

The Mechanic 401

Chapter 401: New Dungeon

Boom!

The broken pieces of the spaceships fell into the atmosphere of the planet, lit up from the air friction, like flaming meteors descending from the sky.

Even without Sarota's retreat order, Ames' godly blow had already shattered DarkStar's mindset. With destructive power like this, destroying a mothership fleet would be a piece of cake. The other spaceships gave up the mothership and spread out to escape.

All kinds of spaceships escaped from the planet and the mothership one after another, hovering ships, guarding ships, escape pods, and etc. The smaller spaceships were mostly in front, and behind were the larger battleships. The thick armor was initially the source of security for the people in the ship, but now it was a disadvantage they hated the most.

The alliance fleet did not stop their attacks. The battleships that lagged behind were being destroyed one after another, ending with short explosions. The air inside the cabins was burnt out very quickly, and the shattered parts became space trash.

Ames only actually attacked two times, and it completely defeated DarkStar's mothership formation. Her target was only the most conspicuous mothership. After she broke the mothership, she was too lazy to attack again.

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The mothership fell toward the ground like an enormous metal meteor. As the gravitational force was turned into speed, the impact it caused became more terrifying, and the sound of it penetrating the air became sharper. Looking up to the sky from the ground, it was like the sky was falling.

Hong!

Like a meteor landing on a star, the mothership created a large crater. The cracks spread out in all directions for tens of kilometers. The shockwave that it created stirred up dust that covered the sky. The world trembled like an earthquake. Even Goa and the others who were thousands of kilometers away felt the impact, and the world in their eyes was trembling!

The entire mothership was injected into the planet surface, and the surface and the underground space collapsed. The people hastily rushed out.

Dong! Dong!

The Car Ball flew out of the earth gap against the rain of rocks, then stopped at the planet surface. The hatch opened, and Han Xiao jumped out, wiped off the dust on his face, and looked up. "Magnificent. Luckily, Floating Dragon is hard enough and did not drop down together, or this planet would definitely have exploded."

The pursuing DarkStar troops had retreated long ago. The tide had turned, and DarkStar had become the ones running away with the alliance fleet chasing close behind. Many DarkStar spaceships were going closer to Holy Stone and Black Raven's fleets.

If they wanted to escape, they had to go through the formation of these two civilizations' border armies. Shivate was in a dilemma. At this time, the Black Raven army on the other side fired at the escaping DarkStar spaceships without hesitation.

Shivate saw this and did not want to lag behind, so he gave the order right away. "Aim at DarkStar, fire!"

The Dragon Emperor's arrival had changed his attitude. He initially wanted to control the situation and not mess with either side, but that was not impossible anymore. If they give up the encirclement and purposely let DarkStar get away, what would the Dragon Emperor think? DarkStar was an enemy that she would personally attack. If they let DarkStar get away, would that not mean that they were going against the Dragon Emperor?

DarkStar was troublesome to deal with indeed, but Ames was someone who should not be messed with even more. This DarkStar fleet was already fleeing and could not form any organized counter-attack. Holy Stone and Black Raven at least had the guts to attack someone who could not fight back.

With attacks coming from both front and back, it was like capturing escaping fish. DarkStar spaceships exploded one after another.

Hu!

A dozen or so mercenary spaceships landed, and mercenary teams walked out, entered what was left of the mothership, and rescued their comrades.

As the mothership had crashed instead of exploded, there was still a chance that Cerleni and the other captured mercenaries were still alive.

The threat was resolved. Those mercenaries who were not captured gathered and rescued the captives. Luckily, the mothership was quite tough, and it even had interior shockproof construction. Although they crashed quite roughly, most of them were alive.

DarkStar's warriors were no exception, and some of them were alive as well. Their resistance came to no result, and all of them were captured. Sarota did not make it to the escape pod and was among them as well. He was tied up with his subordinates, his face filled with hopelessness.

The situation was decided. The alliance fleet landed one after another, and thousands of mercenaries from various races walked out of the spaceships. They were all from well-known mercenary groups from the Shattered Star Ring.

If the mercenary industry was to be split into three levels—low, medium, and high—the strength and size of Han Xiao's Black Star would only belong to the medium-low level, the three large armies would belong to the high level, and the other partners were at least around medium-high level.

One Deputy Army Commander arrived from each army, all grade A Supers. At this time, the battle above finally ended, and Holy Stone and Black Raven's command ships stopped above the planet. Countless

pairs of eyes were looking at the Dragon Emperor, who controlled her force field and slowly landed at the edge of the crowd.

The noise suddenly stopped. Tens of thousands of people turned to look at Ames simultaneously. These well-known mercenaries lowered their heads a little, expressing their respect toward the Dragon Emperor.

As the representatives, the three Deputy Army Commander walked up quickly and welcomed Ames together in a very respectful way.

Back when Ames needed mercenaries, they always helped for free, so they had some sort of connection. They thought that their actions had moved the Dragon Emperor and that Ames had come to help because of them.

The mercenary groups at the side thought this way too and were all very jealous. Even Ames had to give face to the three large armies—their influence was really growing stronger.

“Thank you very much for your help. Without you, our members would never be able to escape...”

The three of them were expressing their thanks with a solemn face, but Ames did not even look at them. She passed by the three of them without even pausing.

Everyone was stunned for a moment, and their eyes followed Ames. Ames stopped in front of Han Xiao and the others and said, “You’re all fine. Seems like I arrived just in time.”

“Only free after three days, you really are busy...”

Han Xiao narrowed his eyes. It had not been long since he joined the Floating Dragon faction, so Ames’ impression of him was not strong, and now was a good opportunity to have more communication with Ames. It was very beneficial to have a good relationship with one of the strongest people in the Shattered Star Ring.

Ames did not know Han Xiao very well, but the Great Mechanic Han knew her very well. Her personality was casual and easy going, so he did not have to be too formal when speaking with her. Although he was temporarily her subordinate, he did not have to act too lowly in front of her. Furthermore, he was rather clear on what Ames liked and disliked—it was very easy to make conversation. They chatted back and forth very quickly.

The others were ignored. The atmosphere was weirdly silent, and countless pairs of eyes filled with shock were staring at these two people having a casual chat.

The three Deputy Army Commander turned around stiffly with awkwardness on their faces. They had misunderstood. From Ames’ actions, she obviously did not come for them but was called here by this stranger mercenary.

“Was he also one of the mercenaries being chased? Why is he so close to the Dragon Emperor?”

“What’s his name... Black Star? Never heard of this name before...”

“What’s his relationship with the Dragon Emperor?”

The members of all the mercenary groups were appalled, and they asked around about Han Xiao's history. The name of Black Star was very soon heard by everyone at the scene. After hearing that Han Xiao was a member of Floating Dragon, the way that everyone looked at him changed.

The organization under the Dragon Emperor was superior to most, and Dragon Emperor was willing to go to such great lengths to save her subordinate. Black Star's size was not large on its own, but its background was too strong. It was as good as a representative of Dragon Emperor outside Floating Dragon, so no one dared to underestimate them. Black Star was immediately added to their list of people not to mess with.

The news recorded this and played it live. Brimner did not speak anymore—she knew that the viewers preferred her to stay quiet at times like that. She held her breath and watched as things unfolded.

Before this, be it Holy Stone, Black Raven, DarkStar, the mercenaries, or the viewers watching the news, no one thought that it would end this way. This conflict had lasted for three days, and in the end, the Dragon Emperor suddenly arrived. She defeated DarkStar in no time, and the one who called the Dragon Emperor there was one of the mercenaries.

They had originally thought that in these mercenaries, the members of the three large armies were the important ones. They had subconsciously ignored the Black Star Mercenary Group, which was not as well known. They had thought that the alliance fleet was the biggest reinforcement, but they had never expected this small mercenary group to call for help that was even stronger than the three large armies.

Inside Stream Light, Shivate's eyes were opened so wide that they almost dropped out.

"If there's nothing else, I will be leaving. Don't forget, help me to ask around about my teacher."

After beating up DarkStar and saving them, Ames flew up the sky, went back to Floating Dragon Island, and left.

Once Ames left, the tense atmosphere finally became more relaxed. Many people finally exhaled. The Dragon Emperor's existence was too terrifying, and they did not dare to act casually.

At this time, the three Deputy Army Commanders approached Han Xiao together, representing their armies and showing their friendliness. They were not the only ones—the other large mercenary groups that had initially ignored Han Xiao also sent representatives to express their will to work together.

In a short time, about a hundred people gathered around Han Xiao, all commanders or deputy commanders.

This is because of Ames; I'm benefiting from her influences. These mercenaries want to work with me, not because of my strength, but because I'm a member of Floating Dragon.

This was the benefit of being in Ames' faction. He revealed his background and made a name for himself. Furthermore, with protection from the Dragon Emperor, even DarkStar would not dare to mess with him easily.

The Great Mechanic Han had never minded benefitting from the influence of others, he only cared about what effect it would have. The benefits were very clear, but there were disadvantages as well.

Firstly, his name had grown too quickly, no longer matching his strength. Secondly, the Dragon Emperor's name would cover up Black Star's name, which would affect his growth in the future. It was not beneficial to make a name for himself if he kept using the Floating Dragon's name, and this effect would last quite a long time.

Having a background was definitely good, but for Han Xiao, who wanted to have his own faction, too famous a background was an indirect chain. However, since Black Star had not been created for long, the pros definitely outweighed the cons. Furthermore, the Dragon Emperor had helped him once, and in return, Han Xiao did not mind helping her do some stuff.

Not long after, dozens of communication numbers were added to Han Xiao's communicator, all parts of the industry. Only large mercenary groups on the three large armies' level had this level of connection.

At this time, a notification appeared on the interface. The mission was completed.

[Escape] Completed!

Mission Rating: B

– You have received 1,200,000 Experience!

– You have received +3 Renown!

He had lasted for three days, so the rating was two grades higher than the lowest grade, and the reward had increased significantly. Han Xiao thought that it was quite okay, not too much but not too little either. In the case of the players, the few of them who lasted till the mission completed were all overjoyed.

Following Black Phantom is always beneficial! This had become almost a rule in their minds. They received 1,200,000 Experience from just one mission, and they almost did not know what to do with this 'outrageous amount' of experience.

The successful ones were few, as most players had failed the mission, now green with envy.

Han Xiao's browsed through the interface. He opened the NPC interface and noticed something new. His eyes sparkled.

This is... a new dungeon?

Chapter 402: Question

As Han Xiao entered the Dungeon Creating interface, there was a new option under [Six Nations and Germinal Organization].

[Warfare: Power of the Dragon Emperor]

Han Xiao tried it out of curiosity. He realized that this was a different type of dungeon, not created by a main storyline. [Six Nations and Germinal Organization] was a series, and parts of it could be intercepted to create multiple Dungeon Crystals. In the case of the new dungeon, it was fixed. It could only create the scene during the three days from DarkStar's pursuit to Ames's arrival. It was a fixed dungeon.

Only large events create series dungeons. The requirement for warfare dungeons should be quite versatile. Since the name is related to Ames, maybe it's because she has legendary characteristics, and that increased the influence of the event, Han Xiao guessed.

The Germinal Organization event happened back in Version 1.0 and could create a LVL 60 dungeon at most. Power of the Dragon Emperor would definitely at least match with Version 2.0. Han Xiao did not enter dungeons, so he could not check the details of the dungeon. However, from his experience, he knew that this new dungeon would be a painful journey for these LVL 60 players.

Simply put, the players did not reach the lowest requirement for challenging new dungeons. The difference was at least one version.

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Although there aren't any physical benefits at the moment, it will make the players feel a sense of freshness. This is the first dungeon that exceeds the version limit. After letting ace reporter Bun-Hit-Dog add some materials to it, it should gather some popularity. Also, as an NPC who's able to give out dungeons of higher levels, my standing will become higher too. Han Xiao blinked. Standing was like money—no one would say it was too much.

After informing Han Xiao of their intention to work together, the dozens of commanders walked to the side and ordered their comrades to clean up the battlefield.

The planet's surface was devastated. The mercenaries were recycling the parts and pieces of the mothership. Han Xiao had some free time, so he took the members of Black Star to the side.

He did not have to worry about the players. The wounds of the Volga brothers were bandaged. Maple Moon had the Pharmacist sub-class, so she was counted as half a doctor. She was holding her tools and helping Herlous treat his wound.

Herlous was sitting on a rock, and his left shoulder was empty. The broken part felt like burnt wood when touched. He clenched his teeth and endured the pain as large beads of sweat rolled down his forehead.

Han Xiao looked at the wound, frowned, and said, "The bones and the flesh are no good. It was bad luck to meet Ember."

"I knew this day would come, but I never thought it would come so soon..."

Herlous forced a bitter smile. Many of the Sunil warriors were disabled. He had hardened his resolve long ago, just that when it actually happened, he still could not control the sadness and pain in his heart.

Han Xiao comforted and said, "Old Herlous, you don't have to be too pessimistic about it. Many advanced civilizations have the technology to cure broken limbs, such as an incubation pod,

nanotechnology repairs, or Supers with healing powers. Right, about that, I know a pair of sisters that can even save someone after death, not to mention losing a limb.”

“Really?” Herlous was shocked. He had thought that he was going to lose his left arm forever. Now that he had heard there was a chance to recover, his morale immediately increased.

“They’re people of my home planet. As you know, I left my mother planet to save a disaster of the future. Before I find the solution, I can’t go back. Furthermore, the power of these sisters is not yet strong enough. You’ll have to endure it for some time. I will build a mechanical prosthetic arm for you for now.”

After comforting Herlous, he turned to look at Aroshia. Aroshia still looked like a human made of light.

“How are you feeling now?” Han Xiao asked curiously.

“My vision changed, my senses changed, and the control of my body changed. Apparently, I can extend them infinitely, without the limitations of physical forms.”

As she was saying, Aroshia changed her shape many times and got used to the new changes very quickly.

“Usually, changing shape will change one’s mind too. Do you have any special thoughts?”

“No.”

Han Xiao scratched his head. He suddenly recalled that when Aroshia still had a physical body, she already did not have any desire or curiosity, which was similar to the characteristics of energy lives anyway. He never expected her to really be able to turn into an energy form.

He had quite a number of guesses. “Are you able to change back?”

Aroshia tried slowly. This ball of light kept changing shape for quite some time, then suddenly, she seemed to have found the way. The light particles quickly contracted and condensed, then the light started to disappear, and she turned back to what she looked like before.

The expression on her almost perfect face changed a little. She was a bit curious about her new ability.

The players who were watching this were stunned.

“Ultraman?” Second Prince was dazed.

“Tiga, is that you?” Bun-Hit-Dog was shocked.

Aroshia tried many abilities. She could turn individual parts of her body into an energy state, and she could also turn her entire body into an energy state. In her energy state, her form was no longer limited, but when she recovered to physical form, she was only able to turn back to what she looked like originally. If she was wounded in her physical form, it would disappear after she turned into her energy form and back to her physical form, but that would cost her some energy. As long as she had enough energy, she could recover no matter how heavily wounded she was.

Han Xiao held onto Aroshia's wrist and said, "The energy particles in your body is very active. Your Super genes are activated. You're an Esper, so turning into your energy form is the ability you have awakened."

In his many guesses, the chance of Aroshia awakening as a Super was the highest, and that was exactly the case. This power was her Esper ability, [Energize].

This type of Esper power was considered as shapeshifting, but it could also be considered as elemental controlling. For example, some flame or thunder Esper powers could turn their user into a flame man or an electric man. However, when these shapeshifters took damage during their elemental state, they would not be able to recover from it. In the case of Aroshia's shapeshifting, it was more like a reconstruction of material structure and life form. When she turned into an energy form, she did not have lethal parts. As long as her energy was not used up, she would not die.

Another difference was that Aroshia's shapeshifting was different from those of a single element. Although it looked like she turned into light energy, when she sent energy into the Car Ball energy core, it automatically changed into the compatible electric energy. This meant her energy form could change. Han Xiao was knowledgeable, so he realized Aroshia's potential very quickly.

This was a walking battery and a universal energy source!

Being able to change energy property meant that there was a chance for her to change into very high-level energy, such as particle energy or psionic energy. As for the strength, range, energy limit, and other matters, these would require her to train her power to increase. As soon as Aroshia awakened, her starting point was close to grade C, and her power potential was very high. Part of the reason for that was because her blood contained energy, and she had activated a small part of it.

"You're a Super now. Although Herlous and I are not Espers, we can still guide you on how to use your energy. With your potential, your strength should increase very quickly," Han Xiao said. He did not guide Aroshia to become stronger just because of the related mission requirement—it was also to have another person with combat power in the mercenary group.

This time, Goa and Porter brought their teams along and walked over. Cerleni was covered in bandages and was holding two crutches under his arms. He was limping toward Han Xiao with his subordinate's support.

"If not for you calling the Dragon Emperor, the pickup teams would have been stalled from the start to the end, and none of us would have been able to escape. You saved us all, please accept our appreciation," Goa said with a solemn tone. The hundreds of mercenaries were very thankful.

When the alliance fleet was being stalled, she had already lost all hope, but the Dragon Emperor had appeared and completely turned the tables. The support that Han Xiao had called for was the key.

"Sorry I did not listen to your suggestions back then. That's why I was captured by DarkStar. They tortured me for a very long time and asked me if I have seen a bead. It was very weird. If we were not saved, we definitely would have been killed," Cerleni said with shame. He wanted to put down the

crutches, ignore the dozens of fractures on his body, and hold Han Xiao's hand to express his appreciation but was stopped by Han Xiao.

Han Xiao sized him up and praised him. "DarkStar tortured you so badly, but you hung on, good job."

"You mean these wounds?" Cerleni looked down at the bandages all over his body and said, "You misunderstood, these are from the mothership's crash."

"..." Han Xiao's eyes twitched, speechless.

"By the way, about that..." Goa intercepted and pointed at the sky. "Because Holy Stone's fleet sent a fake message, that's why you were caught. What are you planning to do?"

"You reminded me, they almost got me killed!" Anger appeared on Cerleni's face. He turned to his subordinate and yelled, "Contact them!"

A mercenary took out his communicator and tried to contact Holy Stone's fleet. The other side picked up the request very quickly, and Shivate's face appeared on the screen.

Shivate knew that his decision back then would bring blame, but he did not think that it was a bad decision. All he could say was that he made the wrong bet, so he had no choice but to deal with the consequences.

After receiving the communication request from mercenaries, he told the operator to direct it to him immediately. He was prepared to personally give an explanation and fake some sincerity. He adjusted his shirt and introduced himself. "Hello, I'm Holy Stone Border Guards Army Third Formation Commander Shiva..."

Before he finished introducing, Cerleni yelled at the communicator, using his local language. After being translated through the translator, it was easily understood...

"You moron!"

Han Xiao felt much livelier when he heard that.

NPC cursing isn't muted, nice!

Chapter 403: Rocketing Renown, Transferring to Godora.

Cerleni was cursing like a machine gun. The words that he used were very descriptive and lively, including various positions. The nouns included Shivate's ancestors, parents, wife, descendants, and so on. Han Xiao was enjoying listening to it on the side—he felt a sense of familiarity.

Shivate was stunned by the curses. He could not even interject. His face was as black as the bottom of a pot, and his entire body was trembling furiously.

I am the high-level commander of Holy Stone Civilization. Other than my boss and my wife, who dares to shame me like this? I... will endure it!

Seeing Han Xiao at the side, Shivate pressed his rage down. *This time, we have the moral low ground, so I will give you face!*

Porter's face was filled with surprise. He had thought that he was rough enough, but he had never expected Cerleni, who was usually very sensible, to be grumpier than him.

After he vented out his anger, Cerleni took a break and asked, "Why did you set us up?"

Shivate was expressionless. He explained with a very stiff tone, "You misunderstood. We did want to pick you up, but plans can't keep up with changes. DarkStar set up a blockade, and there was no chance to break through. That's why the pickup team did not arrive at the indicated location on time. This was an accident."

"When we wanted to contact you after arriving at the location, but you did not reply at all. How are you going to explain that!"

"DarkStar forced our pickup team back. Seeing that the situation was not good, we did not fight them and retreated first. We initially wanted to contact you to change the pickup location, but DarkStar used the short-range communication signal disrupter on us and blocked the communication. It was to not let us inform you of the changes to the situation. Then, DarkStar used this message to capture you. It's not strange for you to misunderstand us."

Shivate described it without blinking, as if it had really happened, which showed how experienced he was. With his position, he did not have to explain so much to a group of mercenaries, but Black Star was an exception—his background was too strong. Shivate only explained because of Han Xiao. He faked his sincerity and said, "Our mistake has led to a bad result. I am very sorry about that. No matter what, I have explained the truth, and hope you can understand..."

Cerleni was about to say something, but Han Xiao stepped forward and spoke first. He smiled and said, "So, that's what happened. We really misunderstood you. This is a misunderstanding caused by intel difference. Don't have to apologize, this was not your fault."

Shivate's eyes sparkled, and he said with a very pleased tone, "It's really great that you can understand... Since the misunderstanding has been resolved, I shall not stay any longer. Do whatever you want with these DarkStar people."

As Shivate finished his sentence, the Holy Stone fleet retreated, and Black Raven retreated from the other side as well. The fleets that covered the sky had left, and the exterior space of the planet became empty again.

"You didn't actually believe that, did you? That Shiva-something commander is looking for excuses," Cerleni said.

Han Xiao shrugged and said, "A lie that can't be proved, how can I believe it?"

Goa walked forward and sighed. "Don't hold a grudge for it. Even though we know it's clearly an excuse, we can't do anything to him. He's Holy Stone's border commander after all."

Factions were different, and knifing each other back and forth was very normal.

However, mercenaries believed peace was required to make money. The opponent represented a large civilization that was very strong, and he had just been affected by a shady play—it was not enough to make them enemies. At the same time, it was not worth doing. The higher ups of the various armies would definitely not agree on that, and they could not take revenge personally. Everyone knew what the truth was, but they still acted peaceful toward each other and acted as if it did not happen.

They were all quite upset, but they sighed and moved on.

Han Xiao smiled and did not say anything. On the surface, he took a step back, but he secretly wrote Holy Stone Civilization's name on his notebook. He was not going to just forget it—violence was not technical enough and not worth it. *Since you did me dirty, it is only fair for me to do the same.*

Hmm... When I'm free, I shall find an opportunity to kidnap their main character type of person. No one will know, and I'll get a new officer, two birds with one stone.

Han Xiao rubbed his chin, and an evil smirk appeared on his face.

Far away on Stream Light, Shivate suddenly felt a chill up his spine just as he was being proud of himself.

The cleaning for the battlefield was completed. The parts and broken pieces had been recycled by the mercenaries. Sarota and a few other DarkStar members were tied in one place, and a few deputy army commanders surrounded the captives and discussed quietly.

Han Xiao walked over and asked, "Are these all the captives?"

"Hmm, all the escaping spaceships were destroyed, so these are the only ones alive."

After taking a closer look, Han Xiao realized that Ember was not one of them. *Looks like he exploded when in a spaceship—he should be dead.*

He felt that it was a pity. It was not easy to meet someone with legendary characteristics. Plus, that person's power was countered by him. If he could kill Ember with his own hands, he would most likely get a Molding Talent. Ember had died in someone else's hands, so Han Xiao did not receive any reward from it.

"What are you planning to do with them?"

"It's best to transfer the DarkStar people to Godora. We have contacted Godora, and they are very happy to take over the captives. They are even willing to pay a reward for it," Sky Ring's Deputy Army Commander said.

It was actually more suitable to let Holy Stone or Black Raven take the captives, but neither of them wanted to be involved. Just now, Shivate acted as if letting them deal with the captives was an act of generosity, but he was actually just not wanting to take this hot potato.

Sarota heard this and started to struggle violently. He growled with rage and said, "Kill me!"

If the people of DarkStar ended up in the hands of Godora, there would only be one place for them to go—to be imprisoned in Rainbow Prison for life.

Rainbow Prison only imprisoned captured DarkStar members. The inside of the prison was very mysterious. All the DarkStar members who were locked in there for some time would lose their faith for DarkStar, turning their loyalty to Godora. DarkStar thought that this prison was brainwashing its prisoners continuously, twisting their minds and turning them into betrayers, making them Godora's dogs and tools.

The organization was rather fearful of the Rainbow Prison. Rumor had it that the reason for Godora not executing DarkStar's war prisoners was that they wanted to make DarkStar's people fight and kill each other through brainwashing. It was an extremely vicious intent!

Sarota was not afraid of spending his life in prison, but he was afraid of having his mind twisted. If he had to betray his belief, he would rather die!

A mercenary kicked Sarota on the back of his head and knocked him out, silencing him.

"I'm going to Godora's colony as well. It's along the way, so how about giving me a ride?" Han Xiao said.

"Haha, no problem."

The mercenaries tidied the place up for a few hours, recycled everything valuable, then the fleet took off. The alliance fleet left and headed toward the neighboring Garton Galaxy.

The incident had ended. Peace was restored on this planet. Only the devastated planet surface reminded people that a tragic battle had once happened there.

The things that had happened there were all detailed in Shattered Star Ring Express News. One day later, the other news stations used Shattered Star Ring Express News' material and did another report. The impact of this event was gradually fermenting.

The most compelling part was, of course, the scene in which the Dragon Emperor showed her power. It was repeated many times on various channels. The one who received the second most attention was Han Xiao; he attracted more attention than the fact that DarkStar had suffered a huge loss in this incident.

Countless viewers came to know of the mercenary called Black Star. He was the only team under the Floating Dragon faction that was acting outside Floating Dragon Island, which meant that he was the executor of the Dragon Emperor's thoughts, which had a much higher influence than himself. The name Black Star and his data was rapidly spread among various large organizations in Shattered Star Ring, becoming one of the targets that they paid attention to.

Everywhere around the Shattered Star Ring, regardless of race, as long as they watched the news, they all remembered Black Star's name. Naturally, all kinds of rumors spread out.

Someone passed out a new message—the three large armies and their partners actively requested to form a partnership with Black Star. Black Star, who was previously unknown, was suddenly famous in the mercenary industry, and the number of connections and the size of the network that he had made a lot of mercenaries envious.

In a few days, Black Star's name became renowned!

In these few days, notifications of Renown increasing kept popping up on Han Xiao's interface. It increased across various areas, covering many Star Clusters in Shattered Star Ring. In terms of raw numbers, it grew by a total of thirty-seven points, and it was still growing.

He was a little surprised by this, till he saw the galactical news.

No wonder his Renown rocketed after that; it turned out that he was on television. This fame was a bonus benefit brought by Ames' influence, and it at least saved him a lot of time that would have been spent grinding his Renown. This was very important for the growth of a faction—because of this, his starting point was higher than others'.

...

A few days later, in Garton Galaxy. The alliance fleet stopped at Godora's colony planet, Golden Palace.

Godora's structures had beautiful styles. They liked curves and arcs—curved surfaces and fan shapes could be seen everywhere. The color theme was mostly gold and white, beautiful and pure. Godorans did not like the tight feeling of having too many tall buildings, nor did they like the seriousness of symmetry. The city was made up of short, curved, and more "ancient" buildings. The only tall buildings were the Mage Tower, the Tower of Gal, the government building, and the army stations.

There were no metal transport tools on the road. Instead, there were magic tunnels covered in streams of light. The people walking on it would have increased speed, not any slower than cars, and there would be no traffic jams or anything of the sort. Other than that, some people rode on weird looking mounts, which were more expensive and rarer. The flying carriers had something to do with magic as well. There was a facility called 'Flying Emblem Station', where one could spend some money and rent a magic item with several fixed flying magics. There were quite a number of people flying on the sky. With one flap from the translucent wings behind their backs, they would be able to fly a very far distance.

The people on the street wore many kinds of robes. Most of them were Godorans whose skin looked like they were covered in gold powder. A city's pace could be seen from how fast the people on the street were walking. Godorans walked slowly. Their life was relaxing and casual, adhering to the style of ancient Godora. Usually, magic civilizations would not develop as fast as technological civilizations, and that affected the pace of their lives, the shape of their society, their aesthetics, and their culture.

Han Xiao walked on the street alone. He had gone to Golden Palace to find that master of identification to open the Secret Message Bead. He wanted to see what was inside it that was so important to DarkStar.

The spaceship was still waiting at the dock. Han Xiao did not waste any time and headed directly toward the target.

Chapter 404: Triple Trigger, Origins of Large Events!

The identification mage was staying at a small villa far away from the city. Han Xiao found the place easily and pressed on the doorbell.

After a while, the door opened. An old Godoran walked out and looked at Han Xiao puzzled.

“Who’re you?”

“Hello, Master Angleton. I have come to you for help after hearing about you. I hope that you can help me open an item with magic security measures.” Han Xiao recognized this person as the target, so he went straight to the point.

To his surprise, Angleton was confused. “It has only been three months since I moved here. I did not notify anyone yet, how did you find me?”

Han Xiao was stunned for a second, then he realized. At this period, the players in his previous life were still in their novice planets. He was too ahead of time. Luckily, Angleton had moved here this early, or it would have been awkward if he could not find him.

Angleton could not figure out why but did not dwell on it. He invited Han Xiao into his house and said while he was walking, “You’re the first customer after I moved house. It has commemorative significance. I think I should write this day in my diary. Uninvited surprise guest, what do I call you?”

“Call me Han Xiao.”

“Today is the official opening. To celebrate my first business, I will help you as much as I can...” Angleton smiled.

The inside of the villa was very luxurious. The two of them came to the basement, and there were many magic tools here. Quite a number of magic arrays were embedded on the wall and the floor. There were also many precise instruments to research and analyze magics.

After Han Xiao paid the fees, Angleton placed the Secret Message Bead inside the analytical magic array, flipped open his thick magic book, and started channeling.

Ding.

The seal of the Secret Message Bead appeared in the air. Angleton wore his reading glasses, narrowed his eyes, and observed it. He drew magic lines on the array from time to time, solving it bit by bit, just like opening a lock.

The Mage class and Mechanic class were known as the vastest and complicated classes. There were many types of machinery, ranging from nanotechnology to battleships, from nuclear weapons to psionic canons, from internet technology to artificial intelligence. It was very versatile and mostly about technology. The branches of the Mage class were very complicated as well. There was elemental, secret sorcery, blessing, spacetime, shape manipulation, summoning, curse, and so on.

Mages could learn spells from multiple branches—it had no limitations. They could use ice and fire at the same time if they wanted to. Like Mechanics spending experience to gamble on blueprints, Mages had to spend experience to learn spells as well. As long as they had enough experience, they could learn as many as they wanted. However, to players, there were differences between these two. For a Mage to learn a spell, the spell was divided into different ‘stages’. For example, learning Fire Blast required three stages, and every stage cost experience. The higher the stage, the more it would cost. If a certain stage failed, one had to use experience and try to learn that stage again. When all the stages were completed, the mage would officially be able to use that spell—meaning, the mage would get a new ability.

The success rate of learning spells depended on Intelligence and Mystic. The higher the spell grade, the more stages it has. It was also very experience consuming. It was relatively easier for higher level Mages to learn low-level spells, and it would be very difficult the other way around. Plus, high-level spells usually had prerequisites, such as learning a certain low-level spell or attributes reaching a certain value.

The differences between spell branches were like the differences between machinery types, which was a difference in ability choices. In terms of class focus, the Mechanic class had Cannon Master, Mechanical Pugilist, Mechanic, and so on. The Mage class also had different focuses. The class difference in the Mechanic class was decided afterward, but in the case of the Mage class, it was decided beforehand. The method of awakening decided their path. The first method was awakening Super genes of a Mage normally—those people are born with magic power or those able to activate their magic power through meditation would become official Mages. These were the talented ones.

The second method was for those that could not activate magic power or even had no Mage talent at all. Through planting magic circuitry in their body, there was a chance to generate magic power, granting them the qualifications to be a Mage. This was similar to the Esper class, in which some Espers could self-awaken and some needed Gene Awakening Elixir. The magic circuitry planted into their bodies was the source of magic power; it required continuous enhancement and strengthening. The biggest difference between circuit mages and talented mages was that circuit mages were unable to learn all spells, as circuits usually had certain tendencies. They could only be specialized Mages, as the foundation could not be changed once it was planted, so there was only one chance to choose a circuit.

Of course, as the saying goes, knowing one thing very well is better than knowing many things a little.

Specialized Mages were not weak. Instead, they were the majority. After all, one's energy was limited, so it was better to focus on one instead of not focusing on everything. In fact, there were even some talented Mages who planted circuit in themselves and became specialized Mages afterward. As circuit was equivalent to an enhancement to that certain type of magic, it meant to give up all-round capabilities in exchange for strong spell powers. Goa, for example, was a specialized Mage, a pure Ice Mage.

There was another special type of Mage, called the MagicNet Mage. Their magic power did not belong to themselves; rather, it was 'borrowed' through religion, praying, ceremony, and all kinds of strange methods to come in contact with magic entities of other dimensions—usually of unspeakable appearance. They would then form a contract or deed. They could not learn spells; they could only use spells given by that magic entity. Most of these spells did not cost mana but had a limit to how many times they could be used per day. In other words, they had a cooldown but had no mana cost. The way for them to become stronger was to enhance their connection with the magic entity or to create contracts with more magic entities, granting them more spells and higher usages.

The Great Mechanic Han played a Mage class in his previous life before. It required very high skills, emphasizing on creating combos by using all kinds of spells, and it had countless combinations. It was the complete opposite of the simple and brutal Pugilist class. When battling other players, one had to pay attention to details and make a lot of calculations. It was very suitable for technical players with good brains... Oh, that was except for Fire Blast Style and Summoning Style—these two were more brainless than Pugilist. There was no need for any analysis or whatsoever—they just have to finish their mana bar, and there would barely be anyone standing.

With a cup of magic coconut tea in his hands, Han Xiao sat at the side and waited for many hours. He almost fell asleep.

Clank!

In midair, the magic seal array was finally cracked as it shattered like a mirror.

“It’s done.” Angleton took off his glasses.

“Let me see what on earth is inside...” Han Xiao took back the Secret Message Bead, took a deep breath, and slowly turned it.

Without the seal, the Secret Message Bead was easily split in half. A mini vacuum glass cabinet was fixed to each side. These two things both had a shrinking spell on them, which was why they could fit in such a small bead.

Unknown item identified. You have received [Secret Message Bead] x 1.

You have opened [Secret Message Bead].

You have received [Seventh Generation Mutation Source] x 1.

You have received [Super-Gene Extractor—Test Version] x 1.

“Holy... It’s these two things!” Han Xiao’s breathing stopped for a moment. His eyes were fixed on these things. He finally understood why DarkStar had spent so much effort in tracking this down. The significance of these two things was beyond ordinary—he had almost snatched DarkStar’s lifeblood away!

These two things were connected to two huge conspiracies of DarkStar—they were the origin of two big events! One of them was Planet Aquamarine’s main storyline in Version 2.0—Mutation Disaster!

He had a flash of insight and connected the dots.

DarkStar bought these items from another organization. The seller is outside Shattered Star Ring, so they chose to send one of their subordinates to deliver the goods, who happened to be a Silver. He followed a tourist group here and planned to deliver the goods secretly. However, just as the Silvers were having a tour, they were suddenly robbed by slavers. The carrier was unlucky as hell, and that forced DarkStar to come and find the goods. Then, coincidentally, the other Silvers hired us... They did not know about the deal behind this. Everything that happened was because of the first accident.

Han Xiao was astonished. Through many coincidences, he had ruined DarkStar’s secret deal and robbed them of the goods that they had spent an outrageous amount of money to buy!

Secret organizations selling this kind of product were like arms dealers. DarkStar itself did not have the technology to research new ‘weapons’—they could only buy them. The Mutation Source was already generation seven, so it had definitely been tested in another place before.

As these thoughts flashed through his mind, more than one notification of triggering a new mission popped up in the interface.

You have triggered A ranked main storyline mission [Mutation Disaster]!

Mission Introduction: You accidentally ruined DarkStar's private deal and discovered the source of the Mutation Disaster. DarkStar has secretly planted Mutation Sources in many mother planets of civilizations. When the virus enters its mature stage, a terrifying disaster will arrive. Defending against the disaster is every life's responsibility.

Mission Requirements: Clean up the Mutation Disaster virus and protect the planets where a disaster is going to happen.

Planet Aquamarine – Progress: 0/30,000,000

Planet Barrifos – Progress: 0/21,000,000

Planet Dawn – Progress: 0/19,000,000

...

Success Requirements: Successfully protect any planet mentioned above before the mutation virus reach its mature stage.

Failure Condition: All planets are defeated, and all survivors are forced to leave their planet.

Reward: Depends on contribution.

Remarks: Even if the virus spreads and causes the overall progress to decrease, individually earned progress will still be calculated into reward rating.

[Mission Status: Frozen]

The Main Storyline mission of the next version!

Han Xiao's eyes sparkled in surprise. He did not expect to trigger the main storyline of Version 2.0 in advance.

The main storyline mission of the Mutation Disaster was not an individual mission but a mission carried out by all players. Planet Aquamarine needed thirty million progress points, and every player's actions would be added into the progress. There were many stages of the Mutation Disaster, and the virus would grow, causing the progress to drop by large portions. The mission requirement was to complete the requirements before the virus grew into its unstoppable mature stage. It required all players to work together.

This mission is different from the one players would receive. I remember that the players' mission is just to protect Planet Aquamarine, but my target includes other planets as well... Is it because I got the Mutation Source?

Han Xiao was a little surprised. This was a good thing; it gave him more choices. Of course, he was definitely going to protect Planet Aquamarine first. Not only was it his home, but it was also for the players of the next version.

The status of the mission at this moment was frozen. Only when the timeline reached Version 2.0 and the disaster broke out would the mission start. What he was thinking was how to make full use of the Mutation Source in his hands in order to achieve the biggest impact.

The key component of solving the Mutation Disaster is Godora. In my previous life, Godora took a very long time to invent the cure. If I give them the mutation source, they will be able to invent the cure earlier...

Han Xiao contemplated on the issue. This was probably the best way to maximize the use of the mutation source. However, he had to think of when he should give it to Godora. If he gave it to them too early, the contribution points would not be counted into the mission, and he would be suspected too.

He searched through his memories and had a rough plan. The details had to be improved, but he let it aside for the moment. He looked at the other two new missions.

– You have triggered A ranked mission [Godora's Ally]!

– You have triggered S ranked mission [Bloodline]!

Chapter 405: Throwing the Blame (1)

[Godora's Ally]

Mission Introduction: You caused DarkStar's failure. Godora will reward any actions against DarkStar.

Reminder: This is a faction series mission; you can complete below-mentioned requirements during this mission.

Capture I: Transfer 100 DarkStar captives to Godora (Regardless of strength). Reward: 500,000 experience, +100 Godora Favorability

Capture II: Transfer 10 DarkStar elite warriors to Godora (grade C and above). Reward: 700,000 experience, +150 Godora Favorability

24 targets in total... [Expand/Collapse]

When the mission ends, the rating will be given based on the number of targets completed. Bonus reward will be given.

This A ranked mission had more than twenty targets, the easiest one being [Capture I], which required him to capture some DarkStar members. Even the cleaners would count. The more difficult targets were destroying a certain number of battleships or even a DarkStar mothership. The most difficult ones were capturing or killing a certain high-ranking individual.

These mission targets depended on Godora's actual reward for capturing DarkStar members. If there was a new threat, the mission list would refresh as well, adding new targets.

Han Xiao did a count, and the mission rewards were very rich. Not mentioning the easier missions, the experience reward for those high difficulty targets was at least six million, together with money and faction favorability. Completing some very difficult targets would also give the reward of a random reward, which might give something good.

Those single target missions had the richest reward, such as the target's unique ability or item.

"This is the subsequent events after the Mutation Disaster main storyline. The players' choices will cause them to enter different sides. Godora and DarkStar are considered guides into the galaxy. The players entering the galaxy will be divided into two sides and unlock faction battles. I captured DarkStar's men, so I'm a member of the Godora faction by default, thus triggering the Godora series missions. The opposite mission will be [DarkStar's Ally]. One is a lawful faction, and the other is an evil faction."

The Mutation Disaster main storyline was not that easy. DarkStar was not just going to plant the virus and do nothing else. Triggering the disasters was just their way of completing their plan—it was not their final target.

The players were a double-edged sword; some were willing to unite, and some preferred chaos. Where there was unity, there would be division.

As he was familiar with this mission, Han Xiao was not surprised. Instead, the other S ranked mission [Bloodline] was the more interesting mission even though he had only heard of it before in his previous life.

[Bloodline] was not a hidden mission, but it was very difficult to trigger. The normal method of triggering required a prerequisite of faction relationship with DarkStar or Godora reaching [Reverence], which was 6,000 Favorability. He had obviously triggered it through a different method.

Although the prerequisite was quite high, many players triggered the mission nonetheless... However, no one had ever completed it!

The difficulty of S ranked missions was something on another level. They all had the same obvious characteristic—the mission introduction was extremely brief.

[Bloodline]'s mission requirement was just one very vague target—[Solve the Godorans' bloodline conflict].

Other than that, there was nothing else—not even the reward was written. The players could not get intel from the mission introduction, so they had no idea on the steps and methods required to complete

the mission. They could only use their brains and collect information from countless NPCs, but it was like searching for a needle in a haystack.

The universe was so huge. The high freedom of choice became an obstacle for the mission, and the players were like headless chickens. In his previous life, the players who accepted the mission worked together, walked down countless wrong paths, and were finally able to find the seemingly right path. This mission actually had hidden stages, and the completion of a certain stage was signified by causing a subversive change in the bloodline problem and receiving a rich stage reward. With this as the lead, only then were the players able to move forward slowly while stumbling...

Still, even though the clues online could fill a hundred pages, no one could find a way to complete the final target.

This mission was also listed in articles with titles like ‘Those Missions That Made You Vomit Blood!’ Posts like these that recorded the history of the older versions of Galaxy were ways for newer players to know about the events that happened before. They were nicknamed ‘Galaxy Chronicles’.

The progress of every novice planet had its own chapter. Countless players added on to it and created an enormous chapter. The Great Mechanic Han had been addicted to this before. He had read it like a novel, and it was a very good way to kill time while he set up stores, farmed gold, and boosted accounts.

“At least I know how to complete the earlier stages, so at least I will get something. And about the final result, I’ll let fate decide...”

[Bloodline] could not be completed by any player back then, so Han Xiao could not guarantee that he could complete it as well. However, he was not concerned about it.

These three missions all had very rich rewards. Han Xiao preferred this kind of developing missions that could last him a long time, and most of them were against DarkStar, which made him very motivated.

“Looks like I have quite a few things to do. Hehehe, DarkStar...” Han Xiao smiled.

Other than these three missions, the Super-Gene Extractor did not trigger the related event. Han Xiao guessed that it was probably because he had only gotten the test version, or DarkStar had yet to start this plan.

Without the additional mission, he paid attention to the effect of the extractor itself. Its effect was to extract the power genes of Supers, which could then be stored or given to others. However, it was not permanent—it had a time limit. As the gene compatibility could not reach one percent, the genes would continuously die out after being planted into someone else, which meant that the power would gradually become weaker until it disappeared.

The Supers whose powers were taken away would also not lose their power forever. Their Super genes were taken, but they could recover slowly, generating new genes, and their power would come back. The extraction strength could be adjusted as well. If it was only a little, the target’s power would only be weakened temporarily.

The good thing was that the extraction process could be repeated. Therefore, even without searching through his memories, Han Xiao could guess what DarkStar would do with this.

“The extractor’s effect is quite good, but what’s its use to me? I’m not evil, and I can’t capture people and use them as supplies. Also, I can’t use it on my people... Wait, this thing is a test version, so its effect is definitely not as strong as the final version. Plus, it’s unstable... I should find a chance to test it.”

These thoughts raced through Han Xiao’s head as he put the Secret Message Bead away. Suddenly, he had a thought and asked, “Master Angleton, can the magic seal be recovered?”

Angleton nodded and said with a smile, “This Secret Message Bead used an Almev Six Layer Lock Structure and had three mixed magic arrays embedded into it. Normal Mages wouldn’t be able to crack it. Luckily, you found me. I am specialized in analytics and identifying, so it’s not difficult for me. I did not crack it the rough way—I left a ‘Lock Clasp’, so even an identification apprentice can recover the seal.”

Han Xiao’s eyes sparkled, and he said, “Then can you write the recover spell into a one-time use scroll?”

“No problem, but there’s an extra charge. Just 100 Enas.”

Han Xiao’s face twitched. This reminded him of the tragic experience of him going bankrupt. Angleton’s kind smile suddenly became fraudulent in his eyes—Mages were indeed all profiteers!

Angleton pulled out a magic scroll made from some kind of rare beast skin, then completed the scroll within one minute.

After getting the scroll, Han Xiao paid the money and left without wasting any time.

On the way toward the dock, Han Xiao found a hidden corner, took out the mutation source and extractor, then opened the magic scroll toward the Secret Message Bead.

Hum!

With a flash of light, the Secret Message Bead could not be twisted open anymore. It returned to its original state. The only difference was that Han Xiao had taken what was inside.

Then, Han Xiao took out his communicator and contacted Wilsander.

“What’s the matter Black Star?”

“Is Floating Dragon Island still in Fawn Galaxy?”

“Currently making a stop at a planet to collect gaseous fuel.”

“Not far from Holy Stone right.”

“Nearby the battlefield of that time, why ask?”

“Hehehe, I want to ask you for a favor...”

After he finished the call, Han Xiao returned to the dock but did not continue to take the ship. He brought all his members along and exited the ship, expressing his intention of going somewhere else.

The mercenaries were going to Godora’s mother planet to transfer the captives, so there was no need for him to follow. He was not the one that captured the captives, so it would not be calculated into his

mission progress. Furthermore, after getting the mutation source, he was not in a hurry to come into contact with Godora.

The three large armies did not have any objections. Goa, Porter, Cerleni, and the others said their sincere goodbyes and told Han Xiao that they would work together again if there were opportunities in the future.

Hu!

The alliance fleet took off. The Black Star Mercenary Group stayed at the dock of Golden Palace, watching as the spaceships disappeared out of their sights, one after another.

Herlous turned around and asked, "Captain, what are we going to do now?"

"Old Herlous, you take everyone back to Juberly Hub. It was a tiring journey, so you guys should have a good rest. I have to make a trip back to Floating Dragon Island."

With such a dependable Officer, he did not have to bring the players alongside him all the time.

The Golden Palace was very prosperous, and it had many docks. Han Xiao easily found a Galactic Travel agency and told Herlous to take the players, Aroshia, and the Volga brothers and return to Juberly Hub.

He found another travel agency and headed toward Floating Dragon Island.

...

A few days later, the alliance fleet arrived at the Godora mothership and received a warm welcome from the officials.

Godoran senior officials personally came to welcome the mercenary fleets at the dock. The entire process was videoed and played on the galactical channel, announcing to all the Star Clusters that as long as someone damaged DarkStar, they would definitely reward them handsomely.

After the routine welcome ceremony, Sarota and the other captives were transferred to Godora's military then sent to the Rainbow Prison.

The officials realized that Han Xiao was not in the team and were uncertain.

"Why is Black Star not here?"

"They left in advance to settle some stuff."

Hearing that, this Godoran official was a little sad. The higher-ups paid a lot of attention to this person that had made the Dragon Emperor create such a huge scene. He was thinking of using this opportunity to make some connection with Black Star, but Black Star was not here.

The official told his men to send the reward to the mercenaries and emphasized, "A part of this belongs to Black Star Mercenary Group. Please help to transfer."

The three large armies would not take Han Xiao's part of the reward, so they naturally agreed. Also, they told Godora that DarkStar attacked them to find a black bead.

Cerleni and the mercenaries that had been captured were all asked this question during their interrogation, so DarkStar's target was obvious. Hence, the three large armies told Godora about this.

As these two parties were in contact, Han Xiao returned to Floating Dragon.

Chapter 406: Throwing the Blame (2)

Floating Dragon Island was floating above a huge gaseous planet. Numerous small unmanned harvesters were going back and forth, harvesting gaseous fuel for Floating Dragon like hard-working bees.

In the guards' base, Han Xiao met with Wilsander. This guy had bandages on his head, and he was still bleeding.

The moment that he saw Han Xiao, he immediately rushed over enthusiastically, placed his arm on Han Xiao's shoulder, and pulled him to the side. Then he said softly with a face full of excitement, "The plan you mentioned, I think it's quite interesting. I told Jenny about it, and she agreed. Did you bring the stuff?"

Han Xiao took out the Secret Message Bead and passed it to Wilsander, then said, "Do as we discussed. By the way, you know how to act, right? I can teach you if you don't."

"Do you think I need you to teach me?" Wilsander said with disgust. "How do you think I cleared my name to join Floating Dragon? Just wait for my good news!"

He then took the Secret Message Bead with a smirk, gathered his subordinates, and took off in a spaceship. The spaceship drew an arc, then headed toward Holy Stone's direction. With a flash of light, it disappeared and jumped.

"Why is this guy more in a hurry than me?" Han Xiao shook his head, unsure whether he should laugh or cry.

What he did not know was that everyday Wilsander was in Floating Dragon, he was either catching small thieves or maintaining order, and now that he could go out and stir up some trouble, no matter whose trouble, he was as happy as going on a vacation. As an ex-galactic pirate and a hybrid Demon, chaos was in his blood. The fact that he could endure the boredom and stay in Floating Dragon was all because of... love.

...

Numerous space stations were fixed at the Holy Stone border like anchors. A large metal stronghold was floating in space. It was the Third Formation that was on duty. Holy Stone's fleet patrolled the area. In the Stream Light command room, Shivate was half lying down on his commander seat, and his two legs were placed on the control panel, his hands behind his head. He was having a snooze, relaxing as he was having a sunbathe.

This time, a subordinate reported.

"Commander, a spaceship is approaching. They've sent a contact request..."

Without even opening his eyes, Shivate asked lazily, "Who is it?"

"Err, one of the Dragon Guard Trio, Guard Captain 'Red Wings' Wilsander."

Plop!

The people in the room saw their Commander fall straight off his seat.

Shivate hastily helped himself up with the chair. His face was stiff.

Whenever he heard the name Floating Dragon, he would have a feeling something bad was going to happen.

The other party was Floating Dragon's Guard Captain. After seeing the Dragon Emperor's astonishing strength a few days ago, Shivate did not dare to not give face to them. The request was quickly approved.

Stream Light came to the border, and an opening appeared on the side of the battleship. A mechanical magnetic tentacle extended out and sucked onto the spaceship. Wilsander boarded Stream Light, and Shivate brought his men along to welcome him. They met on the bridge.

"Are you Holy Stone's Commander?" Wilsander said with an expressionless face.

Shivate nodded. "Holy Stone Border Guards Army Third Formation Commander Shivate. May I know why you've come?"

"Yes, here's the reason. A member of Floating Dragon was chased by DarkStar some time ago, and the Dragon Emperor personally attacked and defeated DarkStar. The mercenaries that were rescued exposed the fact that DarkStar's target was a black bead. Black Star reported this to me, and I ordered my subordinates to search for it on the Floating Dragon Island just in case.

"To my surprise, the bead was really on Floating Dragon Island, and it turns out that one of my guards found it. He turned the bead in, and we plan to give it to Godora. Since your territory is nearby, I would like to ask you to help give it to Godora so that we don't have to waste time to travel."

Wilsander said with a solemn tone as if these things had really happened. He took out the Secret Message Bead and placed it in Shivate's hand while he was still stunned.

"Th—This... What? I — I, wait..."

Shivate was completely lost and could not form a complete sentence.

"The item has been delivered; I'll get going now."

Wilsander turned around in a cool manner.

He came quickly and left quickly, leaving a hot potato behind.

To Shivate, this was a disaster that fell from the sky, and he could not even reject it. Although this was a sensitive matter, it required little effort to help out, so there was no need to not give Floating Dragon face. When the image of Floating Dragon Island crashing into the DarkStar mothership, his legs would turn wobbly. Floating Dragon Island was an entity that he could not dare disrespect.

Shivate reported this to the superiors immediately. After they had a discussion, they decided not to swallow the Secret Message Bead themselves. Floating Dragon knew about this, so there was no way they could hide the fact that they took it. Furthermore, keeping the Secret Message Bead would lead to DarkStar's hostility. DarkStar was very clear in how important this was to them. They wondered what was inside.

Currently, Holy Stone was faced with a choice—should they open the Secret Message Bead and take a look?

The answer was a definite yes!

Since it passed by their hands, even if they did not take it, at least they had to take a peek and know what was going on. Anyway, the seal could be recovered, so there was no reason to be afraid.

Holy Stone quickly dispatched an Identification Mage, who spent a day opening the Secret Message Bead. However, the result left them dumbfounded.

It was empty.

How could it be empty?

What did DarkStar want with this? Or was there a hidden message in it?

This made Holy Stone realize what would happen if they gave it to Godora. The Secret Message Bead was empty, and Godora would be suspicious, thinking that they had taken what was inside. And they could not even prove they did not.

Holy Stone was frustrated, but a thought appeared in their mind—did Floating Dragon take what was inside? Was passing it to Holy Stone just to frame them? But was there even a need for Floating Dragon to do this? DarkStar would not mess with them anyway!

Holy Stone initially wanted to hide the fact that they opened the seal. Now they had no choice but to contact Godora and tell them the truth, that there was nothing inside from the start and that they did not take it—it was empty when Floating Dragon gave it to them. Floating Dragon probably took it long ago.

Godora's reaction was straight forward—Do you think I believe that?

How dare you, Holy Stone? Not only did you steal what was inside, but you also want us to misunderstand Floating Dragon and cause trouble for us. How vicious!

Holy Stone had no way to explain themselves or prove what they said—they could only firmly state that they did not take anything.

They suspected and doubted each other, but the item still had to be delivered. After some discussion, they decided to meet up secretly.

...

On Floating Dragon Island, Han Xiao heaved a sigh of relief after hearing from Wilsander.

“The blame has finally been thrown to someone else.”

Although DarkStar failed once, they would not give up so easily. They would still track the Secret Message Bead, and the mercenaries and himself were the top targets. This was a hidden danger.

Han Xiao had done this to clear his suspicion and divert the attention so that he and the other mercenaries would be safe.

Godoran and Holy Stone would most likely keep it a secret. However, the next step of the plan was to have Wilsander ‘accidentally’ leak the information. When that happened, for the sake of not being targeted by DarkStar, Holy Stone would definitely emphasize the fact that they gave the Secret Message Bead to Godora. DarkStar would then have no need to guess where the Secret Message Bead was and target Godora directly, not affecting others anymore. This would mean that the hidden danger was resolved, and that was very important to Han Xiao.

Godora and DarkStar were enemies to start with, so they would not care, but Holy Stone was the unluckiest—they had gotten involved and dragged down out of nowhere, and they became suspected by Godora. Han Xiao had actually made targets that he could choose from, but he had chosen Holy Stone because they set him up once, so now it was his turn.

You don't want any trouble? No problem, we will give you some...

The Secret Message Bead arrived in Godora's hands, which meant that DarkStar basically could not take it back anymore. Only Holy Stone and Godora knew that it was empty—DarkStar had no idea. Even if DarkStar knew about it from other sources, they would think that Godora or Holy Stone took what was inside and would at most suspect that ‘mysterious force’ that had also been tracing the Secret Message Bead back then.

On paper, the first party to have discovered the Secret Message Bead was Floating Dragon Island. Han Xiao had been hidden in the dark all along, and now he pulled himself out of the equation.

Regardless, he and the other mercenaries that had been chased before were now safe.

“This way, the risk should be minimized. Although I have Floating Dragon as my background, it is not me who they fear and respect. My strength is far from strong enough, and it's not suitable for me to face DarkStar head-on. I need to accumulate more strength—maintaining stable growth is more important.”

The problem was finally resolved. Han Xiao felt that his entire body was lighter.

His identity on Floating Dragon Island was a field operative, so he could move freely. Now that his goal had been achieved, he did not stay longer.

A few days later, Han Xiao took a travel agency and returned to Juberly Hub. Herlous had already taken the group back and was standing by and resting in the station.

The three large armies had sent them the reward from Godora two days ago. It was quite a lot, 30,000 Enas. Including this money, Han Xiao had more than 70,000 Enas in his account, reaching a new height. This was just the direct income—he had yet to count in the amount in the players' hands.

This mission was not very dangerous for the players. The intel that they had was too little, so they did not know what was happening the entire time. With Han Xiao doing the work secretly, they had made a

huge fortune. Han Xiao was pleased, too. His effort did not go to waste, and it would translate directly to the players' purchasing power.

Unexpectedly, the hiring mission that was supposed to be simple turned out to be this complicated. Han Xiao had taken quite a number of risks throughout the mission. He initially did this mission for compression technology, but he had benefited much more from it, and the value of the reward was much higher than he expected.

Profit was accompanied by risk. Luckily, he was able to get out of the storm safely.

After so long, Han Xiao finally had the time to digest his reward.

"With the compression technology learned, my combat mode can be evolved to a large extent. I finally won't have to fight everything myself."

Inside the machinery modification room, Han Xiao rubbed his hands in anticipation.

Chapter 407: Thoughts About A New Style

"The first step is modifying all my current machinery into a compressed form so that there will be no need to worry about not having enough backup machinery..."

Modifying all the current weapons was a large process. New structures needed to be added after these weapons were dismantled. Luckily, Han Xiao's current building speed was much faster than before. After being in solitude for two days, he had already finished this step.

Even after staying up for two consecutive nights, Han Xiao was still wide awake. More than ten small metal orbs were laid out before him side by side. They were only the size of half of a palm, and their surface was covered in markings like matrixes. It had a very strong mechanic feeling.

He lifted up a small orb and placed it flat on his palm—it hardly had any weight.

There were two modes of compression. One could be opened by pressing a button, and the other could be activated by energy. The difference was the user's choice. The former meant that anyone could use it, and the latter required the magnetic energy of a Mechanic to be activated, which meant that it could only be used by Mechanics.

These weapons were for his own use. Of course, he chose the latter mode.

Buss!

Electric light flashed past as Han Xiao injected his energy into it.

Clank!

It was the sound of machinery components moving. The compressed metal orb quickly expanded, turning from palm-sized into the one-man tall Amphiptere mechanical suit. The expanding process was very quick—it took one to two seconds to complete. The front armor of Amphiptere opened up like two leaves—Han Xiao stepped in, and the armor closed.

Amphiptere's tactical goggles lit up as the armor activated.

Han Xiao reached out and released magnetic energy toward the other small orbs. The energy quickly connected all the orbs together like a fork of lightning. A concentrated sound of machinery came out from these orbs, and in an instant, they all expanded into all kinds of weapons—guns, cannons, scythes, Bat Wings Flying Device, and so on. They attached to Han Xiao's body in a flash, making him fully armed within a few seconds.

"Quite a good expanding speed, able to enter combat mode anytime. This way, there's no need to carry such bulky equipment everywhere." Han Xiao was quite satisfied. He turned the machinery back to the compressed state.

Modifying the original weapons was the first step. The biggest advantage was that the large increase in the number of weapons that he could possess. As for what kind of machinery he was going to add on, he was still thinking about it.

The compression technology was called 'the watershed of Mechanic class'. Once a Mechanic gain that technology, they could change their combat style anytime and combo them with each other. With this ability came many advanced Mechanic class combat styles.

"Originally, my combat style could adapt to all of close, mid, and long-range combat. The core of that was my mechanical suit. Technically, it was still a single unit combat style. Among the combat styles compression technology can adapt to, the Army Style is the most widely known. There is also a more detailed segregation between Army Styles. When different machinery combinations are used, the focus point of the Army Style will be different as well. However, that's way too expensive. I can't afford it yet with my current financial power. It's not impossible to do if I want to force it, but it's not worth it..."

Another requirement of forming the Army Style was mass productions from an assembly line, which he could neither afford nor had the knowledge for. Most importantly, he had too few robot blueprints that could keep up with his current level. The Army Style had to consist of different combinations of machine types, like a strategic game.

The number of robot types that he could build was not high enough, and there was no strong robot that could play a huge role in combat. The technology used in Rangers could not keep up with his current level. It was still good for bullying those who had a low level, but when it came to fighting with someone around the same level, they would be dismantled in no time.

Regardless, he had a rather clear plan.

"There are a few goals that I need to achieve for now. First, get rid of single unit combat, build allies that can fight individually, and steal the enemies.

"Second, enhance my own area attack capabilities and attack range.

"Third, build a defense barrier around me using machines, viable for both attack and defense.

"Fourth, mobility. So that I can retreat from the battlefield when the situation goes bad, I need to build disruptive and lure devices, as well as machinery to assist in my retreat.

“Fifth, since I now have the compression technology and Basic Machinery Construction, I can build a huge weapon, dismantle it into parts compressed into small orbs, spend some time during combat to build it up, and make it my trump card! Furthermore, it will work very well with my [Flaming Will].

“Also, if the enemy is able to close the distance between us, I will also need combat abilities to protect myself. That will require many Mechanical Pugilist style melee or mid-range weapons...”

This way, he would change his style from singled out kiting style to outnumbering the enemy with his machinery.

Han Xiao wrote down these key elements, then started to recall the suitable machinery. After biting his pen for a while, a plan quickly formed in his head.

“There are four styles that are most suitable for me now—Multi-Turret Firepower Coverage Style, Giant War Cannon Style, landmine planting Trap Style, and Hounds Style.”

These styles were the comparatively simpler styles to outnumber enemies. Other than the Giant War Cannon Style, the other styles only needed low level machinery, using quantity to make up for quality, cheap and affordable.

Although it was a little humble, it was practical regardless.

The Multi-Turret Firepower Coverage Style would solve the firepower problem, the Giant War Cannon Style would serve as a trump card, the Trap style would act as a barrier, and the Hounds Style could prevent enemies from getting too close. In the case of mobility, the mechanical suit could already solve it, or he could build a small single-person transportation tool.

The original single unit combat mode already ensured his personal combat ability—he just had to update his mechanical suit. With the Void Dragon bone and Mini Nuclear Reaction Furnace that he had gotten from Floating Dragon, he just happened to be able to build a new series mechanical suit.

After completing the plan, Han Xiao opened the interface and started to combine blueprints. He needed a large number of low-level blueprints this time.

He had 1.5 billion experience left, a number that the players at the current stage could not even imagine. The reason that the Mechanic class was the most difficult class was because of the blueprint gambling system. It was a bottomless hole of experience, and with every repeated use of the same combination, the experience required would double.

For players, they would usually only use the same combination five or six times. If they were still unable to get the machinery that they wanted after that, they would normally give up because the risk would be way too high. If they spent hundreds of thousands of experience and took the gamble but only combined a useless blueprint or a low level machinery, their mindset would be completely slanted... Regardless, it is exciting indeed.

If a Mechanic could not get the blueprint that they wanted, and the other blueprints would be useless after their level increased, it would mean that they would never be able to build that machinery. Therefore, the difference between Mechanic players was quite large. After all, not everyone could splurge like Han Xiao no matter the cost.

Ding ding ding!

The interface notification kept ringing. Dozens of low-level machinery blueprints were finally all created after spending more than thirty million experience, and this was the expense of using just the basic knowledges. If he did not know the various combinations clearly, it would have cost thirty to forty percent more.

Han Xiao's ability list became very long and dazzling. After counting, Han Xiao received a total of six types of artillery, four types of robots, eight types of mechanical traps, eleven types of firearms, seven types of close range mechanic weapon, and some other random blueprints.

Although there were multiple low-level machinery of the same category, they all had different functions.

"Now that my blueprint inventory is richer, I have many more choices." Han Xiao nodded. This was not his only target. "With these low-level blueprints, there's more material to invent blueprints. By combining the advantages of the blueprints of the same category and inventing a new blueprint, I will then create equipment of my own. It will be top-notch machinery in the same level and category, and its power might exceed its level."

To combine the advantages of multiple blueprints and create his own blueprints!

This was the reason he combined so many low-level machines.

Han Xiao left the modification room and headed to the market area to purchase materials. He had more than 70,000 Enas in his account—taking out a small part of it would be sufficient for him to buy a large number of low-level parts. He just had to wait for them to be delivered.

Before that, he had promised Herlous to build a mechanic prosthetic.

...

In the machinery modification room, Herlous took off the bandages and exposed his empty left shoulder, on which was a very neat wound. He was a little nervous. "What do I need to do?"

Han Xiao was measuring and recording the size of Herlous' wound, and without even looking up, he replied, "Just don't scream too loud."

"Wil—will it hurt a lot?"

"I will have to cut open your wound and connect the mechanic arm with your nerves, so... the pain level should be the same as cutting your arm off again, then putting a piece of metal in your open flesh. Double the pain, buy one get one free."

Herlous' face became stiff. "Can I take anesthetics?"

"Do you not have an idea of your physical capabilities?" Han Xiao took out a small orb expressionlessly, and it expanded into a large hammer. "Do you want me to give you a physical anesthetic?"

"... Never mind. If I wake up midway, I would have taken the beating for nothing."

Herlous swallowed his saliva.

“Wait a while first.” After Han Xiao finished measuring, he took out the materials and started building on the workbench. His movements were extremely fast and dazzling.

Herlous sat at the side very nervously, and seconds felt like years.

Not long after, a mechanical arm was crafted. It had a silver alloy armor, various power output structures, a small shield fixed onto the back of the hand and the forearm, and many tiny nerve connection ports where it connected to the body.

Han Xiao had the Nerves Connection knowledge, so he had combined a prosthetic mechanical arm blueprint before coming.

He took out a small knife and slashed open the scab on the wound, Herlous shivered instantly. Then, Han Xiao picked open the flesh with a small plier, lifted up the mechanical arm, aimed at the wound, and pressed it down.

Hum!

The Mechanical arm booted up, and many thin, long needles extended out from the connection port and drilled into Herlous’ bones to connect to the nerves.

“Tssss!”

Herlous’ body tightened immediately, and large beads of sweat rolled down his body. He clenched his teeth, but a muted scream still came out between his teeth.

After more than ten minutes, the pain finally started to fade. Through the pain, Herlous regained the senses of his left arm.

He tried moving his arm. The mechanical arm moved as he willed through the nerve connection with a buzzing sound—it was practically as swift and lively as a normal arm.

“So, this is what prosthetics feel like,” Herlous said. Then, he waved his arm slammed his fist on the ground.

Boom!

He created a shallow pit on the metal floor.

“This is the S-30 prosthetic shield arm—strong power, thick armor, a rather good model, used for pure physical combat. Use this for the time being,” Han Xiao said.

Herlous nodded. The prosthetic mechanical arm could not generate energy, so his strength as a Pugilist was somewhat weakened, but at the very least, it was much better than not having a left arm.

Herlous hated Ember, who had turned him into a disabled, but he feared him more. He never wants to meet Ember again. Luckily, that horrifying guy was already dead.

Besides, the disability was just temporary. Black Star had said that he had a chance to recover, so Herlous could not help but look forward to it.

“By the way, two days ago, the other Sunil warriors contacted me. They said that they want to discuss something with you.” Herlous suddenly recalled.

“What do they want to discuss with me? To borrow money? Tell them don’t even think about it.”

“Not that.” Herlous coughed, and he was a little embarrassed. “Actually, they want to join Black Star Mercenary Group...”

Because of what had happened with the Dragon Emperor, Han Xiao had become a nouveau riche in the mercenary industry. From what Herlous felt, the goal of joining Black Star at this juncture was very clear—they wanted to benefit from Han Xiao’s identity and fame.

By using Black Star’s rocketing connections in the industry, they would be able to get better treatment, which would, in turn, help them earn more money.

Therefore, it was a little bit embarrassing for Herlous to say. However, life for these warriors was not easy, so he could only agree to help the mercenaries of his race say a few words. He was nervously waiting for Han Xiao’s response.

Chapter 408: Expansion

Han Xiao’s eyes sparkled.

Due to the Dragon Emperor’s influence, Black Star’s name was now well-known. Making more connections in the mercenary industry would equate to more hiring opportunities, plus higher rewards. Those that chose to become a mercenary mostly did so for money, and this was very attractive to normal mercenaries.

“If I make an announcement and send out recruitment notices, there will be thousands of bottom level mercenaries who respond. Although expanding is beneficial for me now, there’s no need to hurry it. I have the foundation now—what I need to do is strengthen Black Star’s position. There’s no need to expand quickly; stable growth is more important.”

Outsiders were not dependable, and his name was on the line. Han Xiao’s target was the future players. He was now just waiting for the next version to start, and then, he would be able to recruit thousands of players. His size would then reach the level of the three large armies. He was not short of manpower, so there was no need to expand in a hurry.

Regardless, Sunils are a very high-quality combat power. Ever since their split, their already bad situation became worse, so their desire to earn money is stronger.

“How many want to come?” Han Xiao asked.

“About a hundred or so. They saw the news, so they reached out to me, expressing their desire to join Black Star.”

A hundred was just a small part of all the Sunil warriors. They saw the Shattered Star Ring Express News and recalled that the grade B Super Herlous of their race was in Black Star. So, someone suggested the idea, gathered about a hundred other Sunil mercenaries, and came to join Han Xiao.

“Let me talk to them personally,” Han Xiao said.

Herlous contacted them. A familiar face appeared on the communicator screen; it was Lerden, whom Han Xiao had met before. As he knew Han Xiao personally, he had been chosen as the representative.

“We meet again, Black Star,” Lerden said.

Han Xiao nodded and went straight to the point. “You guys want to join my mercenary group?”

“Yes, what we mean is to carry out Black Star’s missions under your name, and for that, we are willing to turn in fifteen percent of our commission,” Lerden said. Although they had to give a certain amount of their commission, with Black Star’s connections, they would receive better treatment and be safer. They would only end up earning more.

“So, that’s the joining tactic?”

Han Xiao’s eyes spun. He provided resources and the Sunils provided the labor, both taking what they want.

Plus, the more officers in the faction, the better. These were all NPC resources.

Naturally, the Sunils did not know what Han Xiao was thinking. From their perspective, they benefitted more from this deal. Therefore, at this moment, both Herlous and Lerden were looking at Han Xiao nervously.

Han Xiao put on a pondering face, kept silent for a while, glanced at the nervous face of these two, and then pointed two fingers. “I want twenty percent.”

Seeing that Han Xiao had given his terms, Lerden heaved a sigh of relief and agreed. After some discussion, they decided on the cooperation plans. These hundred or so Sunil mercenaries joined Black Star and formed a team on their own.

An application request popped up on the mercenary group panel in the communicator. Soon after, about a hundred more names appeared on the member list. Han Xiao glanced at them one by one. These Sunils were all experienced mercenaries with very long mission resumes.

“These Sunil mercenaries are quite capable. They are quite a force now that they are gathered together.”

He nodded in his mind. This team was Black Star’s first detachment, the Sunil Division. The highly-skilled players and himself were the direct members. The size of the mercenary group multiplied by two to three times instantly.

The Sunil Division was like the employees, and Han Xiao just had to receive the money.

It’s indeed much more comfortable being a boss.

With connections and resources, there will indeed be people who will willingly work for you.

Han Xiao opened up the Black Star Mercenary Group page—its information had already been updated.

Black Star Mercenary Group

Credibility: 198

Scale: 173 members

Grade D: 41

Grade C: 52

Grade B: 2

Hires Completed: 2

Main Activity Area: Garton Galaxy

Records:

[Sunil Defense Battle (Expand/Collapse)]

[Silver Rescue Operation (Expand/Collapse)]

Creator: Black Star – Han Xiao

Creation date: Galaxy Calendar Year 688, 02 October

Summary: Small-medium size mercenary group, has a good name, has a partnership with Sky Ring, Blades, Purple Gold, and other large mercenary groups. This mercenary group belongs to the Dragon Emperor.

As expected, the Mercenary Alliance wrote in the information about me being a member of Floating Dragon, Han Xiao thought. This was a label that he would not be able to get rid of in a short period of time.

The news brought him many points of Renown in several areas of Shattered Star Ring. The total Renown of his faction was 67, many times of what he previously had.

Although the total was not little, when counted individually, his Renown in other Star Zones was actually just one to two points. To most people in the galaxy, they had only heard of Black Star. The good thing was, the faction interface only counted the total Renown. If he wanted to get to this number through the normal method, he would have to take at least one to two hires at each of these areas. This had saved him from needing to do twenty to thirty hires.

Han Xiao talked to Lerden for a while and told the Sunil warriors to gather at Juberly Hub.

Herlous was overjoyed. From what he saw, Black Star willingness to accept his people was him giving them a helping hand in their tough times. How righteous!

After getting rid of Herlous, Han Xiao opened the player forums, which he had not visited for a very long time.

Countless posts had appeared. The time between these posts being posted was very short, which meant it was very active.

He glimpsed through. There were all kinds of posts such as showing off equipment, discussing duels, selling things, asking to team up, arguing, telling stories, and many more.

The earliest batches of players were already familiar with the game. They had started to go deeper into the storyline and train their skills. Other than Planet Aquamarine, the main storylines of other novice planets were still going. The other planet did not have someone like him who stirred up everything, so their game experience was very normal.

Also, many new players had joined the game recently, so there were many posts from these new players on the forums asking for help.

“Coordinates Planet Winterfrost Pond Of Bones, need a pro to carry [Frost Baptism] dungeon. Price is to be discussed.” This was from someone who was willing to pay.

“Planet Lasting Song villager here, please help me farm Bandit Canyon. I can last hit and shout ‘well played’!” This was from a noob player.

“Female with a cute voice, soft body, and 8/10 face looking for a male mentor. Need to be thoughtful, handsome, gentle, caring, in possession of a magnetic voice, experienced in providing comfort. No chauvinists or hideous men, thanks.” This was one of a kind. Without context, people would think that this was an online dating personal profile.

It had been almost three months since Han Xiao left Planet Aquamarine. Many new players had joined the game. The situation on Planet Aquamarine did not change much, and Sanctuary Three had become one of the default gathering places of players.

The prefix ‘Black Phantom’ on Sanctuary Three had sparked curiosity in some new players. They had asked around about who Han Xiao was, which gave the old players opportunities to show off their seniority, explaining Han Xiao’s past with a lot of emotion, telling the new players that there was this legendary person. Han Xiao’s name became more well known.

There are more and more players now, but it’s still very far from Galaxy’s peak in my previous life... Anyway, this is only the first version. These players will become the most senior players in a few versions. As the versions are upgraded, the level limit of the players will increase, and the environment will become more dangerous. However, this is a double-edged sword, as long as I always maintain the lead, with the help from the players, I will be able to strengthen my position in the universe... Speaking of which, time will not be synced during version updates, and players will disappear too. In just over a year, the first version update will arrive.

It had been some time since he had last visited the forums. As his current activity area basically had nothing to do with the players, he did not pay much attention to the status of players as a whole.

Conversely, the players paid a lot of attention to his actions. Bun-Hit-Dog’s videos were the only source of information on the galaxy, so every release of an episode was extremely popular.

Bun-Hit-Dog edited his videos to look like a drama show. The first episode was when they came to Juberly Hub and created the mercenary group. The second episode was the Sunil Defense Battle. The

latest was the third episode, which was about Black Star joining Floating Dragon. Ember had yet to make an appearance—it was mainly introducing the three large armies and Floating Dragon, as well as the dock scrimmage to rescue the Silver captives, followed by the highly-skilled players catching thieves in the Guards after joining Floating Dragon.

Compared to the two previous episodes, the popularity of this episode created a new high once again. Han Xiao had yet to watch it.

He clicked open the video, and the introduction was covered in countless comments. He gave a closer look and realized that these comments were all very similar.

“47:35, the screen is covered in long legs!”

“Ahhh! Please marry me, Ms. Dragon Emperor!”

“Ames is mine! Draw your sword!”

Han Xiao’s mouth twitched. He finally understood why this episode was so popular—at least half of the audience came to look at Ames.

Chapter 409: Black Star Series: Episode 3

Han Xiao liked to watch Bun-Hit-Dog’s videos; it was a way for him to relax and have fun.

At the start of every episode, Bun-Hit-Dog always did a summary of the previous episode, making it similar to a drama. The third episode was connected to the previous episode. This time, the background displayed before the players was much larger, and there were the space battles, the river of stars, and many more. Giving the players a clearer knowledge of more details of the galaxy. More and more forces appeared—Sivers from another Star Field, three large mercenary armies, the Floating Dragon Island, and so on.

The video was made from Bun-Hit-Dog’s third-person perspective. It started from the Silver recruitment to arriving at the colorful and dangerous Floating Dragon Island, where large mercenary teams roamed. There were thousands of strange species and equipment. The viewers felt a sense of immersion, which sparked their interest. The comments was full of envy.

“Sigh, how I envy these god tier players, able to enter the space.”

“They are strong after all. Don’t you guys remember what happened last time? Only true men can last thirty seconds with Black Phantom.”

“Hehehe, only the god tiers players of our country have been up to the sky. I heard that the professional clubs of other countries are feeling very stressed; their players are working overtime every day just to do more missions.”

The clubs were preparing for the National League in nine months’ time. These pro players following Han Xiao had the perfect opportunity to develop, which made the other competing players very stressed.

Bun-Hit-Dog's cuts between scenes were very straight forward. The next event came very soon. The mercenary group had locked onto the target, and the dock scrimmage started in an instant. It was a scrimmage involving hundreds of people. There were countless abilities used, forming colorful lights and explosions, almost deafening to the ears. There were pirate groups shooting lasers simultaneously, Pugilists crashing into each other head-on, and many more.

The viewers were dazzled, they felt like they were in the battlefield themselves, like a boat in the midst of a storm, following Bun-Hit-Dog's perspective behind Han Xiao and charging forward, breaking through everything before them.

From the perspective in the video, the audience could see Han Xiao's battle very clearly. Han Xiao was in a complex and black mechanical suit, a pair of mechanical turbo bat wings extended behind his back, and his scythe was covered in electric sparks, like a god of death. Then, the heavy attachments fell from the sky, automatically attaching themselves onto Han Xiao's body through magnetic connections, changing into Siege Mode in a blink of an eye. The four-meter-tall mechanical exoskeleton giant waved his hand like an iron sphere, crushing the enemies. Han Xiao was unstoppable.

"These metal parts look so cool. I wonder if he can transform and roll out ¹."

"Ah, these angular lines! Ah, this complex structure! This is the beauty of machinery!"

"Beauty is all Mechanic class has; it's really trash when it comes to fighting. Us Pugilists rank first in professional PKs, what do you think?"

"All you Pugilists do is punching and kicking, there's zero technicality to it. What's the fun in playing that? You have no idea how fun the Mechanic class is, the excitement of gambling blueprints, the sense of achievement of finally building a piece of machinery after collecting materials, the fun in combining styles..."

"And then, the machinery that you spent so much effort building is turned into waste with a few punches from us, hahahahah—"

"Well, aren't you arrogant. If you're so good, why don't you look for Frenzied Sword? Do you think his title of 'Top Mechanical Pugilist in China' is just for show? Also, have you seen the video of North America's top Mechanic during his competition? How many Pugilists did he defeat with ease with his dazzling machinery combos..."

"Well said, I choose Esper."

"The Mechanic class is really too costly, can't top up enough..."

"All of you are trash, my spells will make you feel sorry!"

Other than these arguing comments, there were also people who discussed normally.

"Black Phantom is stronger than before. Was he always this strong, or was he slowly getting stronger?"

"The Planet Aquamarine players are smiling silently."

"Didn't the Galaxy Times mention that this kind of NPC is a main character, and they are very strong. I think, since Black Phantom said that a disaster will happen in Planet Aquamarine and he went to space

to look for a solution, he will definitely play a part in the next version's Planet Aquamarine storyline! Think about it, space is the future, and something will definitely happen that helps us go from our planets into space. I'll bet fifty cents that he'll have something to do with it."

"Waiting for analysts to get slapped on the face."

"Tsk, Floating Dragon's culture is so savage."

Other than discussions, there were also show off comments.

"From a time, I started to have senses. First, a small piece of metal, then more parts were birthed. My world was filled with darkness. I can't see, but I could feel someone was creating my body.

"As time passed, I started to have more senses. One day, I suddenly felt pain, a pain that gradually made my mind clearer. Finally, I had eyes. I tried opening them, and I saw a dense number of data streams in my vision.

"What are these?' I was curious.

"A warm stream of light landed on me, and the colors of the world appeared before my eyes. I looked down, and I saw a small mechanical spider.

"Is this my body?' I thought.

"This time, I heard someone's voice above me.

"It's finally complete." He sounded happy.

"I looked up following the voice. A man looked at me from above, his eyes filled with love, smiling.

"I had never seen a smile before, and it turns out they're so pure and gentle.

"He is my creator.'

"A sense of connection appeared from the bottom of my heart, but... why do I have a heart? Why do I have emotions? I'm just a machine!

"Have you gifted these to me, my creator?

"The man reached out his hand and stroked my body, his temperature passing through my cold armor.

"It turns out, that is what warmth feels like.

"It's so comfortable.

"I couldn't help but rub against his hand. He smiled and said, 'Looks like the Artificial Senses are very successful. The artificial nerves are working perfectly. Hmm, let's put this on standby first.'

"Suddenly, my body stood straight up on its own, and I couldn't move anymore. At this moment, I understood. Although I have sensed, although I can feel temperature, although I can feel pain... what's really controlling me is an artificial intelligence program.

"I'm just a machine; I can't even be counted as a life. The meaning of my existence is to follow the programmed orders.

“But the effort you put in gave me senses. They let me feel this world, feel life.

“That’s fair, isn’t it?”

“It’s alright, I’m willing to be trapped in this body and watch you silently.

“Thank you for creating me.”

“Holy, a master appeared!”

“That was some passage right there.”

“Literature master, do you want an orange?”

Han Xiao enjoyed reading such works—the players had really rich creativity.

Other than those normal comments, the rest were all regular spam comments from the fans of pro players.

“Boss Li Ge’s handsome face belongs to Li Ge Fan Club!”

“I, Hao Tian, don’t agree, fight me!”

“Old Wang (King Admiral) is looking at you second-rate contestants fight with a smile.”

“Black Phantom Engineering Team is here in the comment section to do construction. Irrelevant people stay back!”

What he did not expect was that there were players who sent spam messages with his name—this made his eyes sparkle. Being turned into a meme was one of the signs of becoming a renowned character, so he did not expect himself to have fans.

The video was still playing, and the comments were chaotic. However, when Ames appeared, these different comments all disappeared—they all became rampaging comments of praise!

Ames appeared at the dock, sitting on her dragon bone throne. She wore a high cut black dress, showing a huge portion of white on her thigh, long legs. She was beautiful and stylish, surrounded by a mysterious aura. Combined with her astonishing strength, her attractiveness multiplied. The viewers could not take it.

“Holy sh*t, top-level beauty!”

“All of you, go away! I’m going to lick the screen till it explodes!”

“‘Dragon Emperor’ Ames, one of the four beyond grade A Supers in the Shattered Star Ring. Damn, she is way too sexy!”

“Quickly, pass some tissues to me... Don’t misunderstand, I need them to wipe off the blood from my nose!”

“Ho—how dominant. I’m a female, yet I was seduced!”

“Quick, screenshot, I want to use it as wallpaper!”

“Such a shame her chest is flat...”

“What the hell do you know? What need does such a dominant beauty have for a chest!”

“Let me introduce you, this is my new wife.”

“I hereby announce that the Ames Guards is created at this very moment!”

Ames’ time of appearance was not long—it ended quickly, and the video went into the following events. The video ended at the pro players catching the thieves as members of the Dragon Guards. There were some pro players’ interactions with each other played afterward as bloopers. However, ever since Ames appeared, the comments were stuck on her and could not get out.

“Her screen time was too short. I want to continue watching her long legs!”

“Who the hell wants to watch these pro players? Go away!”

“I have betrayed my belief. Give my Ames back to me!”

Han Xiao closed the video and did not know whether to laugh or to cry. Beautiful females were always popular. After all, most of the people who played games were males—females were very rare. Ames appeared out of nowhere, so her popularity rocketed, almost surpassing his popularity, which he took so long to build.

She was strong, sexy, and her position was superior to most, which was very attractive. Her conditions were way too much better than Han Xiao. There was nothing that Han Xiao could do about it; he was frustrated, too.

In order for male characters to be popular, there had to be something unique, either a strange person, a real man, or extremely strength. He was confident that being handsome was not something that he was short of, but the other factors were not high enough at the moment.

Anyway, the more popular Ames is among the players, the more I will benefit from it. I am currently under the Dragon Emperor, and as long as the players know about that, I can share her popularity and increase the attractiveness of my faction.

This was just something extra for Han Xiao. According to his original blueprint, even without Ames’ influence, he would also be able to make a large number of Planet Aquamarine’s players join him willingly. Regardless, the higher the influence, the better; he did not have a problem with it.

In two days, the materials I ordered will arrive. The number of machines that I have to build this time is very large, so I’ll probably have to build in solitude for quite some time. It’s best to first give those players something to do and make sure they’re not too bored, or they will cause trouble.

...

Bun-Hit-Dog had been very troubled lately.

Although the third episode reached a new level of popularity because of Ames, made him well known, and gave him a lot of fans, it also gave Bun-Hit-Dog trouble.

The Dragon Emperor was too popular. Many viewers sent him private messages requesting him to put in more scene including with Ames in them. Of course, Bun-Hit-Dog was very willing to do so. He had even already thought of the content of episode four. It would connect to episode three, including the twist and turns that came after, finally saving the Silvers, adding on new members, all the way to being chased by DarkStar and the Dragon Emperor's arrival, creating a sensation.

But the problem was, he did not have the recording of this part!

When they were chased by the DarkStar fleet, during the times when he was not doing anything in the spaceship, he was hiding underground, so he had no chance to record at all, and he even missed the part where Ames completely destroyed DarkStar's fleet. This had made him truly regretful.

It was such a majestic scene filled with explosive material, and he did not record it. What a dereliction of duty!

Therefore, he had always been frowning lately. No matter how hard he thought, he could not think of a way to make up for this part of the content.

At this time, Han Xiao entered the resting hall of the stronghold and looked around. Most players were there. They saw him walk in, and all eyes turned to him, flashing with anticipation.

In the eyes of these players, Black Star Mercenary Group was a growing faction of which they could drive the growth. They were looking forward to what items would be updated in the faction store after this hire mission.

Chapter 410: The Beginning of Suffering

After glancing over the players' anticipation-filled eyes, Han Xiao opened the faction panel and put in Sunil NCO Class armor along with some low level machinery blueprints that he had combined earlier and did not need anymore.

Blueprints were only usable for Mechanics. The main seller was the NCO Class armor. He earned the extra repairing fees and enhancing fees from the players' Enlistee Class armor last time. Now that he had introduced the NCO Class armor, those players with money in their pockets would not be petty.

There were three types of Sunil Armor—Defense, Offense, and Scouting. The NCO Class armor was enhanced in all three types. On average, their armor durability was three times higher than the Enlistee Class armor, the total attributes bonus was fifteen points greater, and the melee damage was increased by twenty points.

There were also new parts. The scouting style armor could move very fast; it had spring mechanics in its legs, which allowed the user to jump higher and further, and chain blades could be ejected out of the arm, which meant that it would not be afraid of close distance combat.

The defense style armor was equipped with heavy firepower. Weighted toward long-range combat, it had a handheld high caliber cannon with armor-piercing bullets, and the cannon could be folded. After expanding it, the cannon was about one-man size. With every shot, the flame from the cannon was like

a cloud of thick smoke from an explosion, and the bullet shot out was like a mini flaming meteor. Its fire rate was very high, its bullet magazine capacity was 250, and there were many backup magazines.

The offense style had the advantages of both of the other styles—it was well rounded.

Some time ago, Li Ge had exchanged an NCO Class armor for the Secret Message Bead—it was a scouting style armor. Because of this, the others knew about the attributes of the armor and were all envious. Once they saw that the faction store had updated, they were all excited. There was no need for introduction, they all bought it as fast as possible.

The price he set was 1,400 Enas, and he also set a Reputation cost, which was 1,000 Reputation points. He had set that between 0 to 1,000 Favorability, 50 Enas could exchange for 100 Faction Reputation. The players had spent 500 Reputation points last time when they bought the Enlistee Class armor and spent all their Reputation points. After this mission, Han Xiao had rewarded them another 300 points. Such a scheme meant that the real cost of buying an NCO Class armor was 1,750 Enas.

The players received about 5,000 Enas from the Silver as a reward, and this would cost them more than a third of that. However, the players did not hesitate at all. The pro players earned money for the sake of buying equipment to increase their strength as much as they could.

There were seven NCO Class armors in stock—the rest were all preorders. The players were used to it, and they did not doubt the faction's credibility at all. The first seven people to purchase got the physical item. It was made of gray metal—thick, tough, and angular. It was uniquely attractive.

Frenzied Sword got one. He wore it quickly and put on the helmet. His vision became overlapped with the analytical vision from the helmet. Every item that he saw had a database tag on it. A mechanical mixed voice appeared in the helmet.

“Welcome to Black Star. Your serial number is H-A0001. Carrying out auto-check... Check complete. Armor status: 100%. Liquid power: intact. Weapon system: intact. Spring system: intact. User vital signs: normal.”

Frenzied Sword tried moving his arms and legs, creating the clankings of mechanical parts moving, adding power to his movements. His punches made whooshes in the air.

This armor is so much stronger than the Enlistee Class armor. I bought the scouting type, so it's very mobile, which works very nicely with heavy weapons, decreasing the effect of the bulkiness. I will be able to battle very swiftly, Frenzied Sword happily thought.

As a Mechanical Pugilist, he used melee weapons most of the time. The NCO Class armor gave him the most benefits as compared to others.

The Mechanic class was the class with the highest armor bonuses. The players of other classes could use them too, and its effect was pretty decent; it gave them extra protection and firepower as well as more health. Mostly, they needed the various functions of the armor. For example, the very paper ¹mages could wear a protective armor, then stand still and only do damage output. This kind of mixed style was very strange and funny.

The Enlistee Class and NCO Class armors were uniform armors. The stronger Commander Class was for Supers, and it had even stronger attributes. Han Xiao had yet to learn how to build it.

As always, Han Xiao held back when building the armor, leaving room for enhancements.

Other than armor, the few Mechanic players in the faction liked the newly added blueprints more. They were afraid and careful every time they gambled on blueprints, and now they could directly learn quite a few blueprints from Han Xiao. They were overjoyed.

The blueprints that Han Xiao put in were, of course, types that were not important but were still useful regardless. He kept the important blueprints for himself and sold the not-so-important ones. It was more effective this way.

Maple Moon's eyes were shining, and her cute face was filled with joy.

"Optical Confusion Trap, this is not bad. Wait, that Scattered Shot Turret is quite good as well..."

Even though Maple Moon was considered as a quite casual girl, the Mechanic class had still made her develop a habit to control her spending very tightly. One blueprint only cost 300 to 400 Enas, much cheaper than gambling blueprints. She used her fingers to press one time after another, buying again and again.

Han Xiao paid more attention to the Mechanic players. Not only because they were of the same class as him and it was easier to earn their money, but also because they could become his helpers once they grew stronger, which might help him to enter the next stage of the Mechanic class in advance.

Of course, the other pro players did not care about these blueprints. Only the NCO Class armor suited their taste.

Selling things was not Han Xiao's main goal. He gave out a number of faction missions, which he had prepared long ago, and their rewards were all Dungeon Crystals. He had intercepted some later parts of Germinal Organization storyline and created level 60 dungeons, as well as the recent [Warfare: Power of the Dragon Emperor].

Dungeon Crystals could only act as a mission reward and could not be sold directly, but rules were dead and inflexible. He planned to make these missions that rewarded Dungeon Crystals repeatable missions, and the only requirement to complete that mission was to increase a certain amount of Faction Reputation after accepting the missions.

He purposely set it as 'increase' and not 'reach' a certain amount. For example, after accepting the mission and increasing Reputation by 500 points, the mission for [Warfare: Power of the Dragon Emperor] would be complete, and that Dungeon Crystal would be rewarded. At the same time, the other dungeon missions with lower numbers would be completed as well, making the players feel they took a shortcut. This way, more players would be attracted to spend money to buy Reputation. Once they spent money to purchase Reputation, they would have to spend it one way or another. The Faction Reputation could only be used with Han Xiao, so this would, in turn, encourage expenditure.

Also, once above 1,000 Favorability, the cost of buying Reputation would increase. If the players wanted more Dungeon Crystals, they would have to repeat the process of 'buy Reputation, spend money, buy Reputation again'. Although, sometimes, there was no new product, he had many extra services, such as repairing and enhancing.

If the player wanted to buy something initially, this kind of mission would become a bonus reward. It would work as a promotion. If the player just wanted the Dungeon Crystal, it would attract spending.

Anyway, there was only one service belief—Don't ever have to worry about not being able to spend your money here!

Han Xiao was very bad. He only gave out this mission after the players bought the armor.

“Wow, new missions, and the rewards are Dungeon Crystals.”

“The requirement is to increase Reputation. How sad, if there was this mission earlier, it would already be completed.”

“Actually, it doesn't matter. We still need to enhance armor and whatnot anyway. Furthermore, there will definitely be chances to use Black Star's Reputation in the future.”

“Hey, there's a new dungeon here, Power of the Dragon Emperor? Isn't this the event that we experienced a few days ago? So, not only does the faction update the store, it also turns our experiences into dungeons!”

They were surprised. The benefit of a growing faction was really so good. This was a pleasant surprise. After they followed Black Star into space, they had yet to meet a dungeon. They did not expect that this faction had a dungeon of its own. After they experienced more hires, new events would be turned into new dungeons as well, which meant that they could choose it themselves.

Seeing this, Han Xiao thought, *That's right, if a faction can stably provide dungeons, it's another type of attractiveness.*

The people were most curious about the Dragon Emperor dungeon; this was a new dungeon that they had never seen before.

In the crowd, Bun-Hit-Dog saw [Warfare: Power of the Dragon Emperor]'s mission. Suddenly, his heart started beating faster, and his eyes became brighter.

“This dungeon... the scene back then might be displayed again!”

His heart was pumping fast. He immediately bought 500 Reputation. With excitement, he touched the Dungeon Crystal, and a message popped up on the interface.

LV 90 Dungeon Crystal—[Warfare: Power of the Dragon Emperor]

Introduction: At the border crossing of Colton Star Cluster's Holy Stone Civilization and Black Raven Civilization, a mercenary group was chased by the DarkStar fleet. At the most urgent time, [Dragon Emperor] Ames arrived. This will be your test.

Dungeon Type: Backward Time Travel Dungeon

Player limit: 10

Player Completion Count: 0

Highest Dungeon Completion Rate: None

Record Holders: None

The people extended their head to this direction and saw the item introduction, and they were all shocked by it.

“Level 90 dungeon?”

This had exceeded their level limit!

The level on Dungeon Crystal did not represent the required level to enter but the suggested level to complete it. Even a level 1 player could enter a level 60 dungeon, but of course, the result of that would be obvious—that player would not be able to do anything inside. Even if the level 1 player found a team of boosters, because of the large difference between them and the dungeon enemies, there will be a very high experience penalty and rating penalty.

Dungeons could be used to farm experience and train skills, but the equipment inside could not be taken back out. However, if the rating was high after completing the dungeon, one could be rewarded with the chance to draw items and equipment from inside. These were the benefits of dungeons. Dungeon had a challenge time limit, which would be refreshed every certain period. In order to receive top tier weapons in the dungeons, if one could not get the highest rating, it would be a dream. Till now, the players from various planets had challenged many dungeons, but the number of dungeons that rewarded good equipment or items was very low, not to mention the difficulty.

Regardless, players had never seen a level 90 dungeon before. They were all shocked by the fact that Black Star Mercenary Group could give out such a high-level dungeon.

Han Xiao smiled in his mind, turned around, and left.

NCO Class armor, blueprints, and dungeon missions—a total of 98,000 Enas profit, close to 100,000. Including the money I already have before this, the balance in my account is already more than 130,000, which is at least enough for three class advancement knowledges! Han Xiao was very satisfied and felt fulfilled.

After he left, the players in the stronghold could not wait to team up. They wanted to see what a level 90 dungeon felt like.

Bun-Hit-Dog teamed up with Frenzied Sword, Maple Moon, and Hao Tian, who were his friends, plus players from Long Sky and other clubs, making up ten players.

He crushed the Dungeon Crystal, a fog flew out and covered everyone, bringing them into the dungeon.

...

The world in their eyes changed. Suddenly, Bun-Hit-Dog and the rest could not control their bodies. The angle of their vision became higher, and they looked down at a very familiar planet—Fawn-122 Planet, where the pursuit took place.

The Silvers' spaceship took off and rose up through the sky, then was suddenly destroyed. Right after, the DarkStar mothership appeared, sending out a large number of hovering ships to chase the three mercenary spaceships. This was indeed the event that they experienced, but back then, they were all on the spaceships. Now they were watching the process with a third-person perspective. It was a brand new experience.

"This is the cutscene." Hao Tian was experienced.

Quite a number of dungeons had cutscenes, so they were not surprised. They all could not take their eyes off.

The enormous DarkStar fleet, the chase of countless hovering ships, and the crazy escape of the three mercenary spaceships. The scenes were very impactful. Then, they saw the Sky Ring spaceship suddenly speed up, and its movements became extremely swift and unpredictable. The hovering ship fleet behind was running around like dogs being walked.

"Wow, this is even stronger than drunk driving!"

"I remember Black Phantom was the one piloting that time, no wonder the people on the ship were this dizzy." Fear still lingered in Frenzied Sword's heart.

The cutscene was about three minutes long. This was a copy-pasted scene made by the dungeon, not the real scene. The event progress was compressed and modified. The mercenary spaceships went underground at the same time as when the alliance fleet's reinforcements arrived.

The cutscene ended there. As the captain, Hao Tian received a message.

The dungeon is about to begin, please choose a faction!

Remarks: Faction chosen will affect the dungeon's completion targets and difficulty.

Escaping mercenaries: Your mission is to run from the pursuit and last until the Dragon Emperor's arrival.

DarkStar chasers: Your mission is to capture a certain number of mercenaries before the Dragon Emperor arrives.

Reinforcements: Your mission is to fight against the chasers, protect the target mercenaries from being captured, as well as pick them up—all before the Dragon Emperor arrives.