putting aside the fact that pro player would completely skunk you, even if you succeeded, the guild will chase you everywhere, or maybe Blank Phantom will kill you first."

The crowd talked among themselves.

He received 500,000 in one shot, then wrote the referral letters on the spot and gave them to the two pro players. He told them the location of a Dark Net stronghold in the Western Continent and said, "Take my letter there, and you can join the Blood Pact Society."

He paused and then said, "Seems like I can trust you. I have some tasks here. Would you like to help me?"

"That's what I've been waiting for." Dragon Tail immediately accepted the mission. He wanted to accept one after another but was notified that only one mission could be accepted.

This had been set by Han Xiao—one referral letter for one mission.

"Shit, only one mission can be accepted. I thought I could accept all of them." Dragon Tail was unhappy.

Han Xiao raised his brows and said, "Leave it if you don't want to do it."

Dragon Tail shut up. If he did not accept the mission, the money would have gone to waste.

Wind Chaser had no choice but to choose the same mission. The two clubs behind them had joined forces to do the mission as a team. Luckily Dragon Tail accepted a mission that was in the Western Continent.

"If you can complete the mission, there might be more things you can help me with." Han Xiao hinted that in order to unlock his 'hidden storyline', first they had to complete this mission.

Pro players were always in a rush. They left immediately after accepting the mission.

Five mission targets, two in the Western Continent, two in the Northern Continent, and one in the Southern Continent—he had to make sure they were all accepted by someone. Fortunately for him, all these continents were part of his schedule.

Although the main storyline mission was A-grade, this was the easiest first round. Han Xiao separated the mission targets into many smaller missions that had a difficulty of around grade D, so the single mission experience quota could suffice for the experience he was rewarding.

In the later rounds, when the difficulty becomes higher, my quota might not be enough by then.

He felt that he needed a way to increase his quota. Levelling up was not an option at the moment, so he had to go for organizations and legendary points. There was no need to think about these at the moment.

Wind Chaser and Dragon Tail were normal pro players, and they didn't have a very good battle record in my previous life. I shall observe for now.

Han Xiao was strict in choosing his spare tires. He was not going to choose every pro player.

...

Fanatics and Nine Gates posted about their players buying the referral letter on the forums, which was a promotion of themselves to increase their fame within the players. The huge amount of money that they had spent attracted many players' attention, and they were all amazed at what they had done.

Han Xiao's face also showed up indirectly because of the advertisement from these two clubs. The clubs that followed after would also mimic the same actions so that they did not lag behind. Han Xiao guessed that his face would probably appear many times on the forums.

Without stopping, Han Xiao came to the last novice village in the Western Continent. As he was harvesting experience, there were other pro players that used the funds from their guild to exchange for a chance to accept the missions. Normal players could only watch and envy from the sidelines.

Another mission in the Western Continent was also accepted by a pro player. Han Xiao could finally relax and happily sell his abilities, at the same time paying attention to the forums and the Dark Net.

"Hmm? New episode of 'Galaxy Times'. Titled... Creation of the Professional League?"

Han Xiao felt wide awake. He had always paid a lot of attention to this show, so he clicked in immediately.

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

"Spring, I have been quite anxious recently," the female host commented.

"What's wrong, Autumn?"

“I fell in love with a man. He doesn’t speak much, and he’s so handsome, but he’s never looked at me seriously and never talks to me.”

“Don’t worry, I think you two suit each other very well.”

Female host was surprised. “Really?”

“Of course, he’s handsome and cool, you’re short and ugly, how suitable.”

“...”

It was the awkward opening joke again. The style felt very nostalgic to Han Xiao.

The screen was filled with comments.

A lot of players watched Galaxy Times. In less than a month after beginning, they had already become the go-to show for the players. After all, they had the official background, so they had a lot of first-hand information.

They chatted for a while to bring up the atmosphere. Then, the male host said, “Alright, let us get back to our main topic. In today’s show, we will be digging deep into the most popular topic—Inhuman Phenomenon—the news from pro players, and we also invited Li Ge to be our guest. Be sure to stay.”

The contents of the show were interesting as always. They started off by going through the progress of players in all various planets while giving some comments on the level leaderboard.

“Currently, the highest-level players are already closing to level 20. Level 20 will be the first class advancement, so I wonder who will receive this honor. The first player to receive a class advancement will be recorded in the books of gaming history as a milestone.”

“As everyone can clearly see, the players on the top of the leaderboards are mostly not pro players. The Japanese players have the highest number of players on the list; as everyone knows, their base camp planet is the Lonnie Planet, where technology and magic coexist. They are at the peak period of the civilization, which is very suitable for getting missions and levelling up. There are also quite a number of players from France and America while there are not many from China. Oh, I see someone I know. Maple Moon, do you guys remember? Not long after the official launch, she received more than 100,000 experience points, which was from the first prize pool mission the players have seen.”

“Speaking of the Black Phantom, from the beginning of the game till now, he has been the center of attention for the players in Planet Aquamarine, and recently, something has happened again. He continuously appeared in novice villages to give out guidance and rewards, and not long ago, he showed another main storyline mission, but it had a prior requirement of buying an item that was priced at an outrageous amount of 250,000 Aquamarine dollars! If players from other planets want to know how much this means, please move to the currency exchange panel, and look at how many resources can be purchased with 250,000 Aquamarine dollars.

Players from other planets envied Planet Aquamarine. Why did they not have such a great novice guider?

Chapter 197: Responses from All Sides (1)

The male host changed the topic. "Recently, an event has raised wide discussion among the players. The NPCs in the game have expressed extreme curiosity over the unique characteristics of players. Every planet has witnessed different reactions and labelled this phenomenon differently, such as Chosen Ones, Inhumans, Genius Phenomenon, which was very exciting and surprising. It's like NPCs have their individual minds and are not as rigid as NPCs in other games."

"If every NPC has an individual mind of their own, the amount of computation needed will be extremely high, but Galaxy is using the latest light speed computers. Its limit is unknown," the female host said.

Players wrote their speculations in the comments. The fact that NPCs seemingly had their own intelligence and interacted as freely as a person would in the real world was very new and exciting.

The hosts read from their scripts. They talked about the situations on various planets and made some speculations.

From the players' perspective, they only knew the NPCs attitude toward them and not the responses from the organizations, but Han Xiao did. Recently, the information on the Dark Net had almost all been about the contact with Inhumans. The rapid increase in the number of players had given a lot of pressure to the organizations.

All the organizations agreed that, if the number of Inhumans grew continuously without a limit, it would bring endless potential dangers and subversively impact the current social construct, but they could not find a way to suppress that growth at all.

Luckily, Inhumans were weak and easy to control.

The organizations in Planet Aquamarine had yet to notice that the strength of players was growing at a very fast pace. Before they were LV 20, their power was still in the category of normal humans.

Han Xiao shook his head. *When the level of the players is high, these organizations are going to be really shocked.*

The topic of the Inhuman Phenomenon had ended. The male host said, "... we have invited Li Ge to join us today. Good to see you, Li Ge."

Li Ge, the god tier player that ranked second in China, sat between the hosts with a smile on his face.

Galaxy Times frequently invited highly skilled players for an interview and discussion, so the female host asked Li Ge what his view on the Inhuman Phenomenon was.

"I think this is part of the game's plot, to give the players a feeling that it is real. When I was playing, I kept having the misconceptions that I was in a real world, and I think that is what the developers want us to experience. As a unique character in a real world, everything that occurs required improvisation, and there will almost never be any repeated events. It's all new and exciting. I have high hopes for what Galaxy can achieve in the future."

"Talking about the future of the game," the male host said, "our channel has received first-hand news that the international esports association has confirmed that they will be hosting the first ever pro league, and they have also informed the countries to host competitions. What is your view on this?"

“I would say that it means I have yet to lose my job.” Li Ge laughed. “On a serious note, strong esports clubs have all stepped into Galaxy. They will definitely be preparing for it, and I think it will be a great fight. Hopefully, I can lead China to a good result.”

The comments exploded again. The players were very excited about the creation of pro leagues. It was going to be a big event. There were also other comments like “Li Ge is so handsome!” and “Love you hubby” that came from the female fans.

“The competition has been established, and pro players will have to quickly prepare for it. Do you have any advice or tips that you can share with us?”

Li Ge thought for a while and said, “We pro players have to distribute the experience points logically in our abilities in a way that suits our strengths best. Therefore, we stick to a steady pace and won’t rush our levels so that we can familiarize ourselves with the controls in every level and improve our skills, which is why there are almost no pro players in the level leaderboards. Oh, there are a few from Japan. Well, as you know, they like to show off,” he mocked lightly.

“We pro players will grab every opportunity to become stronger. Black Phantom in our Planet Aquamarine has become very famous recently. I think I’m going to try my luck too... but that’s if he returns to the Southern Continent.” Li Ge sighed.

The rest of the show was mostly chitchat.

After he watched finish the show, Han Xiao thought, Pro leagues are going to start soon. All the clubs will be preparing themselves and not wasting any time. My customers should be increasing.

Li Ge—a god-tiered player that ranked second in China, someone whose status was so much higher than Han Xiao in his previous life that Han Xiao was not even qualified enough to be in contact with him—had said that he would come to find him.

But now, Han Xiao had the power to choose if he wanted him to be one of his spare tires.

Li Ge... I’ll have to think about it.

...

Frenzied Sword and Bun-hit-dog did missions in Black Pine. It was not a place for high-level players. The missions were difficult, but Frenzied Sword was a pro player after all. With his skills and the equipment that he had received from Han Xiao, he was having a good time and grew rapidly.

Through the missions in Black Pine, Frenzied Sword had received new equipment and new abilities, but these things could not fill his heart. Instead, he felt empty inside.

When he thought of Han Xiao, his heart would be filled with desire.

Only by following Han Xiao could he understand the true meaning of life, and the missions in Black Pine paled in comparison

“When will he return...”

Frenzied Sword was melancholic.

Outside the isolation zone in Black Pine, Lu Cheng was talking to Frenzied Sword. "Honestly, you have surprised me. You actually suppressed the plague."

Frenzied Sword was upset. Bun-hit-dog pulled him to the side, and only then did he come back to focus.

"Hmm, yeah," he replied perfunctorily

In the beginning, when Black Phantom had left the two of them to deal with the plague, Lu Cheng did not take it seriously at all, but not long after, he realized that these two people really could be of huge help. The characteristic of them being able to revive meant that they were unafraid of the infection and could do many things the researchers did not dare to.

The plague in the colony stopped spreading with the help from the duo, and the lightly infected patients were already cured. The number of people in the isolation zone had visibly reduced.

Lu Cheng has always been surprised by the characteristics of Inhumans. He had told the people of Green Valley Ville to research these 'homeless wanderers'. He contacted his friends from other organizations and knew that the Inhumans phenomenon was happening everywhere in the world. As the Inhumans' area of activity started to grow, even the Six Nations could not keep the secret from the civilians.

As the level of players increased, players from novice villages started to explore the map slowly. Many left Green Valley Ville, and some of them came to Black Pine.

Lu Cheng did as Han Xiao taught him to, which was to treat the Inhumans like mercenaries. He noticed that Han Xiao had surprisingly pointed him down the right path.

"Er... rewards?" Bun-hit-dog reminded the distracted Lu Cheng.

Frenzied Sword glared at Bun-hit-dog.

During the mission, he had done almost everything. Bun-hit-dog had just spent the whole time recording from the side like a boss, and yet he had the guts to ask for rewards.

Lu Cheng laughed and told his subordinates to pass the agreed rewards to the duo.

Frenzied Sword carefully read the details of the pieces of equipment that he had received. With the creation of the pro league, he had felt more pressure, so he improved on his skills as much as he could during his free time.

But Bun-hit-dog did not care. He browsed through the forums, then suddenly, he said, "There's news about Black Phantom. He can give out main storyline missions... how come he never brought it up to us? We triggered his hidden storyline, so why aren't we getting at least the same treatment?"

Frenzied Sword's expression tightened, and he said in a low voice, "When he returns, he will definitely give the main storyline missions to us too."

"Where did that confidence come from?" Bun-hit-dog questioned.

"I..." Frenzied Sword was at a loss for words. He was rather anxious, but he comforted himself with a firm expression and said, "I believe in him!"

Chapter 198: Responses from All Sides (2)

In a military base in Stardragon, many players crowded around as if attending a mini fair on a bright, sunny day.

Stardragon's approach toward the players was gentle. They held many internal meetings and tried to command the players. They realized that other than some Inhumans being mentally ill, they were capable of normal communication. They decided to put the players together as a special division and made them serve the military.

This military base was specially created for the players. Commanders from Stardragon gave out missions, and many players were opening stalls and grouping up—the whole area seemed to be prospering.

Impacted by Han Xiao, many players chose to join the Stardragon, including Maple Moon.

Fighting and killing was not Maple Moon's style; she liked to collect materials and build machines then sell them to other players. Many players liked coming to her for supplies and repairs, so Maple Moon could easily find a team when doing her missions.

Maple Moon was just a casual player. The time that she spent online was less than other players. Plus, she preferred to enjoy the game more than doing missions all the time, so she wasted a lot of time by doing that.

Even so, with the prize pool rewards that she had received from Han Xiao, she still surpassed most of the players and became one of the players on the level leaderboard.

Maple Moon looked at her experience bar and excitement showed on her face.

Almost level 20. I will be able to find Black Phantom very soon.

...

A piercing cold wind blew across the wasteland with thin snow. Together with the ground, they created a view filled with gray and white.

In a wasteland on the Northern Continent, a player with an animal skin coat slowing trekked across in the cold wind. On the horizon behind him was the novice village that he had left from.

With blood scabs on his fists, seven dead Frost Wolf bodies lay one hundred meters behind him.

Frost Wolves were a common predator in the Northern Continent. Their level was around 10, so players at the time had less than a 20% chance of winning under the siege of seven Frost Wolves, but there were only a few shallow scratches on this player.

The ID above the player's head was 'Hao Tian', which was clearly an old ID.

Hao Tian—a famous pro player, a pillar of the Long Sky club, and a veteran in the pro scene—had used this ID for many years.

There were many esports clubs in China, but only a few were considered top tier, such as Guild of Gods, Long Sky, Dynasty, Fried Eggplants with Fish... Yes, that club was called Fried Eggplants with Fish, and their mortal enemy was the Kimchi Club in Korea.

Hao Tian suddenly received a ranged communication request from Li Ge, so he stopped and accepted.

“Hmm?” This greeting clearly conveyed the fact that Hao Tian did not like to talk too much.

“Have you heard that the Esports Association has confirmed the creation of Galaxy Pro Competitions?” Li Ge asked.

“Oh.”

“What class did you change to.”

“Pugilist.”

“I’m an Esper,” Li Ge said. “Level up quickly. The situation of the Chinese players is not looking good. I need help from people to fight top clubs from other countries.”

“Speak for yourself.” Hao Tian did not give face at all, and he hung up.

Both were top players; their styles were very different.

Hao Tian had been in the pro scene for many years. He had steadily trained and climbed up to where he was. He did not like to talk, did not like to manage public image—all he did was shine in the competitions.

Li Ge was very passionate about managing his image. He often went to shows, so he had countless more fans than Hao Tian. Plus, he was handsome, so he had many female fans. Li Ge was the type of player that was talented enough to surpass other players without much hard work.

Every pro player had their own talent, and Li Ge was full of talents.

Some people are just that talented.

Many people admired Li Ge, and many envied him. Hao Tian was not one of those. He had known Li Ge for a very long time. Li Ge was just someone who succeeded in the same industry as him and nothing more; he did not care for other factors.

Li Ge was his old rival. Hao Tian lost to him many times, and in order to reach a higher place in Galaxy, he spent almost all of his time strengthening his in-game character. He did not want to miss any opportunity.

He opened the forum as was his habit, then saw the posts about Black Phantom giving out main storyline missions.

He suddenly stopped walking and turned back around toward the novice village.

With Hao Tian’s skill, a novice village was already useless to him, but for the missions of Black Phantom, he was willing to wait.

...

In the basement of the Dragon Horn building, the headquarters of Division 13...

The corridor toward the central computer room was dark and metallic, with infrared detectors in the walls all along the corridor. The ground was equipped with devices that recognized and recorded weight and footprints.

Gu Hui typed the password at the door, then had his eyeball, fingerprint, and voice scanned. Within a few seconds, the center computer recognized Gu Hui through the floor and infrared detectors.

"Identification authorized. Welcome, Deputy Director-general," a robotic voice emotionlessly said.

All the security devices were turned off. The path was clear, and Gu Hui walked into the spacious center computer control room with a serious expression. He was carrying out the order of the highest ranked superiors—inquire about the Inhuman phenomenon from the galactic civilization far away in the universe, Godora.

It was an important issue. All the cameras in the center computer room faced him, and the leaders were watching through them.

Gu Hui knew that it was not only Stardragon—all the other countries were going to do this as well. The Inhuman phenomenon was too weird. They had absolutely no way of solving it and could only seek help from galactic civilizations. Godora was the only superior civilization that they were in contact with. It had a mostly neutral but slightly biased attitude toward them, and they did not interfere too much with Planet Aquamarine.

Gu Hui turned on the central terminal and typed a series of long passwords to unlock the encryption. He then opened the deepest layer of the program and typed another string of secret passwords, activating a secret program.

The screen turned entirely white, then a new simple window popped up. It was filled with countless options and links in weird Godoran symbols. All except one were gray, which meant they could not be selected.

The only one that could be selected was translated into Planet Aquamarine's language.

Godoran Communication Window with Star Zone 9, Planet Aquamarine.

This was a star zone communication device model called [Feathers of Light—8]. All of the Six Nations on Planet Aquamarine had received it from the Godoran Civilization. It allowed them to connect with the galactical civilizations. This technology was yet to be obtained by Planet Aquamarine.

The Godoran Civilization locked many functions of the program and closed the hundreds of connections on the network; it was limited to only single-directional communication from Planet Aquamarine. Thus, Planet Aquamarine could only make use of less than 0.00000001% of the galactical communication device, and they could only get information about the universe from Godora.

But Planet Aquamarine did not have a choice.

Gu Hui calmed his mind and clicked the link. The ten-second wait felt like hours, but eventually, the screen flashed, and a dialog window appeared.

A sentence in the Godoran language appeared before it flashed into Planet Aquamarine's language through the translation function from the device. "Human from Planet Aquamarine, why did you request communication?"

Gu Hui revised what he had planned to say before typing it out word by word. "My friend from Godora, I'm the person in charge of the intelligence organization of Stardragon on Planet Aquamarine. I have requested the communication due to an abnormal phenomenon on our planet. We call it the Inhuman Phenomenon. The details are as below..."

Gu Hui explained their research on the Inhumans briefly and sent the documents and records over. Then he ended his message with a brief plea for assistance. "As our technology is unable to find the reason behind this, we hoped you could help us to solve it. If you can provide assistance with this, we will give you our sincerest appreciation. Godora and Stardragon will forever be close friends."

Chapter 199: Aurora

After a few seconds, the person from Godora replied.

"There are many technologies that can achieve this effect. It also might be a natural occurrence. There are far more weird events in the universe, so don't have to be so surprised. Tens of thousands of species die and come to life every second. We would have to research on it ourselves to know the exact cause."

"That is what we are hoping for," Gu Hui wrote back, "for you to send someone here to do field research."

"Request authorized. Current date: 10th August 688 Galaxy time. Mission has been submitted into the schedule. ETA 7th May 689."

Galaxy's calendar was set by the three biggest civilizations. It is used across the entire universe, but of course, many places had their own calendar, just like the use of dialects. The general calendar would usually only be used in the communication between two civilizations so that time calculation would be easier.

"So long?" Gu Hui was stunned.

"Every activity follows a schedule. The request needs to be queued. I have already received the request from other nations on your planet, so it will be settled at the same time".

The reply of the receptionist from Godora was typical. Gu Hui feel it was quite familiar. He thought about it and realized... *Isn't this the same tone as government officials pushing things around?*

Gu Hui turned off the communication with a sigh.

“Have to wait one year. Who knows how the Inhuman Phenomenon will turn into after one year?” Gu Hui shook his head. “Luckily, the Inhumans are able to communicate and are passionate about being mercenaries. They are controllable to a certain extent.”

The highest ranked superiors of Stardragon hosted a meeting. Since there was currently no solution to the Inhuman Phenomenon, they decided to immediately focus on declaring war with the Germinal Organization before the phenomenon grew worse, to prevent the Germinal Organization using this phenomenon as a tool for them making a comeback.

Preparation for the expedition war started again.

...

Ta, ta, ta!

The military boots stepped on the metal floor. Hila walked in the corridor full of twist and turns with an expressionless face. She did not even hesitate at the intersections. She was too familiar with this place—this place where Aurora was locked up.

At the end of the deep corridor, a thick, metal gate blocked Hila’s path. She walked over with light steps, and the automatic guarding guns kept their aim all on her like they were going to open fire at any moment. Two guards stood in front of the metal gate and stopped Hila.

“I have authorization.” Hila’s tone was cold.

The guards turned around and tapped a few times on the control panel, made sure that Hila had received one-time authorization from their leader, and nodded. “You have one hour.”

He opened the metal gate. Light shone from within and brightened the exquisite but ice-cold face of Hila.

A pure white room came into her sight.

It was very simple: one bed, one table, one chair, one toilet, and one bookshelf full of books.

In a bed as pure as the feathers of an angel, a tiny, scrawny body covered.

Hila walked forward inattentively and stopped five meters outside the room. She reached out and pressed against the glass that surrounded the room. She could not move forward anymore.

The corner of her eyes shook.

The palm pressed against the wall turned into a fist. She clenched her fist so hard that her bones started to turn white.

“Sis?”

The blanket started moving. A tiny bald head extended from within cautiously. Her face was pale like she was suffering from malnutrition and had not gotten enough sunlight for a very long time. Her eyes were flashing with surprise as she saw Hila.

Aurora lifted the blanket and stumbled toward the glass. Her steps were weak and powerless. She was only as tall as Hila's shoulders and so skinny that she looked like she only had her skeleton left. The exposed arms from her patient suit were full of needle scars. Aurora pounced toward the glass with happiness. She put both of her hands on the glass and said, "You've come to see me!"

Hila hastily extended her hands and pressed against Aurora's palms across the glass. She endured the lump in her throat and softly asked, "Recently... have you been alright?"

"The people in white lab coats have not come as often. The last injection was thirteen days ago already." Aurora's large eyes blinked, and she showed a faint smile.

Hila smiled reluctantly. She looked at the needle scars on Aurora's body, and it felt like her heart was being stabbed rapidly. She knew why they drew blood from her fewer times—it was because Aurora recovered slower. Every time her blood and bone marrow was extracted, she needed more time to recover.

Her ability allowed her to feel one's life force. The life force of Aurora, which had once been as bright as the sun, was now a candlelight that might extinguish anytime.

Her life force was withering.

Aurora sat down and hugged her knees. "Tell me stories elder sister. I want to hear the last one that you didn't finish."

Hila sat down too and leaned on the glass.

"Where did we stop at last time?" she whispered.

"Hmm..." Aurora tilted her head and thought about it. "The uncle called Zero escaped from the base. What happened next? Did sis fight with him?"

After a moment's thought, Hila continued the story with a soft and gentle tone.

...

In the office of the leader of the Germinal Organization, a row of superiors stood in front of the desk and reported the various situations in the organization.

The leader sat straight and tight. No one knew what the expression behind the mask was. His black gloves covered hands overlapped each other under his nose. "The Inhuman Phenomenon has attracted the attention of the Six Nations, but it won't last for long. At least the Inhumans made some time for us to recover. Be prepared, the enemy may invade Andrea any time," he said.

The officers nodded in assent.

The leader looked around and asked, "Where's Cyberlos?"

"There have been breakthroughs in a few projects recently—he's busy."

The leader stood up suddenly and left with large steps.

...

Electrolux was so touched that he was tearing up.

After a month-long ordeal, he was finally released.

It had not been easy!

Although he was trapped in prison, he had been paying attention to the forums, and he knew that the Germinal Organization had captured other players as well. After he was released, he was sent to join a special unit consisting of players; it was called the Inhuman Unit. It was all the unlucky players whose organization was locked due to being brainwashed.

Although he was far behind on levels, Electrolux was confident that that with his Esper ability that had A-grade potential, as long as he levelled up, he would definitely be stronger than other players.

A non-Chinese on Planet Aquamarine player like this was not uncommon. Some casual players did not care which planet was whose base camp; they only chose novice planets to their likings. Every novice planet had casual players from various countries.

It was Cyberlos' idea to put the brainwashed Inhumans into one unit, and it had been accepted by the leader, who felt that undead Inhumans had a strategic value in war.

The leader had assigned a battle instructor to specifically design training and actual combat plans for the Inhumans.

At this time, Cyberlos was in another research lab. He stood in front of a specially designed sealed pod. The research personnel on the side were steadily adjusting the devices. There was an test subject in the pod, and a scream filled with madness and agony could be heard from within.

After some time, the inside of the sealed pod quieted down. Its gate opened, and what was inside could be seen.

It was a man fully armed with all kinds of exoskeleton mechanical parts that were connected into his bones. His skin had all changed into a soft, stretchable metal. With his bald head and machinery everywhere, his body size had grown a considerable amount. He looked like a beast.

This guy was none other than the first test subject of the [Super Soldier Project], No. 1!

Chapter 200: More Than 100,000,000!

“How do you feel?”

No. 1 opened his eyes. His eyes had been modified, too. They flashed red light, and his field of sight could zoom in and out like a camera lens. He looked down at his palms covered in metallic skin, and as he moved his fingers around, a hideous smile appeared on his face.

“Never been better.”

With a buzz from the exoskeleton, he punched at the metal wall and created a pit. His hideous smile expanded and turned into a maniacal laugh.

Finally, after enduring endless pain, he had gained transcendent power.

He enjoyed the surge of confidence.

No. 1 realized that with this power, the Zero that had once killed him was nothing more than a weakling.

They were not on the same level anymore.

“Zero, don’t get killed by anyone else before I find you.” No. 1’s eyes were vicious as he talked to himself. “You’re mine.”

...

Cyberlos walked out of the experiment lab to report to the leader.

“As the schedule has been brought forward, the experiment has yet to reach a mature stage. No. 1 was the only one that could endure and finish all the modifications. I did not think that he could endure all that torture,” Cyberlos said.

“He was killed by Zero. Hatred turned his will indestructible,” the leader said indifferently.

“About Zero...” Cyberlos narrowed his eyes. “If he really has the power to predict the future, we have to get rid of him before the war. Otherwise, all of our strategic deployments and planning will be exposed.”

“He’s like a rat in the sewers, hiding too deep.” The leader fiddled with his fingers before coming to a decision. “Activate Destiny’s Child, find his position.”

Cyberlos smiled. He had always been very interested in the Destiny’s Child.

The duo walked in the twisted corridor and past locked gates that each required higher authority than the last. Elite teams of guards patrolled the corridor in synchronized footsteps. The secret room was deeply hidden.

The leader walked to the gate and entered the password. Next was the fingerprint scanner. He removed the glove that he had always been wearing. His hand looked horrible—it was full of scars like it had once been bitten and chewed by a beast.

There were scars on his fingertips, too. The leader put the glove back on after the authorization was completed. The metal gate slid open to the side. Only the leader could open this gate.

Inside was a hibernation pod with a man wearing a metal muzzle in it, and the nutritional liquid injections were all that was keeping his body alive.

The leader controlled the hibernation pod to inject a drug that would wake the person inside. The door opened up, and the man slowly opened his eyes. He was extremely calm. His eyes had no signs of life, and he did not seem to care if he was asleep or awake.

The Germinal Organization called this man ‘Destiny’s Child’. He had some ability to affect the future with his words, but the Germinal Organization did not know many of the details.

The leader waved behind his back, and his subordinate handed the documents on Zero over. He then flipped the pages. Destiny's Child looked at the pages without even changing the focus of his pupils.

The leader flipped through the pages twice and said, "Make him appear."

Destiny's Child finally blinked.

The leader took out a specially made key and opened the metal mouth mask of Destiny's Child.

Destiny's Child closed his eye for five minutes. When he opened them again, he said slowly with a hoarse voice, "He will come here himself."

The leader's breath paused for a second and demanded, "When?"

"Not too long."

"Hope it's successful this time." Cyberlos shook his head. Destiny's Child's ability did not work every time. The smaller the request, the more likely it was to succeed.

The leader put the metal mask back on Destiny's Child and pushed him back into the hibernation pod.

The guards outside carefully extended their heads and looked at each other with confusion.

Why were the leader and Cyberlos talking into the air with themselves?

...

After staying in the last novice village in the Western Continent for three days, Han Xiao left hurriedly in a plane. His next stop was the Northern Continent, which would be a long trip.

The average level of players was getting close to 20, so Han Xiao had to speed up on his schedule.

Stars filled the night sky outside the window. The plane flew stably in the clouds with its preset route.

The stars glowed in the clear eyes of Han Xiao.

Every time Han Xiao looked at the night sky and the bright stars in it, he thought of the countless civilizations and opportunities that existed in the universe.

Han Xiao was very aware of this, and every time he thought of it, he was filled with ambition.

A man's journey belongs to the sea of stars.

He had already built his base on Planet Aquamarine—this was the starting point. The more he accumulated here, the more confident he would be.

Han Xiao opened the interface and counted his earnings.

In the more than ten days that he had stayed in the Western Continent, he had robbed a large number of drugs, one of which had an unknown effect but could potentially be a very valuable semi-finished drug. He had also built many relationships, with Dion, two superheroes that he had no idea of what use they would provide, Hannes, and others. Furthermore, he had managed to trigger the hidden main storyline.

He also built the mechanical suit, Viper.

Viper could increase both his Strength and Dexterity drastically, which made up for the Mechanics' weaknesses in these two attributes in the early stages. In Han Xiao's mind, Viper was his second battle plan, and it was only a prototype. He needed to continuously add more modules to it so as to enhance his combat abilities.

Sniping was for assassination, kiting, and stealth; Viper was for head-on combat, and he actually already had a few modification ideas for it.

His largest earnings were the experience and money from the four novice villages. [Energy Training Technique] sold very well just as he expected, and it had brought him an outrageous and unbelievable amount of rewards.

120,000,000 EXP!

Those who could afford [Energy Training Technique] were the players who were rather ahead—not everyone could afford it.

The class-change knowledge and basic skills were selling at a low profit margin, but the number of people who bought it was the highest.

He already had 20,000,000 EXP saved up. Thus, the accumulated experience on the interface totaled to 140,000,000!

Han Xiao felt content as he looked at the long string of zeros. Even for the players at his level, this amount of experience was beyond their imagination. Some players could not even get as much experience during the whole version 1.0.

Nice. Han Xiao was overjoyed. He would not have to worry about experience points for a long time.

As long as he settled the two biggest obstacles—changing class and upgrading tier—his level would increase tremendously, and he could even splurge on upgrading his skills. It would be easy for him to max the levels of all his abilities except for blueprints, and most importantly, he could infuse blueprints in bulk and build up his inventory.

Experience points were not the only thing. He had also earned 3,600,000 Aquarium dollars by selling [Energy Training Technique], and he had sold five referral letters, which totaled to 4,850,000 dollars. His wallet was packed.

Worth it!

Han Xiao rubbed his palms. He could not wait to open the interface.

Excluding blueprints, the abilities he had yet to reach max level were: [Accurate Shooting Lv.3], [Special Combat Lv.1], [Stealth Lv.1], [Steady Aim Lv.1], [Night Attack Lv.1], [Medium Enhancement Lv.4], [Energy—Magnetic Enhancement Lv.1], [Meticulous Repairs Lv.1], and the amazing [Pickpocketing Lv.1]

Without even looking at the experience points they needed, he maxed the level of each of those abilities!

That's the feeling of being rich!

Your Accurate Shooting and Sniping are both at Lv.5.

You learned [Field Controlling Vision].

Your Grappling and Special Combat are both at Lv.5.

You learned [Lethal Critical Hits].

You have received talent [Proficient Combat].

You have received talent [Proficient Shooting].

You have received talent [Bat Habit].