

## The Mechanic 391

### Chapter 391: Aroshia, Grade A Chain Mission (2)

The slave market was being rebuilt. Han Xiao showed his identity to the construction team and entered the underground corridor successfully. He came to the cell that Aroshia had once been in, looked around, knocked here and there, and did not find anything unusual.

Floating Dragon had searched the cell long before him, and they did not find anything either.

Aroshia stood outside the door and watched. She suddenly asked, "Why do you want to bring me away?"

Han Xiao paused for a moment. He definitely could not say that it was a mission requirement, so he said, "I'm very curious about you."

"Curious..." Aroshia mumbled. "What is that?"

"Curiosity is the desire for knowledge. For example, when a normal person loses their memory, they want to know who they were before. This is a type of desire."

"Desire... I don't seem to have this sort of thing. Is that special?"

"Er, usually, those without desires are artificial intelligence, and not needing to consume or excrete is a characteristic of energy life forms." Han Xiao sized Aroshia up and said, "But you're neither of them. You just don't have the basic physical needs, you might not have no desire at all. Don't you have anything you want?"

Aroshia thought carefully and said, "I don't think so."

"Are you sure? Since you asked me a question, that's the curiosity of wanting to know what 'desire' is," Han Xiao said. "Desire is the sign of life, a feeling that makes people realize their existence. It can also be said that it's the motive for every action a life form takes. Therefore, a life form like you seems very unique."

Aroshia tilted her head, pondered, and said, "Is the reason for you teaching me how to use the energy inside my body also your own desire?"

"I want you to be stronger and become a help to me," Han Xiao said honestly. He had figured out a few ways to communicate with Aroshia. There was no need to pretend—he just had to be straightforward and express his motive.

As always, Aroshia still had a carefree attitude. "I won't die, so what's the point of becoming stronger. Strong or weak, it's all meaningless. Or I should say, existence itself is meaningless."

Han Xiao thought about it and said, "But if you die, your memory will be reset. You'll forget about this short-term memory. The 'you' after reviving might not be who 'you' are now. Once you revive, you'll start from the beginning again, thinking the same things you have been thinking, wasting the same time

you have already wasted, only to end up in the same place you are now. Becoming stronger will help you to avoid reviving, preventing yourself to be killed by others or disasters.”

Han Xiao paused and said, “And about meaning... You don’t need food and excretion to maintain your life, so you can’t feel existence. If your mind is blank, a day or even a year will feel like an instant. Hence, why not find something to do and give meaning to your life?”

“I see...” Aroshia mumbled a while, nodded, and said, “Thank you, talking with you is very pleasant. No one had ever said this much to me.”

In the past three years, the others only had two impression of her—A Space Wonder or a slave that did not run away. Never was there someone that communicated with her like she was a normal individual.

“Don’t mention it, it’s just chitchat.”

There was no clue in the prison cell. Han Xiao could only stop and casually chat with Aroshia, waiting for the time limit to arrive and see what would actually happen.

Seconds and minutes passed. As the last minute ended, the change happened.

Aroshia was still standing outside the door—she did not return to the cell. She took a few steps backward, then looked down on her body. Nothing unusual happened. Then she backed off further and further.

[Visitor From Afar] Completed

You have received 1,800,000 Experience.

Han Xiao was so surprised her eyebrows almost raised uncontrollably.

He hardly did anything at all, yet a Space Wonder that even the Floating Dragon could not resolve was gone just like that. There was definitely more to it! Han Xiao recalled that this mission had an unknown reward. He looked at the interface and realized that this reward turned out to be a new mission.

You Have Triggered Grade A Hidden Chain Mission, [Reboot]

Mission Introduction: Aroshia is a unique life form. An enormous secret lies within her. Bring her alongside you, and one day, this secret will find you.

Reminder: This is a Chain Mission. The next mission will only be unlocked once the previous one is completed.

First Round: Teach Aroshia. Help her to awaken her power, control the energy inside her body, and reach Grade B

Reward: 5,200,000 Experience, 1 x Random Reward, +5 Risa Favorability

Failure Condition: Aroshia dead

*Chain Mission type grade A hidden mission!* Han Xiao was shocked. This was usually something that only happened in large Main Storyline events.

He had no information about this storyline in his previous life, which meant that no one had triggered it. This was an unknown event. He was more assured that Aroshia was not ordinary. The mission name was [Reboot]—what did that mean? Also, who was this person called Risda?

“Apparently, I’m able to leave.” Aroshia was confused. “What did you do to me?”

“I have no idea...” Han Xiao said. “Anyways, this is a good thing.”

...

Two days later, the superiors of the three large mercenary group arrived late at Floating Dragon. Jenny had a meeting with them. After she accepted their apologies, she finally released Goa, Porter, and Cerleni’s teams who had been locked up for many days.

Right after these people got out, they surrounded Han Xiao and expressed their gratitude and praise.

The superiors of the three armies came to contact Han Xiao with very friendly attitudes. Every mercenary could feel how their superiors took Han Xiao seriously. Han Xiao had showcased his abilities in this mission, and now that he had the backing of Floating Dragon, even the three large armies could not take him lightly.

After they were free, they immediately prepared to leave Floating Dragon and go back to complete the mission, returning the Silvers to the long-awaited employer. The reason Han Xiao had waited till now was to travel together with them.

On the day of their departure, Jenny, Wilsander, and Haier all came to send him off.

The entire dock was stunned. People from everywhere sized Han Xiao up with shock as he chatted with the three of them. Black Star Mercenary Group’s position there was definitely high, given the fact that three of them were sending him off.

The people who knew what had happened were even more surprised. It had only been a short half a month since Han Xiao joined Floating Dragon, and he had been able to work his way up so high in such a short period. The three of them had come to send him off, which meant that they gave him a lot of face. Even the superiors of the three armies were only able to see Jenny.

“Her Excellency Dragon Emperor has allowed you to be a Field Team. You’re now a field commander. Your power is Floating Dragon’s external military power, so we hope you can grow stronger quickly,” Jenny said in a very formal tone. She took out a specially made communicator and passed to Han Xiao. “This communicator can be used to contact Ames directly. However, as a reminder, if there’s no absolute need, it’s best not to disturb her.”

*Able to contact Ames directly? This small thing is equal to a nuclear launcher!* Han Xiao stowed it carefully.

Haier crawled over and said regretfully, "You're quite a good Mechanic. After you're gone, my workload will go up again. This gift is for you."

Looking down, Haier's pedipalp passed an alloy box over. Han Xiao's eyes sparkled as he opened to look at it.

Inside was a mini portable nuclear reactor. Stable nuclear reactors were something that could only be built with advanced energy knowledge. Energy knowledge was more difficult to obtain than compression technology, so he could not build it currently. Now that he had the reactor, he could add materials and use it to generate power, then use it at the power core of a mechanical suit. The output of the mechanical suit would reach new heights.

"Thank you." Han Xiao nodded with joy on his face.

After Haier walked away, Wilsander came closer and said, "Haier is a little ugly. I felt he was hard to look at initially but got used to it after some time. His personality is quite good."

Han Xiao glanced at him and said, "Ames probably feel this way about you."

Wilsander's expression collapsed immediately.

"Don't change the topic, did you bring a gift?"

"No."

"Bye." Han Xiao turned around and entered the ship.

"Come on, why is the treatment difference this huge!" Wilsander said resentfully on the dock.

Hu!

The ship took off.

Floating Dragon Island gradually became smaller in his eyes. He left with four more people than he entered with—three Volga brothers sleeping on the side and Aroshia, who was gazing out of the porthole.

There were both pros and cons to joining the Dragon Emperor's faction. At the moment, the pros largely outweighed the cons. Not only did he receive new blueprints and materials, his talent evolved as well. The most priceless thing that he got during this mission should be the Secret Message Bead. The higher the risk it brought, the higher the value it would bring.

...

As Floating Dragon Island had already drifted to the Fawn Galaxy, less than one day after they left, they had already returned to the desolate planet that the employer was waiting for them on.

As soon as they landed, the Silvers could not wait to return, filled with the joy of escaping death.

After the employer calmed down, he paid the reward as promised.

*Finally, I have the last two knowledges of Compression Technology.* Han Xiao breathed a sigh of relief. For these two knowledges, he had taken on an unfamiliar mission, and it had been exhausting. But at long last, it was time to reap the rewards.

### **Chapter 392: The Sudden Arrival of a Fleet**

What Sky Ring, Blades, and Purple Gold wanted was money, whereas the reward that Han Xiao requested was the two advanced knowledges of the compression technology. After the employer wired the money to the three armies, he personally approached Han Xiao and thanked him sincerely.

The employer had initially paid more attention to the more renowned three large armies. The biggest reason that he hired Black Star was because the other mercenary groups changed their mind and none of them dared go to Floating Dragon Island. He did not expect this small mercenary group to be the key to the success of the mission.

“My friends wouldn’t have returned safely if it wasn’t for you.”

As he was speaking, he and all the rescued Silvers put down their sense of superiority as royalties and greeted Han Xiao with the sincerest way to express gratitude in the Silver culture.

Goa and the others received the same treatment as well. They were a little ashamed, knowing that they had been imprisoned the entire time and it was Han Xiao who had turned the tables and completed the mission.

“Sadly, two of your friends died,” Han Xiao said.

“Sigh, they’re unlucky, but you’re not to blame. The Shattered Star Ring is too dangerous, so we’ll be leaving in just a while. I hope to hire you guys as guards and protect us on our way home.”

The three armies kindly rejected the offer—they were not willing to travel that far. The Sea of Star Spirits and Shattered Star Ring were two Star Fields away, so it would take too long to travel there and return even with the star gate that could transport them across Star Fields.

“What about you?” The employer looked at Han Xiao.

Han Xiao shook his head and said, “Sorry, it’s too far, not inside my business scope.”

Although the Sea of Star Spirits’ resources was richer than Shattered Star Ring, it would waste a lot of time if they traveled there. It was all doing missions and earning money anyway, so he preferred not to travel for it. The Shattered Star Ring was rural and dangerous, but it had a lot of opportunities.

“That’s a pity. If there is a chance in the future, I hope to invite you to travel to our home for a trip...”

The employer shook his head and gave him the reward.

The mission complete notification appeared on the interface. He received more than 4,000,000 experience at once plus the 5,000 Enas. Including the amount that he had obtained through blackmailing, he had obtained more than 40,000 Enas.

The other players' rewards were not as rich as their captain's, but it was quite good nonetheless, so they were all smiling with satisfaction.

The communicator vibrated as it received the two knowledges. This was a special reward that only Han Xiao received. He checked and made sure that they were correct, then immediately chose to learn them.

Learning... Successfully Learned! You have learned [High Density Material Compression Technology]!

Learning... Successfully Learned! You have learned [Basic Spatial Technology]!

You have acquired ability [Super Compression Technology]!

You have acquired ability [Basic Machinery Construction]!

You have acquired ability [Weight Reduction Structure]!

As always, he felt the familiar headache, which only went away after quite some time. Without hesitation, he spent twenty Potential Points and leveled up these two knowledges to the max level.

Mechanics used different knowledge combinations depending on what style they were using, but these knowledges were a must-learn for all Mechanics, and their level had to be maxed.

The knowledges of the compression technology had a hidden connection. Only by possessing all of them would one learn the ability of Compression Technology, and this was the sign of the rise of Mechanics in Version 3.0.

[Super Compression Technology] folded the machineries. As the ability became stronger, it could fold larger machineries into the size of a finger, and its effect was enhanced by Machinery Affinity, level, and Intelligence. Currently, Han Xiao's limit was folding medium-sized machines, which was most of the machines that he could build at the moment, such as firearms, Rangers, Amphiptere, and others.

As the size of his machines decreases after compression, their density increased. The mass of an object never changed, so its weight remained the same. However, [Weight Reduction Structure] would solve this problem. It used many technologies to achieve an internal repulsive force, creating an independent hovering field, maintaining a very low weight in various gravitational environments. It was suitable for many materials. This was a basic technology to achieve large scale compressions.

To achieve compression, folding structures needed to be added into the machines, increasing its complexity by multiple times. For convenience, many machines would be split up during compression, then reconnected back to their original form when they were expanded, using [Basic Machinery Construction]. This was an active ability that required energy to use, enabling extremely high-speed weapon assembly during combat. As long as there were parts, Mechanics would never run out of ammo.

When killing other players in his previous life, the usable parts of weapons and robots of Mechanics that were shattered seconds ago would be immediately reconstructed into other weapons, largely increasing the continuous combat capability and annoyance of the Mechanic Class.

If not for this ability that acted as a 'recycle' mechanism, the cost of using the Mechanical Army Style would have been many times higher.

From Han Xiao's perspective, his Mechanic class could only be counted as shaped now that he had gotten these three abilities.

*With Super Compression Technology and Basic Machinery Construction, my combat style will receive revolutionary upgrades. All my equipment needs to be modified into a compressed form. The number of weapons that I can equip will increase dozens of times. I won't need to fight head-on wearing my mechanical suit anymore. Finally, I can bully others with my 'Machinery Sea' tactic.*

Finally, the bitter days came to an end!

This time, the superiors of Blades and Purple Gold approached.

"Black Star, we want to sign a partnership with you, inviting you to be our ally."

These two superiors were the ones in charge of this area; them sending an invitation personally showed their sincerity.

The structure of large armies was similar. With Sky Ring Army as an example, the Army Commander was the leader and the only one that had the five rings level. Followed by two grade A Deputy Army Commanders. There were two types of four rings members—one was grade B+ High-Class Combat Personnel, and another was High-Class Managers, in charge of one business area. The superior from Sky Ring was one of them, someone in charge of numerous galaxies.

Going further down the corporate table, one would find three rings officers like Goa, who usually brought a large team along but also could choose to work alone. They also had the authority to assemble a team temporarily.

Han Xiao had become an ally of Sky Ring earliest, and now, Blades and Purple Gold also saw Black Star's potential, so they took the initiative to invite him. Large armies like these would only be the one initiating a partnership when they valued someone heavily.

One more large army partner meant more opportunities for missions. Han Xiao agreed and signed the contract.

The Blades and Purple Gold mercenaries immediately looked at him in a friendlier way—a partner was half as good as one of their own.

Sky Ring, Blades, and Purple Gold were the most renowned armies in their Star Cluster. Becoming their partner was a very rare opportunity. Many normal mercenary groups would not even have the chance to request a partnership with just one of them, yet Han Xiao was a partner to all three of them.

After the rewards were given out, the Silvers boarded the spaceship and slowly took off.

The mercenaries were getting ready to leave as well. Goa found Han Xiao and asked, "Where are you planning to go?"

Han Xiao pondered and said, "Colton Star Cluster Star Zone One, Godora Colonized Planet. 'Golden Palace'."

The players were surprised when they heard.

“Black Phantom, are we not going back to Juberly Hub?” a player asked.

“Not yet, we have other things to do... Also, call me Black Star.” Many players were used to calling him by his previous moniker and found it hard to adjust. Han Xiao made an effort to make sure they called him by the correct name. Since they were already in space, his nickname would, of course, have to keep up with the times.

“What are you going to Golden Palace for?” Herlous asked curiously.

“To find someone.” Han Xiao did not explain it clearly. The others did not ask too much—they just had to follow their captain.

He was not planning to return to Juberly Hub for the time being. The Secret Message Bead was a hot potato, and he wanted to identify it first. Fortunately, it just so happened that he knew that a top-notch Godoran Mage was secluded in Golden Palace, who was good at analyzing magic patterns and charged a fee to identify unknown magic items for customers. That person was like a functional item identifying NPC in the eyes of the players.

“Let us send you there then,” Goa said.

If it was someone else, Sky Ring would have sent them to a public planet at most and not sent them straight to the destination like Han Xiao.

Han Xiao boarded Sky Ring’s spaceship. He felt the spaceship vibrate and slowly take off. The ground shrunk in his eyes.

He moved to the bow of the spaceship and looked out the window. The two spaceships of Blades and Purple Gold were taking off at the same time beside them.

Very soon, they rose thousands of meters above and were about to leave the atmosphere of this planet, entering the dark space.

The Silvers had taken off earlier than them, so they were already in space and were very far away. They could barely be seen.

At this moment, an enormous and thick laser beam suddenly penetrated the Silver spaceship. The next moment, the Silver spaceship turned into a firework in space.

Everyone saw the explosion, but no sound reached them through the vacuum. The Silvers who were just inviting them to their home not long ago were now all turned into ash, dying silently.

There was no sound in outer space—death seemed like a small matter.

It was deadly silent outside, but it was loud inside the spaceship.

“What’s going on? Who attacked the Silvers?”

The Sky Ring mercenaries were stunned.

This time, space ripples appeared. A large and black DarkStar mothership deactivated its stealth mode, many small battleships detached from the mothership and approached quickly like black locusts. Their targets were the three mercenary spaceships.

All the people who might have seen the Secret Message Bead were captured, and DarkStar had yet to find the bead. The mercenaries were the last target—the possibility of it being with them was the highest. However, DarkStar did not know whose hands it was in, so they decided to target all the mercenaries.

After Ember's failure, DarkStar ordered Sarota's fleet to come to the planet where the Silver employer was and capture all the mercenaries ruthlessly.

Inside the Secret Message Bead was something that DarkStar had spent a hundred million Enas to buy, a key item for them to deal with Godora's plans. There was no way they were going to give it up.

"DarkStar?"

Everyone was shocked when they recognized the renowned DarkStar Mothership.

*We were never involved with DarkStar, why are they attacking us? Furthermore, they are sending an entire fleet for just three spaceships, what sort of vendetta is this?*

"Stop dazing about, turn back!" Han Xiao yelled, reminding the dumbfounded pilot. The spaceship made a sharp turn and dived toward the ground, and the other two spaceships followed.

Ohmm!

The sharp turn made the spaceship tremble, and many people could not maintain balance and almost fell.

An entire DarkStar fleet surrounded this planet. The difference in the number of spaceships and combat power was too huge, so the mercenaries had no chance to break through the siege. Once they entered space, without any obstructions, they would be destroyed by focus fire in no time. They could not escape the siege, as they would be stopped before they could enter the jumping state, which meant they had nowhere to run.

The only way out was to call for backup and stall for time inside the atmosphere. The chance of survival was low, but it was better than certain death.

Han Xiao was frowning. DarkStar's persistence and decisiveness were beyond his expectations—they were not going to give up on even the slightest possibility, which proved what he thought earlier. The more value the Secret Message Bead had, the higher the risk was.

*What a coincidence, the Secret Message Bead is really in my hands. They don't even know it.*

This was not even a battle; it was like a hunter chasing after prey. The small spaceships of the mercenaries were absolutely no match for the DarkStar fleet. The only good news was that DarkStar did not fire immediately—it seemed like they wanted to capture them alive. This made the mercenaries feel a little more at ease, with there at least being a chance to negotiate.

“This is the most dangerous situation I have ever met!” Han Xiao felt his heart was beating very fast. Not only was he not panicking, but he was excited.

“Chance of getting out unharmed is less than ten percent. Now, this is interesting...”

He licked his lips, and excitement flashed in his eyes.

Those that were faced with imminent death either became terrified of death or fearless. He happened to be the latter. After experiencing countless dangers and even dying once, he had surpassed fear long ago.

### **Chapter 393: Power of the Experienced**

During the process of the spaceship diving down, the pilot sent out a distress signal to the area channel, and invisible waves spread out in space. The area channel was like the public channel for players—all the spaceships passing by the area were able to receive it.

“This is Fawn Galaxy, the territory of Holy Stone Civilization and Black Raven Civilization. Friction occurs very often due to territory boundaries. These two large civilizations always have people stationed nearby, and they have set up very strong signal receivers that are sensitive to all sorts of waves. The Fawn Galaxy radiation is always operating at high output, which means that this area is like a bright spot in both of their detectors. If DarkStar activated a signal disruptor, there would be an obvious area with shade out of nowhere. Holy Stone Civilization and Black Raven Civilization would think its each other’s forces, they would definitely send people over,” Goa explained. “Therefore, I’m fifty percent sure that DarkStar is not disrupting the signal.”

Buzz!

Communication requests from Porter and Cerleni appeared on the screen, discussing their strategies anxiously. They had sent out a distress signal as well, but Cerleni was very pessimistic. “Even if someone receives our signal, the problem is, who dares to come? DarkStar is the one attacking us after all. Holy Stone and Black Raven might come to just watch and guard against DarkStar in case they have other motives, or they might not be willing to waste their military power to help us, a group of irrelevant mercenaries. Unlike Godora, who have so much hatred toward DarkStar, Holy Stone and Black Raven might not want to mess with DarkStar.

The three of them looked at their superiors, and the superiors nodded firmly.

“We have already contacted the commander; he will come to save us. He’s sending emergency dispatch orders to the nearby teams. We fear DarkStar, but we definitely will not let them do whatever they want, and we will certainly not give up on our own people. The commander is currently assembling a fleet and sending out messages to all partners. We have to protect ourselves. Stall for time—there will definitely be someone here to save us.”

All the mercenaries were instantly motivated, and a sense of honor rose in their hearts as firmness and hope appeared on their faces.

“Large armies really are different—they’re very united.” Han Xiao was envious. There were definitely some things that large armies did right after being created for so many years. Although they were all mercenaries that valued rewards, given that they could unite strong forces from everywhere showed that they knew how to build a sense of belonging. Although many members knew about this, they could not deny that they enjoyed it. After all, being in an organization that did not give up on its members was one thing that bonded them together in this cold universe.

DarkStar was known to be fearsome, but Sky Ring, Blades, and Purple Gold were not some organizations that they could easily mess with. Other than their own forces, they also had a very complicated network in the mercenary industry. They had many partners, and they were all very strong individuals or organizations. It was not simply three large armies that DarkStar messed with—it was half of the entire mercenary industry throughout the three nearest Star Clusters!

In other words, DarkStar was used to being unbridled, but this time, they stabbed the hornet’s nest.

However, a distant water source could not put out a nearby fire immediately.

Han Xiao took out the unidirectional communicator that Jenny had given him. He calmed his mind and sent the request.

The mercenaries called for backup, and he also requested help from his cheap boss. He was not putting all his hope on the three armies.

“Didn’t expect to use it this soon...”

Ding.

Ames appeared on the screen. Han Xiao saw the environment Ames was in—a palace filled with a sense of magic, built with obsidian, white crystal, Mithril, fine gold, jade, and precious stones, like a piece of jewelry enlarged thousands of times. Mysterious magic patterns hovered in the air, colorful and bright. Many translucent magic dragons swam happily in the air. Ames was sitting in front of a small hovering table, and on it were all sorts of unique and rare foods. Sitting opposite her was... a kid in a red and white magic cape. He looked about six to seven years old, with sharp ears, white and tender skin, and a cute round face. The cape on him was like a blanket—it did not fit at all. The cape was long, but the kid was short, so it was almost burying him.

Han Xiao’s mouth twitched. This little kid was another beyond grade A being of the Shattered Star Ring, a Mage whose race was a long-lived species that looked like humans on the outside, but his real age was hundreds or maybe even a thousand years old. Also, he was a fighting opponent of Ames’. More accurately, Ames was there as a guest. The four beyond grade A beings in the Shattered Star Ring knew each other. Fighting was just to kill time, and once they were tired from fighting, they would sit down to rest and have a meal together in a very peaceful manner... Han Xiao just pitied that small planet.

Ames’ eyebrow raised a little. “It’s you, my new subordinate.”

“... Did you forget my name?”

Ames swiped the communicator like she was looking for something. One second later, she said with a very natural tone, “Black Star, what is the reason for you contacting me? Have you found the whereabouts of my teacher?”

She emphasized Han Xiao's name like she was trying to say that she did not forget.

Han Xiao shook his head and said, "The aircraft I'm currently in is attacked by DarkStar. The situation is dire, so I'm here to ask you for help."

"Why did DarkStar attack you?" Ames asked curiously.

Han Xiao coughed.

"A few days ago, DarkStar caused trouble on Floating Dragon while you were not there. It seems like they were up to something. Coincidentally, I happened to disrupt their plan. This attack should be an act of revenge."

Ames tilted her head. She recalled Jenny's report. Now that DarkStar was mentioned, she seemed to have some kind of beef with DarkStar, and she had even been planning to find trouble with them earlier.

"Alright, wait there, I'll go when I'm free," Ames said with a casual tone, then hung up the communication.

Han Xiao was speechless. Ames' attitude was carefree, so he had no way to force her to come immediately. He was not strong enough, so he could only seek help from someone stronger.

You have triggered an urgent mission [Escape]!

Mission Introduction: Start running.

Mission requirement: Escape DarkStar's pursuit and stall till backup arrives.

Reward: Basic reward 800,000 experience. The final reward depends on mission rating. The basic reward is given when achieving the lowest rating, D. After lasting for 2 days, the mission rating will reach D. The rating will increase by one level every 12 hours thereafter.

Failure Condition: Captured by DarkStar.

Han Xiao looked around at the players and realized that their faces changed a little—they had probably triggered the mission as well.

This time, the reward for the players was exactly the same as Han Xiao, so all the players were shocked!

800,000 experience!

Han Xiao was long used to it; it was not much for him. However, to the players, this was the highest reward that they had ever seen in a mission!

Shock, joy, surprise—various expressions appeared on the players' faces.

Han Xiao analyzed the information that he read between the lines of the mission. *The lowest rating requires me to last for two days. This should mean the earliest backup will only arrive after two days. Which means that we need to fight alone for two days...*

He was instantly troubled. They might not even last two hours, let alone two days.

This time, the aircraft finally returned to the ground and flew at a low altitude. This desolated planet was almost completely empty. It had no forests and no signs of life, and it was filled with stones and mountains. The only good thing about it was that its terrain was vicious enough. The three aircrafts took the same approach—stall for as much time as possible by using the obstacles in the terrain.

Boom boom boom!

Hundreds of mini DarkStar hovering ships were in pursuit, firing green colored low-energy laser cannons from above, chasing after three spaceships, and creating clusters of dust on the ground. The sound of explosions was nonstop, and the spaceships' shields were flashing from the impact.

DarkStar wanted to capture them alive. They did not want to destroy the spaceships as it would destroy the Secret Message Bead that might be in the hands of one of them. So, they sent out mini hovering ships that were less than ten meters long. The mini laser cannons had very low power too, good for damaging yet not destroying. Using speed and mobility, they would force the mercenaries to give up their spaceships.

“Split up!”

The three spaceships dashed past a black and gray colored menacing mountain, then suddenly split up and escaped in three different directions. Green lasers hit the mountain. With a loud bang, its peak broke and rolled down its hill, stirring up a cloud of thick dust. The hovering ships split into three groups as well, chasing after the spaceships.

The Sky Ring spaceship that Han Xiao was on was being chased by about a hundred hovering ships. However, unluckily, the direction that they turned toward was a plain land without any obstacles.

“This is bad!” Their faces changed.

The pilot was covered in sweat, trying his best to control the spaceship and dodge the attacks. The dust created by the green lights was like a fountain. The spaceship was able to dodge some lasers, but it was getting hit more often than when the three spaceships were together. The shield was flashing rapidly.

“Warning! Warning! Sixty-seven percent energy left in shield! Energy level entered the yellow warning zone! Please refill in time!”

“Energy core close to overload! Please cool down in time!”

A string of warnings was announced, like a hammer hitting their hearts.

The pilot's face was pale.

Suddenly, they saw Han Xiao walk out of the crowd. He walked to the pilot's side, pressed on his shoulder, and said in a confident tone, “Stand up, give me the seat.”

The face of all the mercenaries in the spaceship changed. *Changing pilot during the fight, are you sure?*

Goa stared at Han Xiao and said, "This concerns the life or death of everyone here, do you know what you're doing?"

Han Xiao nodded and said, "If he continues piloting, the chance of crashing is ninety-nine percent. If I do, it's only thirty-percent."

"You!" The pilot was outraged.

Goa stared at Han Xiao for a full two seconds, then nodded and said, "Okay, you do it."

The Sky Ring mercenaries were shocked. Even though they knew Han Xiao's capabilities, piloting a spaceship was completely different from fighting. In such urgent situations, no one would be willing to entrust their fate to someone whose pilot skill was unknown.

"If we carry on this way, in less than an hour, our ship would crash. Let him try," Goa explained.

Although the pilot knew that this was a fact, he was unwilling to let someone else control his fate. After the expression on his face changed several times, he finally gave the position to Han Xiao.

Han Xiao took over the pilot position immediately. This time, Goa walked to him and said in a very serious tone, "Black Star, our lives are in your hands... You must—must—be careful about this."

At this moment, the mercenaries could only place their hopes on Han Xiao. Quite a number of mercenaries actually knew how to pilot a spaceship, but no one was confident that they could do it better than the previous pilot, nor did they have the guts to take on this responsibility, worrying that their mistake might kill everyone. This was a very large amount of pressure, and no one dared do it. Now that Han Xiao had stepped forward at this crucial moment, they could only hope that he was dependable.

"Black Star, you know how to pilot spaceships?" Herlous said with surprise.

"I know many things. Do you know me very well?"

Han Xiao adjusted the control panels casually and easily.

*Piloting a spaceship is nothing; I used to pilot mechanical suits!*

*Like the difference between a passenger aircraft pilot and a fighter plane pilot, one requires safety and stability, and the other requires complexity. The difficulty of piloting a mechanical suit was much higher than a fighter plane.*

Han Xiao was someone who had honed his pilot skills killing other players in the galactic battlefields! Even in the entire universe, he was a top-notch ace pilot!

They suddenly heard an announcement from the system.

"Adjustment complete. Shield output decreased to 20%..."

"Have you lost your mind?" the pilot yelled uncontrollably.

Everyone was shocked. Han Xiao weakened the shield as soon as he took over. The spaceship's defensive capability was largely decreased. If they got hit by attacks like earlier, the body of the spaceship would be damaged.

Was that reminder all for nothing?

Goa was filled with regret. Just as he was about to yell, another announcement sounded from the system.

"All energy is being directed into the engine... complete."

Han Xiao turned his head back a little and gave the people behind him a reminder.

"Hold tight."

The next moment, the sudden explosive recoil tore straight through the internal gravitational stabilization of the spaceship—everyone staggered and fell down in unison.

The yelling that was just about to come out of Goa's mouth fell right back down his throat!

#### **Chapter 394: Speed and Motion Sickness**

On a desolate, unpopulated planet, a chase was underway on its gray plains.

Almost a hundred hovering ships were chasing after the Sky Ring spaceship. The Sky Ring spaceship's exhaust flames expanded violently in an instant. The sudden increase of speed was like a tornado that stirred up countless dust from the floor.

Hum!

Dashing at a low altitude, the head of the boat was covered in dust, like a high-speed triangular speedboat dashing across the ocean.

Boom!

The hovering ships hastily increased their speed as well, but they could barely keep up with the Sky Ring spaceship. Many hovering ships' accuracy decreased noticeably because of the angles, and their attacks missed much more often.

The spaceship was trembling like it would crash at any moment, but everyone felt the visible change. Although it felt more dangerous, the number of times that the spaceship got hit decreased drastically. The high mobility largely enhanced the ship's ability to dodge. The weakened shield was just strong enough to endure these attacks. Han Xiao's piloting skills were horrifying.

By increasing the power of the engine, the difficulty in piloting would increase as well. Yet, As compared to the previous pilot, everyone could directly feel the difference when Han Xiao took over. It was like the spaceship became 'alive'! It felt like the spaceship became an extension of Han Xiao's body.

The gravity in the spaceship was finally calibrated. The people stood up one after another, and their doubts all disappeared.

They were overjoyed by Black Star, who took on such crucial responsibility in the current dire situation. Anything that could better the situation was a pleasant surprise. They never expected Black Star to have this up his sleeves.

“Fantastic!” Goa’s tone changed instantly. A glimpse of a smile appeared on her expressionless face. “At this pace, the damage dealt by the hovering ships will be minimal. You did very well!”

“What?” Han Xiao was confused. “This is just basic controlling. I have not done anything yet.”

The higher the speed, the better his controls. He was far from his limit at the current speed.

Sadly, if he increases the speed further, the shield would be too thin. He was worried that he might be rusty after not piloting a battleship for so long. Maintaining the current shield thickness was a safer choice for him.

However, in the mercenaries’ eyes, the shield’s thickness was already horrifyingly thin, yet Black Star said that this was just his basic controls?

What was he going to do then?

A bad feeling arose in everyone’s heart.

Han Xiao stretched his wrist and said, “Hold on tight.”

With the lesson of falling right on the floor earlier, no one ignored his reminder this time. They held onto anything that they could as soon as possible. Their faces were filled with nervousness.

Hum!

In an instant, the Sky Ring spaceship started to drift, like a raging horse trying to get rid of the rider on its back!

All kinds of tricks were interjoined smoothly—lateral rollover, roller coaster, Z-maneuver, and so on. The spaceship had still been flying in a straight line just one second ago, and now it was completely random!

The hovering ship fleet was already having a hard time following, and now that Han Xiao was moving this way, their formation became broken immediately. Many hovering ships blocked the shooting range of the fleet behind them. Their laser fire became sparser, and the threat level of the attack decreased largely again.

Everyone felt like they were in a can that was being shaken violently. For the first time, they felt inertia that pulled them in all directions. Their stomach acid was rushing up, their brain juice was vibrating, and their faces were pale white. Their vision started to blur, and the surrounding environment and people started to have mirror images.

After piloting spaceships for so many years, the pilot felt like he was back to when he first started learning. The dizziness was like an old friend that he had not met for a long time. He could almost see his pilot teacher waving at him with a smile on his face.

Han Xiao could still divert his attention and said, “That pilot, come and control the weapon. If we keep running and don’t fire back at all, it will be the end of us sooner or later. Fire when you see a chance.”

The pilot hastily followed the order and sat in the weapon operating seat. Compared to Black Star, his piloting skills became completely ordinary. The resentfulness before completely disappeared—he was now only scared that he might burden Han Xiao.

“On my count—five, four, three...”

Han Xiao stared at the screen, then did one more drift that messed up the formation of the hovering ships, creating a split-second opportunity to fly straight up.

Hu!

The trembling came once again!

Even if the people expected it, their legs still softened, and they almost fell.

The spaceship flew in a ‘U’ shape, flying from close to the ground right to above the hovering ship fleet, dashing back in the opposite direction.

“Fire!”

The pilot fired immediately. The cannon shot out from the Sky Ring spaceship. There was no need to aim—it was an attack fired at the dense part of the formation.

Boom boom boom!

Shield lit up on a few leading hovering ships as they were forced to stop for a moment. The fleet behind bumped into them straight away, causing chain reactions like dominos. The entire fleet in front became a mess, rolling across the sky.

The hovering ships were not that fragile, so they did not crash.

Han Xiao only stayed in this position for less than three seconds. Before the fleet could adjust, he made a sharp turn and escaped to the side. Its movement was as smooth as silk.

On the other hand, the chasing fleet took a few seconds to adjust before catching up. Although no battleship crashed, Han Xiao largely increased the distance between them.

“Not bad.” Han Xiao smiled and gave the pilot a thumbs up.

The pilot smiled brightly back at him, as vomit flew down right between his teeth.

The difficulty of these few movements was very high. Yet, no one in the ship showed any sign of being shocked. They did not even have the strength to be surprised—their legs were shaking, and their heads were spinning.

These movements had successfully given all of his teammates a debuff.

Goa opened her mouth, forcing herself to try to give a few words of compliment, but instead covered her mouth in an instant. The muscles in her neck could be seen clearly to have moved up and down, only then did she dare put her hand down.

Aroshia shook left and right, then sat down on the floor, unable to stand up. She said with confusion, “What’s happening to me?”

Herlous was breathing heavily, and he almost suffocated like a fish out of water. The mercenaries around were all trembling. Luckily, Herlous' body was strong enough, so he could still hang on. He turned around and was shocked to see that the players were very calm. "Are you people feeling fine?"

The players smiled cheekily. As short as three seconds after Han Xiao took over the spaceship, they realized the danger and immediately decreased their physical senses to five percent. Therefore, although they had the [Heavily Dizzy] status on their character, so they were still feeling very refreshed!

"I thought we just entered a time and space tunnel."

"This piloting skill is absolutely horrifying!"

"I have seen Fast and Furious; this is fast and dizzy."

The players still had the strength to discuss what was happening.

With no time to be bothered about everyone's reactions, Han Xiao started to think of the plan.

"Just piloting the spaceship will not last us two days. The DarkStar fleet will not make no changes. When they realize that the hovering ship fleet cannot deal with us, they will definitely use more aggressive methods. I can only play with the hovering ship fleet for two hours at most. After that, the danger level is going to rise step by step."

He planned ahead. After all, stalling for two days was not an easy task at all.

The others did not know DarkStar's motive, only Han Xiao did. DarkStar had come for the Secret Message Bead. Therefore, DarkStar would not be willing to miss out on even one person.

A few plans flashed in his head before Han Xiao said, "It's not going to work out like this. We can't stay on the surface. I have a plan..."

As soon as he said this, the expression on everyone's face became as tragic as a prisoner on their way to the execution ground.

"Anyt... Anything you say. We trust you," Goa said.

Despite it clearly being an encouragement, there was no sound of joy in it at all. Instead, her voice was trembling a little.

...

In the command hall of the DarkStar mothership, the image feedback from the hovering ships was shown on the screen. The captain, Sarota, was watching it with hands behind his back.

Ten minutes passed after the battle started. The spaceships of Blades and Purple Gold were clearly struggling—only Han Xiao was doing slightly better. This attracted Sarota's attention right away. He pointed at the screen and asked, "Which mercenary group does this spaceship belong to?"

"The Sky Ring Army."

Sarota nodded and said, "They have quite a good pilot. Looks like we need to spend more time. By the way, that Black Star is apparently on the Sky Ring ship as well, isn't he?"

The last question was directed toward the corner of the hall.

In the corner, Ember was standing against the wall with a cold and indifferent face. When he heard Han Xiao's name, his eyes swayed slightly. He had a very strong impression of Han Xiao since his last defeat.

Oom!

At this time, the alarm suddenly sounded.

"Captain, space ripple detected. There are fleets jumping toward this direction."

Sarota was not surprised at all. He brought up the detection image, showing that a large battleship fleet was jumping toward this direction from far away at both sides of the mothership. Both of them were in a guard formation. DarkStar was in the middle.

The two fleets were the Border Guards Army of Holy Stone Civilization and Black Raven Civilization. Their style of the battleships was very different—one side was semi-circle shaped and thick, and the other was streamlined and thin. The metal fortresses were very intimidating.

As soon as the DarkStar mothership showed up, it was noticed by the Border Guards Army. Holy Stone and Black Star immediately sent out a fleet to make a field investigation. They did not act immediately once they saw DarkStar. Instead, they stayed still and watched from afar.

"Is there a need to do anything?" an assistant asked.

"Send out a message. Tell them we are just passing by to settle our business, and we will be leaving very soon. They will not attack us," Sarota said calmly. He was not concerned at all like everything was under his control.

### **Chapter 395: The Battle of Pursuit (1)**

The ownership of this area has always been blurry. If DarkStar showed up in the official territory of these two civilizations, they would definitely be warned and evicted. However, due to the sensitivity of this area, the two fleets did not make a move.

In the Holy Stone Border Guards Army, command ship of the third formation, Stream Light.

The atmosphere was filled with nervousness. DarkStar's fearsome name was well known, and they had quite the tension with Black Raven. The captain of the Third Formation, Shivate, said with a very serious face, "All units on level one alert, hold the position."

At this time, Stream Light received a message from the DarkStar mothership. Sarota expressed their motive, emphasizing the fact that they meant no offense to Holy Stone and Black Raven. They were just carrying out a pursuit, of which the targets were some mercenaries. Once the mission was completed, they would leave immediately.

Shivate's tightened face relaxed a little, and without thinking, he said, "Tell them that it's possible for Holy Stone to not interfere with DarkStar's operation, but during this period, no suspicious action will be allowed. We will be monitoring from here, and we hope they leave as soon as possible."

Shivate did not want a war to break out. There were many reasons. The first would of course be, they did not want to mess with DarkStar. The entire Shattered Star Ring knew the ugly history between DarkStar and Godora, no one wanted to be part of it. The most horrifying characteristic of DarkStar was that they were very stealthy. If they lost the battle, they would still be able to run away, and the revenge afterward would make you suffer a large loss. Secondly, if they fire, it might very likely cause Black Raven to misunderstand, which would then turn into a scrimmage, leading to a territory conflict. If he was determined guilty of deliberately starting a war in the court martial, the punishment for that was very heavy.

Due to the territorial conflicts, there had always been some tension between these two civilizations. The Holy Stone Civilization was an aristocracy civilization, ruled by a royal family. Its political construction was very complicated, and its efficiency in making decisions was mediocre. They did not like wars, and they were good at using diplomatic measures. Be it resources, connections, or power, Holy Stone Civilization was a little higher than Black Raven Civilization. However, as Black Raven Civilization had limited resources in their early days, their developing process was very tough, which made them have very strong minds and become collectivists. Their efficiency in executing matters was very high. Even though their nation was not as strong as Holy Stone, Holy Stone could not find a way to get rid of them. If they started a large-scale war, both sides would definitely suffer a huge loss. Therefore, both sides controlled the scale of their conflicts.

Hence, DarkStar was not the only thing Shivate feared—he was more afraid to cause a misunderstanding.

The most important reason that made Shivate decide to sit on the sidelines was that DarkStar's target was just a bunch of mercenaries; they were just passersby that did not matter at all. Unless it was the people from their own civilization, these two armies would not make a huge move for it. Seeing that Black Raven's army also held their position, Shivate knew that the captain of Black Raven had made the same decision—sit on the sidelines and monitor.

After all, to two civilizations, the life and death of these mercenaries were not their concern. Like a droplet of water in the sea, it did not matter.

Therefore, the fleets that rushed there were watching silently. Shivate waved his hands and told his subordinate to check the escaping target on the planet.

"I see, they're members of the three large mercenary armies. Their background is rather impressive. Sadly, they met DarkStar."

After reading the report, Shivate was a little bit surprised. He then shook his head and said, "The sooner they're caught, the better. Then DarkStar can leave earlier..."

From the perspective of his own benefits, he would prefer the mercenaries stop resisting.

The same scene also played out in Black Raven Civilization's command ship.

On the other side, the DarkStar mothership received the replies. Sarota's face remained the same as if it was exactly as he expected. He knew both sides would not attack.

...

On another area of the planet, the Blades spaceship was being chased by many hovering ships. They were struggling—its shield already had countless holes, and its recovery speed could not match up to the speed of it being destroyed. The rapid system alarms had the Blades mercenaries on edge.

"Faster, even faster," Porter mumbled with sweat all over his face. When the situation was not looking good, he pushed away the original pilot to control the spaceship himself. Yet, the situation did not become better.

Suddenly, a laser exploded on the shield.

Bang!

The shield blinked twice and disappeared. It had reached its limit.

Everyone in the ship was stunned. Porter's face changed drastically.

Without a shield, the spaceship itself would not have any protection anymore. If they were fired on once again, the spaceship would definitely crash.

Boom!

Just as the hovering ship fleet was going to fire the next downpour of 'laser rain', a chain of cannons hit the formation and caused a series of explosions.

This hovering ship did not have the time to react to it fully, and they hastily dodged. The accuracy of the attacks all missed the Blades spaceship by centimeters.

Faraway, the Sky Ring spaceship drove there at a high speed. Behind him was the pursuing fleet. It was Han Xiao, who had returned after a detour and saved his teammates hastily. The pursuing fleet did not give him any pressure at all, and they were going around and around chasing after him. Therefore, Han Xiao tried to help his teammates as much as he could.

The existence of teammates could divert the enemy's firepower. The longer the teammates lasted, the less pressure he would face.

Han Xiao stopped the enemy for one moment before turning around and escaping immediately. The shield of the Blades spaceship took the opportunity to recover. Porter almost collapsed, and his face was filled with happiness. "That was close."

This time, Han Xiao sent a message to the other two ships. "Don't run around randomly; you guys can't deal with them yourselves. I've sent you the route. Even if you split up, don't stay too far from me. I'll provide support from time to time."

"Why did you become the pilot?" Porter asked with surprise.

"We all feel safer with him being the pilot." Goa's voice came from the side. Porter looked over, only to see all the mercenaries in the Sky Ring spaceship were encased in hard ice from the waist down and

firmly fixed onto the ground like ice sculptures. It was Goa that used her spell to help everyone to balance. Porter was shocked.

*You don't look like you feel safe at all!*

Porter's eyelids twitched.

Anyway, Han Xiao's suggestion was approved. Blades and Purple Gold's teams agreed to follow Han Xiao's plan. They quickly changed their route and maintained communication between them. As soon as they got into a dire situation, Han Xiao would provide backup.

After helping them out in dire situations time after time, the members of the other ships also realized how good Han Xiao's piloting skills were. They were immediately convinced.

Han Xiao stabilized the situation temporarily. Three ships brought hundreds of hovering ships and ran around the planets. Half an hour passed, and the hovering ship fleet had yet to capture them. They were in a stalemate.

On the DarkStar mothership, Sarota was getting impatient.

"More than three hundred hovering ships against just three ships. Why have we yet to capture them?"

The initial plan was to be done with the battle within ten minutes then retreat quickly after. Sarota was very unsatisfied with the current situation. He stared at the Sky Ring spaceship on his screen with unhappiness in his eyes.

"It's all because the pilot of this ship is too good, that's why they're able to stall this much time... Send out medium fighter ships. Surround this area and cut off their escape route."

As he gave the order, more fighter ships launched from the DarkStar mothership and flew toward the planet.

Inside the far away Stream Light, Shivate saw this and was a little surprised.

"Facing DarkStar's pursuit and being trapped on the planet, not only were these three small spaceships stall for half an hour, they even forced DarkStar to send in more support..."

"But if this continues, it will drag on even longer..."

...

Through the porthole, the people in the Sky Ring spaceship saw more fighter ships coming toward the surface from the DarkStar mothership.

"Sh\*t, DarkStar sent reinforcements!" the ex-pilot shouted.

"We knew they would sooner or later; don't sound so surprised."

Han Xiao glanced outside. He had expected this since long ago.

*It's only half an hour, and they have already sent reinforcements. DarkStar changed their tactic quicker than I expected. In gaming terms, this means that the pace of this mission's difficulty change is very fast. How am I going to stall for two days like this?*Han Xiao thought.

Although it looked like they were safe at the moment, they were still dancing on blades. When DarkStar lost their patience completely, they would not care about the resource expenses. They might surround them, and by then, there would be nowhere to escape. After all, piloting skills had a limit. He was only flying a small spaceship, not a galactic level mechanical suit.

After some contemplation, Han Xiao decided to carry out the next part of the plan. At this time, all three ships received the same message.

“This is Holy Stone Border Guards Army Third Formation. We have received your rescue signal and have arrived near the planet. Please gather at the coordinates we gave you; we will be there to receive you and provide protection.”

Together with this message were the coordinates, which were not far from where they were. This message was like cardiogenic, instantly giving everyone energy.

“Holy Stone is willing to help. We're saved.”

All the mercenaries in the three ships were overjoyed.

Han Xiao frowned and pondered, then said something that immediately cooled everyone down, “I think this is quite strange...”

### **Chapter 396: The Battle of Pursuit (2)**

“If the Holy Stone Border Guards Army wants to receive us, they would definitely be in conflict with DarkStar, but take a look up there. The DarkStar mothership is still floating there and not sending out any other ships. Furthermore, this is a very sensitive border area, so it's impossible for Holy Stone and Black Raven to take very long to come. This means that they've made a certain deal with DarkStar. This is the edge of their border, so the official authority here is blurry to begin with. They did not provide any help even when the Silvers were kidnapped. Now they suddenly want to help us? It doesn't feel trustworthy.”

Han Xiao paused and said, “But of course, there's a chance that Holy Stone did not compromise with DarkStar and really wants to protect us. However... this is very unlikely.”

He did not mention the most important reason—the mission requirement stated that they had to last two days for just the lowest rating, but only half an hour had passed. The reinforcements could not have arrived so soon. His intuition told him that there was a problem with Holy Stone's message.

Many people started to rethink, but they still hoped that they had gotten lucky.

This time, there was a disagreement. Cerleni said in a low voice, “I choose to believe this message. Holy Stone has no need to lie to us, and this might be our only chance. I've decided to go to the pickup location. What about you?”

“I’m not going.” Han Xiao shook his head without hesitation and then looked over to Goa. Goa hesitated for a while, then nodded and agreed with Han Xiao’s decision. Although there were some mercenaries in the ship that had other thoughts, seeing that Goa and Han Xiao had both decided, they could only hold their thoughts in.

Porter hesitated for a moment, then rejected it as well, choosing to listen to Han Xiao’s advice.

Cerleni frowned and said, “Best of luck to you guys then.”

The Purple Gold spaceship deviated from the route and headed toward the pickup location, disappearing from sight shortly.

Han Xiao exhaled and said with a deep voice, “DarkStar’s reinforcements will arrive very soon, and our activity area will become smaller and smaller. If we continue to stay on the surface, the situation will only become worse. We have to go underground. The scanner has already recorded all the terrain we have passed by, and there’s quite a number of canyons and gaps in the terrain. The space below the ground on this planet is very huge. Plus, it has a complicated environment and many obstacles. Limited moving space will give us some trouble, but it will give those chasing us trouble too. Furthermore, the ground and block the direct detection from their mothership, providing us another layer of protection...”

He had a rough plan of what to do next. The situation was not pleasant. The reinforcement was just DarkStar’s first step, they would soon be limiting their movement areas, surrounding them, bombarding the area, and so on, forcing them to change the route. Han Xiao pondered and pondered, and eventually, he realized that in order for them to last two days, there was only one workable way—spread out.

DarkStar’s target was all the mercenaries, and two spaceships were only two targets. However, if they spread out in an undetectable environment, every mercenary would be a target. Although there would definitely be unlucky ones that might be sacrificed, it would also make DarkStar spend more time searching. After all, wishing to save everyone was not realistic.

“Let’s do as you say.” Goa trusted Han Xiao a lot.

Han Xiao changed the direction of the spaceship and looked forward. Very soon, a very long gap in earth appeared on the horizon, like the gray colored earth opening its mouth, black as an abyss. From far away, it looked like just a small gap, and only when they got closer did they realize that it was tens of meters wide.

Hu!

The Sky Ring spaceship dived straight into the gap, and darkness filled their vision.

The detector sketched out the terrain in the darkness. About two to three hundred meters down, numerous caves appeared on both sides. Han Xiao chose a cave and flew in. Inside was an underground space, leading to somewhere far away.

There was a very large space under the ground of this planet. It had complex tunnels and was filled with storage stones. It had been undisturbed for countless years, and now, its first guest had arrived.

The Blades spaceship did the same, and the hovering ship fleet followed behind. Unavoidably, their speed decreased. Flying in this kind of environment required a very high reaction speed, plus space was limited, so the formation of the hovering ships had to turn into a long snake shape. Due to space restraints, ninety percent of the fighter ships were blocked by their teammates in front and unable to fire. The attack faced by the Blades and Sky Ring spaceships significantly lessened.

The two ships flew underground just in time, escaping from DarkStar's plan to surround them on the surface.

The Purple Gold spaceship was still on the surface, and it arrived at the pickup location.

Cerleni sent a communication request to the channel that they had received the message from.

"Holy Stone Third Formation please come in. I have arrived at the pickup location. Where are the receiving units?"

He repeated that again and again, but Holy Stone did not reply and kept silent. His expression gradually changed, and he started to sweat all over.

The Purple Gold spaceship did not dare stop. It circled around the pickup location like a headless fly. When the DarkStar reinforcements came from all directions, Cerleni's face turned pale. Only then did he realize that there was no one there to pick them up. Black Star was right. He had lost the gamble.

Boom boom boom!

Bullets rained down!

Not long after, the Purple Gold spaceship crashed onto the ground covered in smoke. The gate opened, and the mercenaries inside sprinted out in all directions. However, the DarkStar warriors landed from the fighter ships hovering in the sky and surrounded them. There was nowhere to run.

The struggle of Cerleni and the others did not make any impact, so they were captured easily and escorted onto the spaceship to be sent to the mothership.

Everyone in the two ships that were descending underground saw what happened to Purple Gold. Seeing that their friends that had once fought alongside them were in such a dire situation, everyone was grieving.

If not for Han Xiao standing his ground, they would have ended up the same way.

The mercenaries looked at Han Xiao with even more trust in their eyes.

"I did tell them..." Han Xiao sighed.

Cerleni had been willing to take the gamble, and there was nothing Han Xiao could do about it; he could not have taken over the control of Purple Gold spaceship.

However, from a purely pros and cons perspective, this would give them more time. With at least some result, DarkStar would be a little less in a hurry.

...

Inside Stream Light, the scene of Purple Gold's spaceship crashing was being played on the screen. Shivate shook his head and said, "Too bad only one ship was captured."

He was indeed the one that gave the order to send that message. It was to mislead the mercenaries and make it easier for DarkStar to capture them, but it was not because he wanted to help DarkStar. In his eyes, these mercenaries would definitely not be able to escape, and them getting captured was just a matter of time. He only sped up this process. The earlier the mercenaries got captured, the sooner DarkStar would leave.

The armies of Holy Stone and Black Raven were holding their position, and these mercenaries' meaningless struggle was wasting their time, leaving these two civilizations with no choice but to stay there and monitor the situation. This increased their workload and brought along risks. Shivate just wanted DarkStar to go away as soon as possible. Giving out that order was purely for his own benefit.

Furthermore, this could not be considered as interfering, so it was not really counted as helping DarkStar. He had just sent a message—it was not a big deal.

Regarding what plan DarkStar had, he simply did not care. DarkStar had no business with them. No matter what they were up to, Godora would be the only one suffering from it. Holy Stone had no obligation to help Godora get rid of their enemies, and Shivate did not want to stir up a mess.

Sadly, not all the mercenaries were tricked.

"Commander, the target has gone underground. We're unable to see a direct image."

"Continue to hold your position." Shivate shook his head.

They would not be able to see what was going on once these mercenaries enter underground. All they could do was wait.

...

Inside the dark underground, beams of light flashed past. These were all spaceships flying at a high speed.

Boom!

Lasers hit the stone walls and caused a partial rockfall. Quite a number of stones landed on Sky Ring spaceship's shield before being shattered by the spaceships dashing through.

The pursuit underground lasted for a few hours. As space was limited, larger sized fighter ships could not enter. DarkStar could only use the hovering ships to hunt.

The underground space was filled with twists and turns, and it was pitch black. The blurry images from the detector were the only thing that they could depend on to dodge the obstacles. Han Xiao was highly focused and did not bump into anything, but the hovering ships behind him were gradually making more and more mistakes. From time to time, fighter ships crashed into the wall, the pillars, and other things. The contrast was very obvious. The pursuing spaceships gradually lost sight of Han Xiao's backlight.

The Blades spaceship, on the other hand, was not as lucky. They were still being chased tightly. Porter's skill was hard to look at, and the Blades mercenaries almost wished to change ship.

Coincidentally, the Sky Ring people had the same thought.

"Can't see the hovering ships, there are only sounds. They're still chasing." Han Xiao looked behind and said, "After chasing for a few hours, DarkStar's patience should be reaching its limit."

"We're... reaching... our... limits too..."

Herlous was almost prostrated, unable to finish a full sentence without pauses.

He could be considered as being in a good state since at least he could talk. Beside him, the Sky Ring mercenaries lay flat down on the ground like dead pigs. Their eyes were out of focus, streams of white bubbles flew out of their mouths, and their hands and legs were shaking. The ice used to fix their legs had already shattered.

Just as Han Xiao was about to say something, the underground space started to tremble violently!

Boom!

Sounds of explosions came from all directions!

"This is... a bombardment?" Goa said.

"Most likely, DarkStar has started to bombard the surface, hoping to trigger a chain reaction and cause the underground space to collapse, forcing us back to the surface. Like chasing mice out of their cave. Then, they'll surround us on the surface, and we'll have nowhere to run," Han Xiao said calmly. He had expected this to happen, so he could stay calm when it happened.

"Is there nothing we can do?" Goa did not want to give up.

"We've stalled for many hours with the spaceship. It's already the limit."

Han Xiao inhaled deeply and said slowly, "We have to abandon ship."

The people were shocked. The spaceship was the only thing that they could depend on. If they abandoned the spaceship, it would mean they have lost the mobility, and they would really become fish in a barrel.

### **Chapter 397: Arrival of the Fleet**

The people immediately disagreed. How were they going to escape without a spaceship?

"It was never possible to break through DarkStar's army in a spaceship," Han Xiao explained. "The chance to escape has always been close to zero. We only had one choice from the start—stall for time and wait for backup. Abandoning ship and losing ability is obviously disadvantageous, but it will also decrease DarkStar's efficiency.

"Without spaceships, we will be fish in a barrel to DarkStar, and their alertness will further be decreased. Once we spread out underground, DarkStar will stop bombarding the surface. Because

without protection from the spaceship, we will be buried alive if the underground space collapses. What they want is the... ahem, what they want is to capture us alive. Therefore, they'll most probably use the hovering ships and send out troops to search slowly."

This was a risky plan, and the mercenaries exchanged nervous looks.

Although the plan did make sense, the risk of abandoning the spaceship made them hesitant.

"Are you absolutely confident about this?" Goa could not help but voice her doubt.

"What do you think?" Han Xiao shook his head. How could he be one hundred percent confident in this kind of situation? If he was, it would not be called a risky plan.

Staying in the spaceships looked safe, but their chances would be almost negligible. Abandoning the spaceships looked desperate, but it could squeeze out more time and stall them longer.

The bombardment continued, and time waited for no man. Goa and Porter discussed a little, then finally clenched their teeth and agreed with carrying out the plan to abandon the spaceships.

"So," Goa asked, "what is the plan?"

"The plan is..." Han Xiao explained in detail.

...

Boom!

In the sky, dozens of DarkStar bombardment fleets were in a neat formation, dropping bombs down on the surface. Mushroom clouds rose up one after another. Heated wind from the explosions stirred up dust and sand all over the sky, creating countless craters filled with cracks like spider nets.

In the command room of the DarkStar mothership, Sarota was staring at the image of the surface, and his fingers were tapping the table continuously. His impatience was clearly expressed through these small movements.

Since the spaceships escaped underground, a few hours had passed, and they still had yet to make any progress. His patience had run out, so he decided to send out bombardment ships to destroy the planet surface, causing the underground space to collapse and forcing the targets to get out of the twisted narrow underground and come back to the open surface.

He also sent out many medium intercepting ships to form encirclements. As soon as the mercenaries' spaceships appeared on the surface, there would be no more chasing and running—they would be able to capture the spaceships immediately.

"Commander, the interrogation is completed. These captured mercenaries have never seen the Secret Message Bead before. We searched their clothes and inside their bodies as well, and they don't have it," an officer said. These captives were Cerleni and the others.

"At least the range is smaller." Sarota nodded.

Therefore, the last two ships were the most suspicious.

At this time, the Sky Ring spaceship appeared on the image from the hovering ship fleet. The hovering ships had almost lost them, but now, they were catching up. The Sky Ring spaceship's speed had become much slower, and it even bumped into walls from time to time.

Bang!

Lasers hit the spaceship's shield. It was as if the Sky Ring spaceship had changed its pilot. There were no more dazzling dodges, and it looked very clumsy.

Almost all attacks landed on the target.

The shield shattered in no time.

Boom!

Lasers fired at the tail of the spaceship, unleashing a trail of flames and smoke!

Sky Ring spaceship's accelerator broke and lost its power. It glided forward and shattered about a dozen stone pillars before crashing into the stone wall, stirring up thick smoke.

The hovering ships surrounded the spaceship, but the Sky Ring spaceship was silent. A few units of DarkStar warriors jumped out of the hovering ships and blasted the gate open with their guns, only to see that there was only darkness inside the spaceship. The DarkStar warriors rushed in, but there was no one inside. A warrior headed to the pilot seat and checked system, then quickly reported the situation to their superior.

"Report. There's no one in the spaceship. It was the spaceship system's autopilot."

Sarota slammed his hands heavily on the table, and with rage in his eyes, he said, "They've abandoned ship!"

On the other side, the Blades spaceship did the same and jumped out of the spaceship in different batches. As they did not get out of sight of the enemies like Han Xiao, the image of them jumping out was directly seen by the chasing ships. However, the mercenaries did not care about that. They landed and spread out on their own.

"Abandon ship... Seems like it's to stall for more time. Tsk, they still have hope for reinforcements." Sarota sneered. "They have some guts to gamble like this..."

Then, he loudly ordered, "Stop the bombardment. Hovering ships, split up and search for vital signs. Send out ground troops to continue to pursue."

Sarota looked to the side and said, "Ember, you'll lead the ground troops."

Ember nodded and left the command room.

Hundreds of egg-shaped airdrop cabins were ejected from the mothership, falling toward the ground. Inside were all DarkStar Supers, including Ember.

Sarota could see through Han Xiao's plan, but he still did as Han Xiao expected because DarkStar's target was indeed to capture everyone alive. From how he saw it, this was what the mercenaries were gambling on—there was nothing that he could do about it.

The target did not have a spaceship anymore, so Sarota was not worried. If they were hunters chasing after prey earlier, now they were just catching them in a ring—there was no need to worry about anyone escaping.

...

This time, in a hard-to-find corner underground, a silver-white metal sphere was parked quietly. Inside the metal sphere was a sophisticated cockpit, where Han Xiao and a few others were.

This was a transporting tool that Han Xiao had been building—[Portable Sphere Fortress].

On the outside, it was just a metal sphere, but its structure inside was complicated. It could travel in both sea and land as well as air. The sphere was made up of many layers. The most outside silver layer were both the armor and the mobility device to move on land, as the sphere was suitable for rolling movements and was able to change direction and speed easily. When it rolled, only the outside layer would move. The inside pilot cabin had an individual structure and was separated from the outside layer, so it would not spin as well. The real-time image of the outside was played on the large curve inside the pilot cabin.

When traveling through complex terrain, four mechanical pedipalps could be extended out of its body for crawling purposes. Furthermore, the sphere was also equipped with thrusters, balance wings, and turbines. It could fly at relatively low heights and move in the oceans. It was a multifunctional transport tool.

In his previous life, the players had called this the 'Car Ball'. Han Xiao had built it while he was on Floating Dragon Island. He had placed it in the spaceship, and now that they abandoned the spaceship, it was time to use it.

The plan was to spread out, so the ones in the Car Ball at this time was only Herlous, Aroshia, the three brothers of Volga, Frenzied Sword, and Maple Moon.

"The bombardment has stopped." Han Xiao was sitting at the controlling seat, his eyes sparkled.

The underground terrain did not tremble anymore, which meant that DarkStar had stopped the bombardment as expected, which made him feel relieved. *From now on, DarkStar will send out ground troops to carry out the search and start a game of cat and mouse. The mercenaries have all spread out, so there'll definitely be some people that'll get caught. Hope we can stall for longer...*

The Car Ball rolled backward and disappeared in the dark and twisted underground tunnel.

Darkness was mercenaries' cover, which made the search more difficult.

There were two to three hundred people in the two spaceships. Now that they had all spread out, the number of targets that DarkStar had to capture changed from two to hundreds. The hovering ships split up as well, slowly searching every corner with their cone-shaped blue searchlights.

Not long after, the ground troops led by Ember arrived underground and started their thorough search. The sound of footsteps echoed in the underground space.

The situation went from spaceship pursuit to time-consuming search. It seemed to be less heated, but the nervousness in the hearts of mercenaries kept growing as they were in the constant alert of not knowing when they would meet enemies in the endless darkness.

In the beginning, DarkStar captured some mercenaries very quickly. However, as time went on, the mercenaries became more spread out, and their capture efficiency rapidly decreased.

Often, DarkStar had to take a very long time only to find one or two mercenaries. The mercenaries had all sorts of abilities, and some were very good at hiding.

...

Time trickled by.

In Stream Light, Shivate was rather annoyed. DarkStar had stayed for one day now, and they had yet to leave. He had sent several warnings, but DarkStar had told him that because the mercenaries had abandoned their spaceships, it would not take too long to capture everyone. Shivate had no choice but to continue waiting despite his impatience.

Oom!

The alarm suddenly rang. The radar showed that, not far away, a new fleet was jumping toward this direction, and its numbers were growing rapidly.

“Whose forces are these?” Shivate’s face changed.

Through the porthole, he saw that in the space behind the DarkStar mothership, streams of light dashed across and stopped, showing their true identity.

It was an enormous fleet with mixed styles like it was made up of battleships from many different races. It looked like a motley army, but when they saw the symbols on these battleships, the faces of the Holy Stone and Black Raven commanders immediately turned grave.

This was a fleet temporarily gathered by Sky Ring, Blades, and Purple Gold. Other than the three large mercenary groups, there were also dozens of mercenary group partners. Hundreds of all kinds of battleships faced the DarkStar mothership.

“Do these large armies really have to make such a huge scene?” Shivate was surprised.

If these mercenaries and DarkStar could not come to an agreement, they would definitely start fighting. By then, it would be very difficult for Holy Stone and Black Raven to not be affected.

Shivate’s expression became terrible. If these mercenaries had been captured earlier, such a troublesome situation would never have happened.

### **Chapter 398: Conflict and Attention**

The DarkStar mothership turned around slowly. Hundreds of frigates flew out and formed a combat formation around the mothership, confronting the mercenary alliance fleet.

The alliance fleet sent out a message, demanding DarkStar to stop capturing the mercenaries immediately, or they would use force to settle the problem. The three large armies were very tough in their stance. As they did not have any territory to protect like civilizations, they were not afraid of revenge.

*If you mess with our people, we will mess you up, no matter who.*

Sarota was a little moved. He had thought that mercenaries were extremely divided, and he had never thought that capturing a small group of mercenaries would attract an entire mercenary fleet.

Sarota has to admit he had underestimated the mercenary industry.

The alliance fleet gave them only ten minutes, demanding DarkStar withdraw all their forces immediately, or they would start attacking.

Sarota's relaxed mindset was nowhere to be found, and his face was grave. Of course, he was not afraid of the alliance fleet since the DarkStar mothership was a moving space station base and was very well equipped. However, if a direct conflict broke out, the damage would exceed the forecast of this operation.

DarkStar was not dragged down by honor or name, so even if they retreated and were deemed as being afraid of the mercenaries, it would not affect them at all. What Sarota was considering at this time was another question—was it worth fighting a fleet head-on for the Secret Message Bead? Or could they give up this opportunity and strike again in the future? Would there ever be an opportunity as good as this?

After some contemplation, Sarota's came to the conclusion that there would never be such a good opportunity again.

Letting these mercenaries return to their organizations would mean that their search range will expand. If these mercenaries split up, it would be very troublesome to find them again.

And these were just the smaller problems.

Letting these people back to their organizations might very well lead to accidents like the bead being given to someone else without DarkStar's knowledge or the bead being lost on some godforsaken rock due to the person dying during a mission. There were too many possibilities. But now, all the mercenaries that might have come into contact with the bead were right there.

Certainly, there would never be a better opportunity than this.

This time, Shivate gave a serious announcement to the alliance fleet and the DarkStar mothership.

“On behalf of the Holy Stone Border Guards Army, I warn you, if you start a battle here, we will see it as a provocation. We will very likely see you as enemies and interfere with the conflict.”

The announcement was clearly very effective as soon as it was sent out. The alliance fleet opened fire at the DarkStar mothership straight away without saying anything.

Colorful lights exploded in the dark space. The battleship formations carried out all kinds of tactics, and lasers were fired at each other nonstop. The mercenary fleet and the DarkStar fleet started to battle.

Shivate's face turned black, and he was furious. They had completely ignored what he said!

"Commander, what do we do now? Which side do we help?"

"Help your ass, we watch!" Shivate clenched his teeth.

One side was a chaotic, evil, and very vengeful terrorist organization—another was a chaotic, neutral, and lawless mercenaries. Helping either side was a waste of military power. Furthermore, he did not dare move his fleet. If they moved, who knew how Black Raven would react?

They might as well watch the mercenaries and DarkStar bite each other. And about the warning earlier... just let it be ignored.

Outside the chaotic battlefield, Holy Stone and Black Raven did not interfere. However, they did not do nothing at all. Their fleet spread out sideways and formed a line to surround the battlefield, preventing it from expanding further.

Allowing them to fight outside their border was already their bottom line. If DarkStar or the mercenaries went over it, the fleets of the two large civilizations would fire without hesitation.

...

The battle started in an instant!

In terms of raw power, the DarkStar mothership was stronger than this temporarily gathered fleet. The alliance fleet was not planning to fight head-on either, so they sent out small spaceships wanting to go around the battlefield and fly to the planet to pick up Han Xiao and the other mercenaries. However, Sarota noticed this and ordered a fleet to intercept them. Thus, they were in a stalemate.

The mercenaries on the planet were the key to determining the result of the battle. Whether they were saved or captured, as soon as either happened, the battle would end immediately.

In Sarota's eyes, Han Xiao's plan to abandon ship was initially digging their own graves and a meaningless struggle. However, the situation had changed, and the meaningless stalling had become the key. Abandoning ship had given them more time, and every second that they earned with that, DarkStar was suffering from more damage.

Battle damage reports came one after another, and the coldness in Sarota's eyes became ever deeper.

Initially, it had been a simple mission that could be completed easily, but now, it had become so troublesome and tough. The performance of that Sky Ring spaceship was the start of all the changes. If not for that pilot who could stall for so long, he would have captured them and left long ago. They would never have met the mercenary alliance fleet. Sarota was deeply regretful for missing that opportunity.

The fleets fired at each other, and the energy reaction from the attacks was as conspicuous as a Fixed Star as seen from the detectors. From afar, the light of the explosions was as bright as the stars.

The spaceships passing by noticed the abnormality there even from afar. The battle attracted many spaceships as spectators, and the scene was quickly recorded.

In the galactical generation, the increase in communication level also made the news more real-time. The distance was not a problem. Not long after, the battle between DarkStar and the mercenaries spread out across numerous Star Clusters.

After watching for more than half a day, Shivate received an unexpected communication request.

Buzz!

A pureblood Godoran's face appeared on the screen and said with a serious face, "I'm the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Godoran Civilization, Plenipotentiary Representative of Godoran Civilization. I hope the Holy Stone Civilization can interfere with the battle immediately and attack DarkStar."

Shivate's face turned formal and said, "This is our local affair. You have no right to interfere."

"DarkStar is an evil force that has spilled innocent blood in many places. They're the common enemy of civilizations. Watching them carry out their crimes is a very irresponsible act!" The Godoran sounded very justified.

"Sorry, I only listen to the marshal's orders." Shivate held his ground firmly. "I'll only interfere with the battle if the marshal gives me a direct order. If you have questions, you can send a request to the Foreign Affairs Department."

Actually, as the commander of Formation Three, Shivate could take care of matters of this scale himself, but he still chose to use the marshal's name. It was obviously an excuse.

He knew very well what Godora was thinking—DarkStar was Godora's mortal enemy, and they had made a rare appearance, so Godora wanted Holy Stone to help them to fight DarkStar. However, Holy Stone and Godora were not strategic allies, so they had no obligation to help. Furthermore, it was a sensitive political issue. As one of the commanders of the Border Guards Army, Shivate was definitely not going to follow the requests of another civilization.

The Godorans had no choice but to contact the higher-ups of the Holy Stone Civilization. However, royalty ruled civilizations such as Holy Stone were best at pushing around responsibilities. They were firm on the grounds of not giving out any orders. Even when the Godorans expressed that if they let DarkStar get away, they would publicly condemn Holy Stone during the Shattered Star Ring Diplomatic Council, Holy Stone was still beating about the bush. Their position was very clear—they did not want to mess with DarkStar.

The Godoran Civilization was just one of the forces that had their attention on this matter. As DarkStar rarely appeared, more and more forces and organizations had their eyes on it, watching the center of the storm from far away.

...

Whoosh!

In the dark underground, Thermo-Electrical Incisor Gloves sliced through a DarkStar warrior's chest like slicing through a piece of tofu, easily taking that person's life.

Han Xiao pulled his hand away, and the DarkStar warrior fell down. On the ground were the corpses of a DarkStar search team.

“Let’s go quickly. Their reinforcements will arrive very soon.” Herlous kept his voice down.

The Car Ball was parked at the side. Han Xiao jumped back in, controlled the Car Ball, and rolled away. He opened the interface, and the mission information had already changed.

– [Escape] Mission Rating: C

Lasting two days would grant a rating of D. Every twelve hours onward, the rating would go up by one grade. They had already lasted two and a half days. The mission was already completed. At this time, more than half of the mercenaries had already been captured, and very few were still running. This meant that the mercenary alliance fleet and DarkStar had been firing at each other for more than one day.

If either Holy Stone or Black Raven interfered, DarkStar would have retreated, and the mercenaries would have been saved. However, the two civilizations were only watching, not helping either side, which led to the stalemate. The alliance fleet could not pick up the mercenaries.

“Putting our hopes on these mercenaries was not a good idea indeed...” Han Xiao shook his head. Luckily, he had already contacted Ames and requested help as another layer of insurance. The thing was, she was not very dependable either, so he did not know when she would be free to come.

If the players were caught, their mission would fail. Some of them were very cheeky and wanted to go offline to avoid being caught, but when they came online again, they realized that the mission had failed straight away.

However, if the players were captured by DarkStar, it would add on quite an amount of trouble. Han Xiao gave out a new mission through the faction interface. As long as they were not captured, they would receive a bonus reward. This way, even if they went offline and failed [Escape], they could still go offline if they are almost caught, and at least they would still have some reward.

Luckily, no players had been caught yet. This had made the DarkStar search team very frustrated, as the prey disappeared without a trace just as they were almost captured. The DarkStar search teams were at a loss and very confused.

Boom!

At this time, the tunnel ahead suddenly collapsed. The Car Ball made a sudden stop. A new group of pursuers walked out of the hole from the wall, and the leader was Ember.

“Found you. I won’t be as careless as the last time.”

Ember was expressionless. He raised his Esper power to the maximum, and his battle intent soared. His eyes had been fixed on Han Xiao for a very long time, and now, he had finally caught up.

Han Xiao faced changed a little.

“Him again, this is not good...”

The Great Mechanic Han himself was not afraid of Ember—they would not be able to kill each other if they started a fight. However, Ember’s power was too destructive to his friends around him. Herlous was already considered to be quite strong, but if he faced Ember, he would be turned into dust in an instant.

That Esper power was too powerful, and it could even be called a ‘Walking Human Dust Maker’.

“That guy is very dangerous, retreat!”

Han Xiao did not have any desire to stay. He pulled the joystick, and the Car Ball crashed through the wall on the side as they retreated.

### **Chapter 399: Broken Arm and Awakening**

The last time that they met, Ember got a taste of defeat from Han Xiao. He had met quite a number of Mechanics, but Black Star was the first Mechanic that could use his own body to drag the battle without using machinery. Plus, Han Xiao was like a fated enemy of his power. Ember had thought about how to deal with Han Xiao, and he had come up with some plans. Thus, he had been waiting to meet Han Xiao again.

Now they had finally intercepted Han Xiao. Seeing the Car Ball turn to run away, Ember immediately activated his power.

Hum!

The walls in all directions started to move as if they were alive. A large amount of black and gray particles gushed out like a black cloud, winding around the Car Ball, turning into all sorts of shapes such as spears and blades, creating sparkles on the moving armor of the Car Ball.

The underground space was narrow and twisted. The Car Ball crashed through the walls like a mole digging a tunnel. Ember and the others chased behind. The Car Ball was very fast, so even though grade B Supers were not slow, the distance between them was still getting longer.

“Call the search team and follow my position. There’s an important target here driving some kind of sphere-shaped transport tool. It’s very fast, but I will slow it down as much as I can.”

Although Ember really wanted to fight with Han Xiao, the training that he had gone through made him always put the mission first. The hovering ship fleet nearby received the message and came from all directions.

The range of Ember’s power was limited. The Car Ball was going to leave his sights. Ember’s energy turned into fuel for his power—the ground in front of the Car Ball bulged and turned into rocks, forming obstacles.

Bang bang bang!

The Car Ball crushed everything in its way, breaking through fang-shaped pillars one after another. Its thick, heavy armor was not damaged, but its speed unavoidably decreased. The curved surface inside the sphere was all made of screens, displaying the image outside. Han Xiao could see in all directions from sitting in the driver's seat, so he quickly pressed on the control panel and activated the Car Ball's other functions.

With the sound of mechanical parts moving, the front, back, left, and right side of the armor suddenly opened. A mechanic pedipalp slid out from each of the openings and pressed onto the ground, the Car Ball jumped up like a flea and skipped over the dangerous obstacles. Then, four anti-gravitational thrusters appeared at the bottom of the Car Ball, pushing the Car Ball forward almost a hundred meters before it landed on the ground. This process was repeated again and again—the Car Ball was not affected by the terrain at all. Ember was getting further and further away.

"Tsk. The search team will definitely surround us. We have to think of a way to get rid of the enemies. Luckily, there's a gap between earth near here. We can..."

As he was saying, Han Xiao suddenly realized that something was wrong. He turned around and looked at everyone else. All of their faces were filled with veins like they were struggling with all their lives, and they were unable to move.

"Stop, or they die."

In the distance, Ember was reaching out his hand with a cold face. Han Xiao was the only one who he could not do anything about, but in the case of the other people inside the Car Ball, he could use his power on them through the armor.

Han Xiao frowned a little. This was what he was most worried about. The two players were not a concern. Even if they died one hundred times, he would not even blink. But Herlous, Aroshia, and the others were different; they were his weakness when facing Ember. Han Xiao was definitely not going to stop, and he would not hesitate on this matter. He was just worried about these two characters that he had spent so much effort to recruit.

"Don't... Don't care about us, he won't kill anyone. We can't... can't be the reason to cause our entire team's... destruction!"

The energy on Herlous' body was flickering. He was resisting the Esper power from Ember, and even with all his might, he could only speak while stuttering. His face was ferocious, and every word sounded like he was spending all his energy on it. Through the time that they spent together, Herlous had gained some knowledge of Han Xiao. He knew very clearly that Han Xiao would not hesitate on something like this and would be able to make choices despite the enemy's threatening, so he did not have to worry. He only spoke so that Han Xiao would not have any psychological burden.

"Hold on, there's a gap in front. We can get rid of the enemies once we fly down." Han Xiao nodded and increased the Car Ball's speed. He did not waste any words.

Seeing that the Car Ball was about to leave his power range, Ember's eyes turned colder, and he clenched his fists.

The higher ups did not allow killing, but as long as the target was alive, it would not matter how badly hurt they were.

“Argh!”

Herlous inhaled deeply with the scream stuck in his throat. His left hand changed shape noticeably, then slowly turned into dust and splashed on the floor. There was no blood and no metallic smell. The decomposition was spreading from his hand toward his shoulder!

“Ember...” A flash of rage appeared in Han Xiao’s eyes, but he had no time to look at Herlous’ injury. The most important thing at the time was to get out of Ember’s power range, and only then would the damage not continue to grow.

Sand fog flew out of Aroshia’s body, and she was being decomposed as well. She looked down at her body as confusion flashed through her eyes.

Most normal life forms would be curious about what came after death, but they would only have one life, and when they discovered the answer to that question, it would also mean that they had left the world of the living. Aroshia, on the other hand, had countless opportunities to try it, so death was not unknown or mysterious to her. She could see her own ‘ending’—a new life. She had been through it countless times, and she knew that she would not die. However, a new life meant that her memories would be reset again. She did not have any memory of what happened after death, and she could not remember anything about what happened before she died. She could not help but think of Han Xiao’s words.

If she did not have the memories of her past life, even if she received a new life, would she still be who she was now? Would that be just another form of death?

“So, I can die after all...” Aroshia mumbled. Suddenly, a sense of trepidation was born in her heart.

When this thought appeared, a change happened within her body.

Hum!

The feeling of her body being controlled suddenly disappeared. Aroshia realized that she could move now. The world in her eyes was different—it seemed brighter, and many small dots of light were swimming in the air like fish. Her senses became completely different from just a moment earlier. Then, she realized that she was floating, and she saw the shocked expression on the people beside her.

“What happened to me...”

Aroshia looked down at her body. It was not a physical body anymore but a half transparent luminous body with a dim glow of bluish gold. Light particles floated around her. Her senses were not her body and head anymore—it was like she was no longer limited by a physical form. With a thought, she suddenly turned into a sphere-shaped ball of light.

“This... This is...” Maple Moon was shocked.

“Energy life.” Han Xiao glanced over. He was shocked as well. The characteristics that Aroshia was showing now were the characteristics of energy lifeforms. Her physical structure changed, so of course,

she was not controlled by Ember anymore. He did not have the time to think of the reason for this to happen, but a thought appeared in his mind.

“Try to touch the energy core.”

Aroshia did as Han Xiao said. A thin tentacle extended out of the ball of light, passed through the cockpit wall, and came into contact with the energy core. The light particles in her body flew into the core through the tentacle.

Buzz!

With the sound of electric currents, sparks appeared on the engine, and the output of the Car Ball increased tremendously and went into overload mode immediately!

The Car Ball’s speed increased instantly, it jumped right into the gap in front and finally got out of Ember’s power range. Herlous’ decomposition progress stopped at his left shoulder. He was covered in sweat, holding on to his hollow left shoulder, and his face was filled with agony. Other than him, the Volga brothers suffered some damage too. However, Ember’s main target was Herlous, who had the strongest resistance, so they were still in a relatively good state—none of them were maimed.

Ember and the others stopped at the edge of the gap and watched as the Car Ball extended its balance wings and flew away at a high speed.

Ember failed twice on the same target. He yelled at the communicator, “Is the search team here yet? Target has disappeared, track it immediately.”

However, the reply was very unexpected.

“One minute ago, the mothership sent out a new order. Give up this mission. Everyone, return to the mothership and retreat immediately!” The other side of the communicator sounded very anxious.

Ember’s pupils constricted in disbelief.

How could it be an order to retreat?

The Secret Message Bead was very important to DarkStar. Now that they were not far from succeeding, unless there was an accident, it was impossible for them to give up halfway. And this accident was definitely something that the mothership could not deal with!

The order was not to be disobeyed. Even though Ember was very unhappy, he could only watch Han Xiao and the others get away while he turned around and retreated.

What had happened above?

...

Fifteen minutes earlier...

“This is Shattered Star Ring Express News. I’m the frontline reporter, Brimner, reporting live on the battle near Planet 122 of Star Zone 4, Fawn Galaxy.”

A news spaceship stopped not far from the battlefield, reporting the situation live at the scene after hearing about it.

Brimner was the reporter hosting this live news. The news was playing on the Shattered Star Ring Current Affairs Channel, reporting live on things happening around the area to all the audiences in the Star Field. People and organizations of countless Galaxies and Star Zones were paying attention to this news broadcast.

“It is known that Fawn-122 planet is located at the border crossing of Holy Stone Civilization and Black Raven Civilization. A special battle has happened in this sensitive area. As everyone can see, the battle is between DarkStar and mercenaries. As reflected by witnesses, the battle has lasted for almost two days now. The cause of this is that DarkStar wanted to capture some mercenaries, and these mercenaries happened to belong to Sky Ring, Blades, and Purple Gold, the three very well-known mercenary armies. Hence, a conflict broke out. The situation now is, Holy Stone and Black Raven’s armies are monitoring on the sidelines, while DarkStar and the mercenaries are in a stalemate. On the planet, the mercenaries who are being chased are unbelievably still running.

“According to our knowledge, the Godoran Civilization far away in the Garton Galaxy is already forming an army. DarkStar is a violence group acting against Godora, so they are naturally enemies. As DarkStar rarely appears and is very stealthy, it is very hard for Godora to trace them. Now that DarkStar has appeared publicly, Godora wants to hold onto this opportunity...”

As Brimner was reporting, a large object appeared on the edge of the image, flying toward the battlefield.

“Wait, there seems to be a change to the situation. A new force has appeared. That’s... Er, Floating Dragon Island?”

Her eyes widened in shock.

The interest of countless spectators in Shattered Star Ring who were watching the news rose immediately. Floating Dragon was ‘Dragon Emperor’ Ames’ territory—almost everyone in Shattered Star Ring knew that.

They were very curious. Why was Floating Dragon there?

Brimner paused and thought of a logical explanation.

“Our crew has just checked Floating Dragon’s route—it just so happens that it came to Fawn Galaxy Star Zone 4. Apparently, it’s just passing by out of coincidence. Holy Stone and Black Raven’s fleets are surrounding the battlefield. I believe after some communication, Floating Dragon will take a detour. This should not have any impact on the situation...”

Before she finished her sentence, Floating Dragon bumped straight into the Holy Stone fleet at the edge of the battlefield, without any intention to change course at all.

#### **Chapter 400: The Arrival of Dragon Emperor!**

Holy Stone and Black Raven's fleets surrounded half of the battlefield each. They were on level one alert. Countless cannons were aimed at both sides of the battle. Shivate stared at the battle and was on high alert all along.

A third-party conflict happening at the border had always been difficult to deal with, as guarding the border was the responsibility of the Guard Army. Firstly, interfering blindly would not grant any merit. As it would not be defending against an enemy, there would be no reward for winning, no compensation for damages, and very severe consequences if they lost. Hence, taking part in the battle was the worst choice. Shivate believed that, if his fleet suffered damage due to his decision, the royalties of his political opposition would definitely use him as an example to attack the political faction that he was in. As the Holy Stone was aristocratic with many factions, most of the army were royalties as well. Of course, there would be political opposition paying attention to what he was doing.

Luckily, the attacks from the DarkStar mothership and the alliance fleet were controlled within the area. As long as the situation did not escalate further, Shivate would be thankful.

At this time, a subordinate said in a hurry, "Commander, a large object is approaching the battlefield. Stream Light is on its route, please give the order!"

Shivate was shocked. He looked at the screen. A large object was approaching at a very high speed, and its energy reaction was through the roof. He adjusted the angle of the porthole and looked over, then he saw an ellipse-shaped golden object was shining in space, gradually approaching. Its size was dozens of times larger than a fleet. It was indeed Floating Dragon Island with its shield activated.

"That's Floating Dragon Island. Is it passing by?" Shivate was surprised.

Seeing the Floating Dragon Island was still approaching and would crash onto his fleet soon, Shivate immediately sent out a message to Floating Dragon Island. "Attention Floating Dragon, attention Floating Dragon. I am Holy Stone Border Guards Army Third Formation Commander Shivate. A battle is underway ahead, and we have locked down this area, please go around."

Just one second later, Stream Light received a reply. Jenny's cold voice sounded, and she only said two words. "Give way."

A tint of rage appeared on Shivate's face. This was his first time meeting such an outrageous passerby. Not only did they not want to go around, they even wanted the entire fleet to move away. Regardless, Floating Dragon had the right to be this way, and Shivate did not dare mess with them.

Floating Dragon did not seem like it would stop at all. It approached in a straight line and would soon bump into the Holy Stone fleet formation. Shivate's face was terrible as he clenched his teeth and gave the order. "All units spread out. Terminate the lockdown and give way to them!"

The Holy Stone spread out hastily and created a path. Floating Dragon passed through the formation and casually entered the battlefield. This was included in the news image, and Brimner's always smooth tone was stuck. She was stunned for a while before saying slowly, "Err... As everyone can see, Hol— Holy Stone fleet gave way. It seems like the negotiation failed. Apparently, Floating Dragon does not care about the battle in front of them. We don't know what will happen next..."

The viewers were awed by how dominant Floating Dragon was, but no one felt that Floating Dragon came just to interfere.

At this time, the alliance fleet still could not break through DarkStar's defenses. They contacted the mercenaries who were being chased, but they could not pick them up. They could only watch as the communication channels became silent one after another. Their organization members were being caught right in front of them, and the rage from that was expressed directly in the strength of the alliance fleet's attacks. From just wanting to go around DarkStar at the start to now being on a killing spree, it was getting bloodier over time.

Boom!

A part of the planet surface suddenly bulged. The ground cracked open, and a large ice pillar burrowed out and rose from the ground. Goa and her teammates came back to the surface on the ice pillar. Her white blue mage robe was covered in dust and holes, and her face looked exhausted. She had been chased by the troops till she had nowhere to run, so she channeled her power and released it on this one hit to finally return to the surface. Looking up, the astonishing scenery reflected in her clear, blue eyes.

In the dark blue, almost black outer space, countless fleets were fighting. Countless lasers and cannons were as bright as stars. On the lower heights, it was the DarkStar fleet that was going in circles and surrounding the area. They were rushing toward her, stirring up dust on their way and twisting the atmosphere with the heat from their thrusters.

"There's... still no one to pick us up?"

It was like all the energy was being pulled out of Goa's body. She slowly kneeled down, and her magic staff fell from her white hands onto the ground. She looked up at, watching the powerless alliance fleet who were supposed to be their saviors.

The color of desperation painted her pupils.

The three large armies were what made them struggle and resist because they knew that there would be fleets coming to the rescue. Everyone had gotten their hopes up. However, the reinforcements they had waited so long for could not save them. Their friends were captured one after another. Their last bit of toughness was gone. Who could save them in this situation?

Hovering ships surrounded them. Goa and her teammates beside her gave up resisting and let go of their weapons.

At this time, the Floating Dragon Island entered the battlefield. The fleets of both sides hastily moved aside. It was like the pause button had been pressed for the heated battle.

Sarota was shocked. "Why is there still interference? Didn't Holy Stone and Black Raven lock the battlefield down? This is... Floating Dragon?"

Both sides stopped. Floating Dragon became the focus of everyone. Everyone—including DarkStar, the mercenary alliance fleet, Holy Stone, and Black Raven—waited for it to leave as soon as possible. They were fighting properly, and suddenly, a passerby appeared. Plus, it was someone that they could not mess with. How were they going to continue fighting?

However, Floating Dragon Island stopped in the middle of the battlefield.

“What’s going on?”

“Why did it stop?”

The captains of all the parties were shocked. Was Floating Dragon not just passing by? They already moved away and cleared its path, so why was it not leaving?

This time, an extremely piercing alarm triggered on the detector of every battleship.

“Attention! Space ripple appeared nearby! High energy reaction! Calculating energy rank... The accurate calculation failed. Area of effect is fluctuating, cannot be displayed!”

A blue dot appeared above Floating Dragon and expanded quickly, turning into a spinning ring of light. Inside was a white fog that was only two to three meters large. It was nothing that people would pay attention to in the wide universe, but now, it attracted everyone’s attention.

High Grade Secret Spell: Physical Entity Teleportation Door!

Then, a snow-white long leg stepped out of the ring of light. Ames, who was in a black dress, ‘walked’ out. Her black hair extended from behind her back right to her ankles. On her beautiful face was her careless expression as always, like those countless battleships could not even make her eyebrow move even the slightest bit.

The commanders’ faces all changed.

“Dragon Emperor?”

“Why is she here!”

Just as everyone was stunned and guessing what Ames’ motive was, it suddenly happened!

Ames saw DarkStar, and without saying a word, a violent force field gushed out. The armor of the dozen or so DarkStar battleships nearby bent inward and exploded like fireworks!

The entire process looked extremely easy. The battleships made from DarkStar technology were as weak as pieces of paper in her hands—she could turn them into paper balls in an instant!

Sarota’s face changed instantly, having not expected this at all. Why did the Dragon Emperor attack them?

Everyone was shocked. Shivate suddenly realized and yelled, “She’s not passing by. She wants to help the mercenaries!”

The alliance fleet was stunned, then became overjoyed. Their morale grew tremendously.

“Dragon Emperor is reinforcing us! Everyone, attack!”

Panic finally appeared on Sarota’s face. The subordinates around all looked at him and anxiously waited for him to give an order.

“Info— Inform everyone to retreat immediately. No wait, inform the fleets to protect the mothership, form a defense formation, cover the mothership to escape!”

Dragon Emperor’s name was as impactful as thunder. When they met Ames, everything about the mission was thrown out of his head. Sarota only had one thought now—minimize the damage and run for their life! As soon as he gave out the order, he left the commander room and ran to an escape pod.

The DarkStar fleet contracted their formation, forming a shield formation and protecting the mothership like a wall, blocking the focus fire from the alliance fleet. Behind layers and layers of protection, the exterior of the mothership started to fade away. It started to go into stealth and back away.

Seeing this, Ames’ force field held onto the entire Floating Dragon Island, then slammed it down!

The Floating Dragon Island covered in the golden shield was like a high energy meteor. The DarkStar battleships were like tiny beans in front of it. The defense formation shattered straight away. Floating Dragon Island slammed into the mothership, unleashing burning sparks on the shield, and a small half of the entire mothership was shattered!

The Floating Dragon Island was Ames’ territory, palace, and... weapon.

Everyone at the scene was dazed.

Brimner opened her mouth wide and was speechless. She was supposed to report the situation, but no one blamed her for it. Everyone who was watching this had the same expression as her.

Ames’ name was known across the entire Shattered Star Ring, but the times that she had shown her destructive power were very few. The impact of seeing such unbelievably great power with one’s own eyes was like a hammer knocking heavily on their heart.

The Dragon Emperor had arrived!