

## **The Mechanic 591**

### **Chapter 591: Changing Main Cities**

After informing them of his identity, the attitude of the Planet Golden Gate guards became immensely respectful, and they were immediately allowed to proceed. With the Golden Gal Badge, he had a transcendent status in the eyes of the Godorans and could move almost unobstructed through the Garton Star System.

Countless players swarmed to the portholes, taking in the grand appearance of the Base No.1.

The Base No.1 that had taken a whole year to build resembled a castle coated in alloys. Han Xiao was deeply aware that this was an era where looks mattered, so he had made the exterior especially beautiful, full of technological impressions.

If not for the fact that it would result in him being judged by the players as narcissistic, he would even have liked to paint a portrait of himself on the castle walls.

The fleet successfully landed in Base No.1. During its construction, Han Xiao's blueprint had reserved a huge section of space to serve as a hangar, which would be more than enough to accommodate sixty to seventy individual spaceships. Even the largest flagship level spaceship had a personalized hangar for it.

The air vents sounded as the ships were depressurized. The doors of the cabins slid open, and tens of thousands of players stepped into the hangar, curiously looking around. They were packed closely together, looking like a sea of bobbing heads.

At this point, Phillip's voice sounded in the hangar area, cutting through the hubbub of noises as it was clearly transmitted into everybody's ears.

"Welcome to Base No.1, hum... I would like to ask the new mercenaries to open their communicators and manually accept the verification procedures, hum..."

As he spoke, the communicators of the players suddenly rang all at once.

Frenzied Sword took his out, only to see that there had been new programs added to the communicator. After opening it, he found out that it was the mercenaries identity verification program for the Black Star Army. There were additional functions, such as searching for a particular area of the base, database query information, and so on...

Basically, it was a guide meant to simulate an AI in certain ways.

This was a sub-program made by Han Xiao for Phillip. The players would be able to find out about their own tasks and credits within the Black Star Army through this program. Since the players were also free mercenaries, there had to be a separate account for their accumulated credit, so it would be convenient for management and overall planning. This would also make it convenient for players to check their current accomplishments.

To enhance the sense of accomplishment within the players, there was a need to allow them to see that each task they completed would be reflected real-time in the records of the Black Star Army. There would be no underhanded moves, and everything was transparent and open.

Because the players obtained rewards through the [Operation Hodellas – War Employment] mission, they had all bought their own communicators during their trip to the Godoran mother planet.

Because the market price for such communicators was dirt cheap, there was no way for Han Xiao to earn by being the middleman, so he did not even bother to dabble in this business.

Base No.1 had been built after Frenzied Sword, Hao Tian, King Admiral, and the rest left during the patch from Version 1.0 to 2.0, so they only received the subprogram at this point.

“So, this is the base of our Black Star Army. Pretty cool!”

“Strange, in the last version of your video, there wasn’t such a huge base!” Someone stared at Bun-Hit-Dog, causing the latter to quickly cover his face and leave.

“Heh, it must be the change in timeline along with the update in the version. It’s not the first time this type of thing has happened.”

Including Frenzied Sword and the others, this was the first time any player had ever set foot on Base No.1—they were all excited.

The purpose of Base No.1 was to allow the players to treat this place as their Main City. With this faction camp, people would feel that their faction had influence and was reliable, generating a higher sense of belonging.

With the subprogram present, Han Xiao did not need to explain things personally any longer. He did not bother managing the players, allowing them to move about as they wished.

Once upon a time, these players’ main city had been on Planet Aquamarine. However, they had now shifted to Base No.1, and thus, they needed to be familiar with the current main city to dispel their confusion.

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Back in his room, Han Xiao took some time off to clear his backlog of work, such as the applications for free mercenaries to join his group, as well as some new employment invitations.

After the ceremony where he showed his face, the amount of business cases showed an exponential surge. There were even cases that invited him, a mercenary, to be their endorser for an advertisement. They had to be crazy!

However, upon closer inspection, he realized that the other party was an arms company. That made more sense.

By recruiting the tens of thousands of players, following word of mouth and his spike in popularity, Han Xiao thus decided to recruit as many free mercenaries as possible. Although the players were good, they had a restriction—the version updates. As such, he had to plan ahead.

To use players to expand his Black Star Army, improve word of mouth to attract more free mercenaries. This also worked as a chain of interest.

The backlog of employment tasks was endless. Phillip sorted them according to the difficulty, and the entire layout became clear at a glance.

The majority of the employment tasks would be provided to the players themselves. Only a few high-paid, difficult, or high-levelled tasks would require his officers or even himself to be involved.

Due to the mercenary model of borrowing chickens to obtain eggs, the players would be sent to different places throughout the galaxy to carry out their missions, which would allow them to explore the area. The place where each mission was to be completed would have their own events and plots, which could make up for the lack of knowledge the Black Star Army had, as well as giving the player some additional benefits.

Furthermore, the players had just entered the interstellar region not too long ago and required a stable flow of activities to allow them to familiarize themselves with the environment, as well as a storyline that could guide their actions.

To this end, areas with rich NPC resources such as Planet Sunil would have most of the functions that the players need, including a storyline.

If the players were seen as seeds, then the NPC resource areas would be the soil with fertilizer.

Planet Sunil was the first pilot test that Han Xiao had prepared for the players, and it was also time to complete his promise to Herlous.

Han Xiao looked deep in thought.

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“Black Star, were you looking for me?”

Herlous pushed open the door before entering the room.

Compared to the past him when he had just followed Han Xiao to be a mercenary, Herlous’ aura had become calmer and more stable. As a mercenary, they had no shortage of opportunities to fight, and Herlous’ strength was slowly increasing with each battle.

“Herlous, I promised that I would bring tens of thousands of Supers to solve the problem of the Sunils’ once and for all.” Han Xiao paused and smiled. “In the name of the Black Star Army, I’ll loan 200,000 mercenaries to you with the most basic remuneration. During this mission, they can be dispatched to Sunil.”

Herlous paused in shock before his face showed unbridled joy.

This was why he had followed Black Star and was also the reason he had believed in Black Star’s promise. The day had come!

At this moment, he was extremely touched and would gladly pull out the knife for Han Xiao.

As for what he would pull the knife out for, even he had no idea.

Reluctantly holding back his excitement, Herlous spoke quickly. "I'll inform my people immediately, allowing them to issue a formal invitation to hire the Black Star Army."

"Sure, but I have an additional condition." Han Xiao nodded.

"As long as it is within our capabilities, I'll promise you."

"It's nothing too serious. I would just like to have permission to build an offshore base of Black Star Army on Planet Sunil." Han Xiao smiled harmlessly.

Each NPC resource area was a great place to provide players with benefits. So long as there was a sub-base established in the location, it would be indirectly counted as the 'territory' of Black Star himself.

"No problem," Herlous straightforwardly replied before pausing a while and adding on, "This is good for us as well. The upper echelons will not reject your idea."

Because of the award given by Godora, Han Xiao's face was akin to a golden signboard. He estimated that if he went out to buy fruits from a stall, he would probably obtain a five percent discount.

After sending away the excited Herlous who was getting irritating, Han Xiao opened his communicator and activated Phillip's feedback interface.

All players who had installed the subprograms were immediately shown as red dots and displayed on his map in real time. With Han Xiao's expertise being in Virtual Technology, this was just simply surveillance in disguise.

It was not that he could not be assured by having players around, but he did not wish for them to mess up themselves.

Inside the map, the players had spread to every corner of Base No.1, with the majority being clustered in the store area.

Seeing the situation, the corners of Han Xiao's mouth curled up, showing a pleased smile.

"The old inventory finally has a pathway to go."

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Base No.1 was divided into many different areas, with the store area sector allowing players to obtain products from the existing inventory. After paying the required amount, Phillip would draw out the respective item from the warehouse. This whole process was automated.

At this moment, there was a long line of players lining up in front of the stores.

Because the production of the assembly line had never stopped, it had resulted in a huge stock of equipment and machinery being stored. The machinery had all been carefully selected by Han Xiao and was very suitable for players at this stage. It would be ideal for players to replace their current equipment.

For the players other than Frenzied Sword and company that did not have the NCO Class armor, they had an even greater demand for more advanced equipment. As long as there was a demand, there would be a market. If there was no demand, he just had to create some!

Set after set of equipment was quickly sold, and the fully stocked warehouse was just like a beautiful love scammer, slowly sucking dry the players'... wallets.

This turnover has caused the Enas in Han Xiao's inventory to raise at a staggering rate. One million Enas? A mere fraction!

Although the equipment was all assembly line products, their quality was not low at all. Furthermore, because the equipment required a higher level of technical skill, the base price could not be set too low. Hence, even if the players spent all their money, they simply did not have enough to replace all their current equipment.

This was especially so for the expensive full body armor, which gnawed on the stomachs of the players like parasites.

The moment the players lacked money, the first thing that would come to their mind would be to complete more tasks!

For this, the subprogram of Phillip showcased a dazzling list of acceptable employment tasks.

Most of those missions had considerable rewards. According to the procedures set by Han Xiao, Phillip explained that this was a benefit brought by the reputation and connections of the Black Star Army. Only mercenaries who had joined the Black Star Army could enjoy such a good employment task. If it was a free mercenary, they would probably have to risk their life for a meagre reward.

The reason Han Xiao had requested that Phillip emphasize this was to ingrain in the players the benefits they could enjoy by being in the Black Star Army. Furthermore, being a growing faction, helping the Black Star Army in its missions would make it such that both parties benefitted.

"The rewards are plenty!"

"The best missions will definitely have a lot of people fighting over it. However, the failure compensation is also equally high."

The majority of players discovered the benefits of being a mercenary.

The most obvious thing was that the reward for these interstellar missions far exceeded that of the missions on Planet Aquamarine. Furthermore, they were now free to choose their missions and had great freedom in completing them, which made those players who were frustrated over triggering mission enjoy this new process.

Each employment mission could have multiple people participating, although the maximum number would vary. Players that wished to accept a mission would first have to submit an application through the subprogram, and then Phillip would operate to access their qualifications. If the player met the requirements, the application would be approved. Only then could the player be officially counted in the mission.

Because the requirements also included the difficulty of the employment missions, the difficult missions would definitely be more rewarding. Many players wanted to grab the high-paying employment missions, but all their applications were rejected.

Phillip explained all this to the players.

Han Xiao had set up a faction level system, to provide players with a way to advance within the system. With the base level as 1-Star, the higher one's level, the higher one's authority and standing. That personal level was also used as an application standard for employment missions, which served as a gauge to the difficulty they could handle. Players had to first complete enough low-difficulty tasks to raise their credibility points in order to be eligible for the more difficult tasks.

This was to protect their reputation. Han Xiao knew the players too well—they loved to fool around. If every mission ended in failure, this would hurt the reputation of his faction, and all the glory obtained thus far would be lost. Thus, such a safeguard was needed.

In addition, Han Xiao also set up another system. Players could browse the employment list anywhere, but they had to return to the base to accept a mission.

The reasoning provided was that there was a need to verify the identity of the mercenary and to prevent theft of the communicator. In actual fact, it was to prevent players from staying outside for an extended period of time, ensuring that they returned to the main city and cultivated their feelings... as well as to spend money.

If they did not come back, how could he earn money from them?

On the other side, the players whom had originally followed Black Star into space had mixed feelings.

"The way to accept missions has been changed..."

In Version 1.0, they had followed Han Xiao to perform various missions. However, they had now been given the right to freely choose the missions. The most intuitive feeling was that their faction's strength was becoming stronger and stronger.

At this moment, a new employment notice was placed on the subprogram's employment list.

Sunil Rescue Operation: Large Scale Employment Mission

Mission Introduction: Planet Sunil is plagued by catastrophes. With the suggestion of the Black Star Army Officer Herlous, Black Star has decided to issue a designated employment to the Black Star Army, recruiting a large number of mercenaries to solve their disasters once and for all.

Mission Requirements: Proceed to Planet Sunil to solve the source of the disaster.

Number of recruits: 200,000

Remark: This is a large-scale mission. Completion of this task will raise the reputation of the Black Star Army. There will be increased benefits as well as a new base.

"Wah, 200,000? That's almost half of our total numbers!"

"This must be a big event."

“Sunil? Catastrophe? Isn’t that the storyline that Bun-Hit-Dog posted on his channel? Turns out, there’s actually still a continuation.”

The majority of players immediately felt curiosity.

The remuneration was not high. After all, the lives of the Sunils were not well off. They could not help but wish that every Ena they had could be split into five. Han Xiao had given them a preferential price, and thus, the other party was able to afford it. However, due to the fact that it was a large-scale employment, the experience reward was still sufficient.

The large-scale employment of 200,000 players was undoubtedly a main storyline in the eyes of the players. Many of them wanted in on the ‘fun’, so gathering the required amount was not difficult at all.

Among the hundreds of thousands of players, those who were casual players numbered higher. Compared to the professional players or players belonging to large guilds, the adaptability of the casual players was weaker.

The interstellar map was extremely broad, and upon seeing the large number of tasks as well as the high degree of freedom, the casual players were thrown into confusion, not knowing what was good.

The employment task of the Sunils served as a way to ‘guide’ these players.

Not sure what missions to take? Just follow the crowd and take up this large-scale employment. As long as there was a crowd, there would not be any problems.

Just in case, to ensure that the mission could attract a significant number of players, Han Xiao also increased the faction favorability reward, and modified the mission description to emphasize it as a task that could help the faction to grow. This served as a form of motivation for the players.

However, Han Xiao could be said to have been overly worried this time. Being awarded the medal from Godora had resulted in him getting sensationalized on the forum. The players realized that Han Xiao was already a famed person shining within the universe.

The players could be said to have watched Han Xiao grow along the way and had a sense of gratification to fight for the Black Star Army.

While the reward was not high, many of the players would not mind participating in missions that would allow the Black Star Army to grow.

After so many years of his actions, Han Xiao had gradually imprinted himself on the players’ hearts.

## **Chapter 592: The Investment from Noriosse**

On the forums, many of the players were sharing their own views. The Planet Aquamarine sector became the most happening region, and many players from the other novice planets also came over to take a look from time to time.

Some players posted about the different strange looking species of the universe and others the magnificent scenery. There were even some who posted their selfies with the various NPCs... mainly Aroshia, Feidin, and Sylvia.

Since Han Xiao made a promise to Risda, he sent the scenes of Aroshia's memories to all the players and gave them a new mission. It would naturally be more efficient to mobilize all the players to search together.

Bun-Hit-Dog and Galaxy Times closely followed the trend and released a new series. The content of the series was the first beginner planet entering the galaxy. The series introduced the Black Star Army, the various facilities of Base No.1, and the award ceremony of Black Star.

Han Xiao, who was already a famous NPC among the players, once again had his fame boosted.

There was another hot thread at the moment, which was about Planet Aquamarine's changes.

There were still tens of thousands of players trying to pass the test in Base No. 2, and they personally witnessed how the galactic financial groups aided Planet Aquamarine in its development, opening up many new opportunities in the process.

Han Xiao found out from the thread that Planet Aquamarine experienced a huge breakthrough in technology through the aid of the galactic financial groups with many new buildings shooting up from the ground. Planet Aquamarine was rapidly stepping into the galactic era.

Han Xiao was not too surprised by this outcome. When he invited the reporters to Planet Aquamarine back then, he had already expected such an occurrence.

However, the way the players felt about this phenomenon could be described with a single phrase.

A single person receiving enlightenment, the chickens and dogs rise to the heavens!

The players worked together to piece together Planet Aquamarine's history, and the change that they were witnessing before their eyes could be said to be a result of Han Xiao's actions alone.

Planet Aquamarine was able to develop so rapidly only because of Black Star's influence in the galaxy.

Bringing benefits to the billions of inhabitants on Planet Aquamarine, this alone would make Black Star the hero of the planet.

Han Xiao's charisma formed a strange sense of attraction between the players of Planet Aquamarine.

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A few days later...

The players could be split into four general groups.

First, the ones who stayed in base and familiarize themselves with the new Main City. Finally, they would accept missions from the Black Star mercenaries.

Second, the indecisive ones who did not know what to do. They would end up remaining on the prosperous Planet Golden Gate, digging up missions from the planet.



Third, those who accept the various missions. They would follow Phillip's instructions to go on a special Black Star Army galactic tour. They would go to the various Star Zones of the Garton Star System and sightsee while completing missions.

The last group would be the 200,000 players who accepted the Sunil rescue mission. They followed the Sunil Division led by Herlous and made their majestic appearance on Planet Sunil.

Because it was the first time that they had entered the galaxy, the majority of the players chose to act with caution.

Because they were not familiar with the galaxy, it was extremely likely for them to violate different laws. Thus, the missions that Han Xiao released were limited to the Garton Star System, and Phillip would design a program such that they would be reminded of the local laws from time to time to decrease the chances of the players violating the laws.

However, there would definitely be some players who just wanted to do as they wished. After all, the players did not like to be restricted, and some of their brains were like black holes.

Han Xiao understood the players 'creativity' too much and so was not too optimistic.

Han Xiao had already drafted an emergency procedure for the worst-case scenario. He was not obsessed with controlling the players, but punishment was a must.

Of course, he was still in the honeymoon phase, and everything was still going smoothly.

The majority of players were filled with curiosity and excitement. The moment they left Base No.1, they set off on their various missions and explored the different Star Zones.

A few months after the Mutation Disaster and DarkStar incident, the Black Star Army officially began their operations.

Han Xiao gave Phillip's child program the function to purchase equipment. Players who were away from the base could view the products in the faction store and compare prices immediately. They could even make a pre-payment and collect the goods when they returned to the base.

On top of that, the players could also choose to pay an additional fee for the goods to be delivered to them with the price being calculated by distance. The goods would be accumulated before being sent in a large batch. Of course, one could spend even more money to purchase a personal delivery service, and the goods would be sent immediately.

This was another way for Han Xiao to make money. However, the players were still poor, and this service was still in the testing phase with the details being ironed out. Because of the vastness of the universe, the distribution business was extremely prosperous. With Han Xiao's current reputation, it would not be difficult for him to find a couple of distribution companies to cooperate with. In fact, he could even build up his own distribution channel.

Building up a large mercenary group was like building a large corporation. Transport, delivery, reputation, manpower, assets, treatment, and many more other factors needed to be considered. The players were like a trump card for a cooperation that held great benefits within them, capable of being harvested over and over again for a never-ending stream of benefits. Thus, Han Xiao's current job was to

design the mercenary group around the players to ensure that he would be able to reap the largest benefits.

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Herlous led the troops over to Sunil, and as a precautionary measure, Han Xiao placed an [Observer's Mark] on Herlous. This was his third mark.

A while ago, Han Xiao had experimented with the talents of the Chaos Observer race. His vision could ignore physical distance with his vision locked within a certain range of his mark. He could see Aroshia stuffing herself without a concern in the world and Serbia the Fifth working hard. Furthermore, the individual being watched would not notice a thing, and this was truly a divine ability to spy on others.

Base No.1 had immediately become much more spacious. Apart from the players who stayed behind, the only officers left behind were Aroshia and Sylvia. The other officers had taken the mercenaries out to complete some missions of middle to high difficulty.

Han Xiao also stayed behind in the base.

With over 30,000,000 Enas in his account, Han Xiao began buying large amounts of raw materials without any hesitation.

Money was the main combat force of the Army Style. Now that Han Xiao was in the Calamity Grade, he could forge more powerful machines, and he was prepared to evolve the current machines that he had. Apart from restoring the previously damaged machines, he wanted to add some new troops.

Han Xiao was prepared to go into seclusion to build up his army. Since he had plenty of motivated troops under his charge, he would have more time to do other things.

Since Ames did not rush him, he was not in a hurry to send Aurora and Hila to Floating Dragon Island.

"I still owe Noriosse 4,000,000 Enas. It has been less than two years since I borrowed the money from them, and the interest rate is only at ten percent. The interest rate will go up again at the two-year mark."

Han Xiao still remembered this debt. Now that his funds were ample, Han Xiao decided to repay the debt while the interest was not too high.

He then contacted the leader of Noriosse, and the other party's projection appeared before him.

"Black Star? Haha, it has been a long time since you last contacted me. Your fame has truly skyrocketed in recent times," Rockfess said with an amiable smile and warm tone.

Compared to his attitude when Han Xiao wanted to borrow money, his current attitude was much better.

"I actually prefer to remain low profile." Han Xiao coughed dryly before continuing. "I am contacting you to repay the 4,000,000 Enas I owe together with the interest for a total of 4,400,000."

The law governing debts was extremely strict, and Han Xiao would definitely have to pay up eventually.

Rockfess suddenly changed topics and asked, "I wonder, are you willing to accept a sponsorship?"

Han Xiao had just transferred the money over, and his heart was bleeding inside. Upon hearing those words, Han Xiao's brows shot up, and a playful look could be seen in his eyes.

A year ago, when he asked Rockfess for a sponsorship, Rockfess had rejected him and only promised him a loan. This time, Rockfess had actually taken the initiative to offer a sponsorship?

It seemed like his recent accomplishment had made Rockfess think that he was a worthy investment. Thus, Rockfess changed his mind and offered the sponsorship.

While Rockfess was an individual only motivated by benefits, Han Xiao did not think that it was anything strange and did not intend to be sarcastic. Everyone in the world only worked for benefits. He would only be able to draw investments if he displayed sufficient potential or strength. This was the ironclad law.

"Of course, I am extremely interested in this proposal." Han Xiao smiled.

Rockfess' eyes lit up.

He originally had not been too sure if Han Xiao would agree. He had worried that with Black Star already developed, he would not need any external funds. However, he would find it a waste if he lost an investment channel with huge potential.

Since Black Star was willing to accept his sponsorship, it meant that his initial investment was reaping returns.

Rockfess pondered for a while before saying, "Sir Black Star, I have decided to sponsor the Black Star Army with another 5,200,000 Enas."

Han Xiao stroked his chin and asked, "What do you want in return?"

"Haha, this is only an initial investment, and I hope to form a long-term cooperation with the Black Star Army. Our Noriosse financial group will come up with funds to support the development of the Black Star Army, including but not limited to the welfare of mercenaries, transportation, expansion of operations, and the construction of bases. We can also borrow the name of the Black Star Army to start businesses in the Garton Star System or other Star Systems as well. When we require violence to solve our problems, we hope to receive the aid of the Black Star Army at the first possible moment..."

The conditions that Rockfess gave were common ones between financial groups and armed organizations.

Under normal circumstances, the Black Star Army was the Field Team of Floating Dragon, and it would be a better option to invest in Floating Dragon Island directly. However, Black Star himself had some influence and thus became another target for investment.

Han Xiao listened to the conditions patiently and concluded that the Noriosse financial group wanted to manage the backend logistics of the Black Star Army.

The reputation of the Noriosse financial group was extremely good, and they had plenty of different businesses all around.

This was the phase where Han Xiao needed to take care of the backend logistics of the Black Star Army, and it would save him a great deal of trouble with the aid of Noriosse. Most importantly, it would save him a lot of money. The amount of money needed to develop an armed organization was truly terrifying.

*What a fat sheep...* Han Xiao lamented in his heart

“Sounds good. Mister Rockfess, I am willing to sign an investment agreement.”

“Alright, I will get someone to prepare it and send it to you later.”

Rockfess was in a brilliant mood, and a bright smile could be seen on his face.

“If the scale of the Black Star Army grows in the future, our Noriosse financial group can even help you to operate a financial market and establish a Black Star brand to launch a credit voucher and public bond.”

“We can talk about this in the future...”

Han Xiao’s mouth contorted slightly.

The so-called credit voucher was basically stocks. With the development of the economy, something like a credit voucher was not too surprising. Since a very long time ago, stocks and bonds had begun appearing in the universe, and many of the large financial groups had begun issuing credit vouchers. Because of the sheer size of the universe, different regions of the universe would have their own stock markets. Usually, each Star System would form a unit, and the Garton Star System had its own financial market.

Players could also purchase these credit vouchers. In his previous life, there had been some players who had made big money from the financial market and also others who had lost big time. With the environment of the galaxy, the ferocity of the financial market could easily be imagined.

Han Xiao was extremely skilled in making money through credit vouchers. In his previous life, he had plenty of experience with buying low and selling high. As for how to suppress the price of another party’s credit vouchers... Hehe, he would never walk the orthodox path. Since he had already done plenty of bad deeds, another one would not hurt him.

Of course, the consequences of those actions were severe. Now that he had to take care of an organization, he naturally would not be taking the same path.

As for Rockfess’ suggestion of listing a mercenary group on the stock market, it was extremely rare. After all, the operations of a mercenary group were extremely unstable with deaths and injuries being extremely common.

After signing the contract, a ‘ding’ sound could be heard on the communicator, and the figure on his bank account shot up by 5,200,000 Enas.

“The road ahead is very long. I hope we have a pleasant cooperation.” Rockfess stretched his arm out with a bright smile.

Han Xiao also stretched his arm out to shake Rockfess’ holographic hand.

“I hope we have a pleasant cooperation.”

Chapter 593: Sudden Emergency

As Han Xiao was undergoing a trade with Rockfess, dozens of spaceships carrying 200,000 mercenaries sailed toward Planet Sunil.

The star map in the cockpit flickered. As it showed Planet Sunil nearing them, Herlous' mood grew all the more excited. The same rang true for the other Sunil mercenaries.

They themselves were too aware of their civilization's plight. Because of the catastrophe, the casualty rate of their young and middle aged had always remained high, and their partners lived in constant danger. Now, they finally had a ray of hope to solving this problem!

This group of warriors who would sacrifice their lives for their civilization were all extremely touched, grateful to Han Xiao to the point of wanting to cry.

“The day has finally arrived.”

Herlous took a deep breath, regaining a calm mood.

Outside the porthole, Planet Sunil seemed to be beckoning them, and the fleet landed quickly on it, as though both sides had collided with each other.

The main city of Planet Sunil was still Forest City, and all the upper echelons there had long received the news, rushing out to welcome them. From all around, army troops wearing the Sunil armor stood in their formations in welcome, filling a huge patch of open space.

As the spaceships landed one after another, and the players stepped out, they saw the armored troops at a glance. The sunlight reflected off the steel from the Sunil armor, exuding an aura of silence and slaughter.

“We thank the Black Star Army for reaching out to aid us. Welcome, I am...”

One of the upper echelons of the Sunils stepped forward, preparing to give a speech, but before he could finish half of it, he saw the 200,000 mercenaries scatter. The majority of the players ran over to the aggressive armored soldiers with dumb expressions.

“Oh, this is Sunil. Indeed, the same as in the video channels!”

“Come brothers, let's take a group photo!”

Having arrived on the new planet, the players immediately started to party.

“This...”

The upper echelon of the Sunil felt his face twitch incessantly, but he did not know what to do. Turning over, he saw Herlous walk out of the spaceship. He regained his composure, rushing forward respectfully.

“It’s all thanks to you, or else we would not have been able to hire the Black Star Army.” The superior of the Sunils had an expression of gratitude.

“You should thank Black Star actually. If it wasn’t for the fact that he asked me to follow him, Sunil would not have had this opportunity.”

Herlous had a solemn expression. In this regard, he felt that he had taken too much of an advantage, and he should not claim credit for this matter.

Right now, Black Star had already been promoted to a Calamity Grade Super, with no shortage of Grade B Supers under him. Instead of saying that he was selling his life for the Black Star Army in exchange for them helping him, it was more accurate to say that it was Black Star that offered his help voluntarily to the Sunils!

After the incident with DarkStar, Herlous had gained a deeper understanding of Han Xiao. To go head on against a terrifying interstellar terrorist organization just for his hometown, this courage was simply too great. Black Star was a righteous partner, with a good character and a nice personality, and his wanting to help Sunil was also purely because he wished to save them, without asking for benefits.

The favorability of Herlous toward Han Xiao had long exploded through the roof, to the point that he would sacrifice his life if asked to or use himself as a shield if needed.

Hearing this, the Sunil superior solemnly nodded. They really owed too much to Black Star. The other party had allowed the Sunil mercenaries to accept better employment, reducing the casualties of their race, and now he had even sent a large number of people over to help, only charging a nominal fee in return.

What a good person!

After arranging the 200,000 ‘mercenaries’, the Sunil upper echelons spread the news of the Black Star Army coming to provide reinforcements to the entire race so that the countless Sunils would know that their opportunity had arrived.

Within the streets, countless people burst into tears as they lowered their heads in prayer.

The name ‘Black Star’ experienced a rapid increase in prestige in the area.

As Herlous took the Sunil mercenaries to walk down the street, accepting the gratitude of the civilians, he suddenly felt that the fire of hope in this city had been rekindled and felt a lot more hopeful in his heart.

Herlous had also witnessed the specialty of the players and believed that this catastrophe would be resolved sooner or later. However, therein lay a problem for him.

“When the problem of my race has been solved, where should I go?”

As though hit by a bullet in his heart, his body froze in confusion.

That’s right, my purpose of becoming a mercenary was to help the race fight on. Once our danger has passed, do I still need to be a mercenary?

Herlous' footsteps slowed down as he entered a dilemma.

Thinking of how Black Star had provided him with help but he would leave right after his objective had been accomplished gave him a sort of feeling as though he was betraying Black Star's trust. His conscience could not ignore this fact.

Then... do I continue staying with Black Star to repay his gratitude?

Upon thinking of his noisy babbling mercenary partners, thinking of the various unknown planets he had seen, the unique lifeforms, and Black Star's ever reliable back facing them...

Herlous' tightly furrowed brows slowly relaxed.

Other than his civilization, it seemed as though he had found another home.

"Heh, without the burdens of my race weighing me down, I can probably obtain a sizable sum and find a pretty lady to get married."

Herlous felt the weight in his heart get removed and suddenly looked forward to the infinite possibilities in the future.

...

On the other side, the players had been warmly welcomed into the Forest City by the Sunils.

"I didn't expect the name of the Black Star Army to be this good."

The crowd of players murmured in surprise. After experiencing it personally, they only belatedly realized how much influence their faction possessed. The name of the Black Star Army seemed to be extremely prestigious.

The 200,000 players split up wandered around Forest City. Right now, the upper echelons of the Sunils were still working out a concrete strategy, so their mission had not yet officially started. At this time, no one would stop the players from moving around freely.

Many of the players utilized the same old method, attempting to trigger additional missions with the various Sunils or searching for equipment stores, skill mentors, general stores, and other functional locations. As a civilization, the Sunils of course had an NPC resource area, with most of the functions being able to serve the players.

Not long after, the players were mass recruited, with a whole list of missions to complete, including exploring the wild, collecting information on the beasts, clearing the beast colonies, regaining abandoned resource points as well as digging mineral veins. All sorts of work were available.

After accepting the various missions, the interfaces of the players would then display the respective tasks, which allowed the players to obtain more experience rewards from these sub-missions.

The popular missions were quickly swept clean, and the crowd's favorite was naturally the mission of robbing resource areas. Because most of the resources were materials, one could get some during the process.

The resource area missions were basically divided among the guild players, but because Sunil wanted to completely resolve the catastrophe, there were many other missions to be completed as well. This ensured that all 200,000 mercenaries had some missions to attempt.

After accepting the missions, players also triggered a series of mission requirements for the faction. The objective was to help the Sunils resolve the catastrophe but had nothing to do with their employment task. Even if one was not a mercenary, they could still trigger this series of missions by helping the Sunils.

In fact, the mercenary mission received by the players back then was the real bonus, which was given as a benefit of the Black Star Army.

With the mission acting like a carrot dangling above the players' heads, the 200,000 players could not wait to get started.

...

A couple of days later, countless robotic arms were busy assembling mechanical warriors in Base No.1's workshop. Han Xiao had his head buried in front of a lathe, focusing on rebuilding his Mechanic Army. Suddenly, his communicator rang.

"Hmm? Who is it?"

Han Xiao put down the items in his hands, taking out his communicator. Lots of possibilities flashed through his mind, be it a mission from Ames or some tasks that the Noriosse Consortium required him to do. It could also be some players having botched their missions and having the employer calling to complain.

All sorts of thoughts flashed by, but after glancing at the communicator, he found out that it was an unknown caller, which left him surprised.

After establishing a connection, an unfamiliar figure appeared in his screen, and he questioned Han Xiao fiercely.

"Black Star, what have you done to my men?"

"Your men?" Han Xiao replied.

"Befuli! Don't tell me you forgot!" The other party's tone was sinister.

Now where had he heard this name...

Han Xiao stroked his chin before belatedly realizing. Isn't he that guy with the fiery golden eyes? Oh no, that guy with the Esper ability of shooting fire from his eyes.

That idiot had attempted to steal his spaceship and ended up being held captive, with his Esper ability being drawn every day, allowing him to obtain over 100 bottles of the Genetic Medicine. He was probably only left with skin and bones, a foot away from death.

That was to say... the other party should be the 'Purple Snake' Sykes, Befuli's leader and the Captain of the Purple Snake Space Pirates.



“Turns out, it’s you.” Han Xiao raised his brows. “Your subordinate tried to steal my spaceship, and you still dare to look for me?”

“Where has Befuli gone? Have you killed him?”

“Oh, the answer to that would be... you guess?”

Sykes had a vicious expression on. “Black Star, hand over my people, and I can pretend that this incident never happened.”

“Urgh...” Han Xiao exaggeratedly exclaimed before saying, “Your subordinate attempted to steal my spaceship and was captured by me. Now, you want me to release the person and pretend that nothing ever happened? You don’t look too pretty, but your thinking is indeed worlds apart from your looks. I’m not sure if I should even thank you for this!”

“Humph, Black Star, you indeed talk as much as the rumors say. However, did you think that I would look for you if I was unprepared?”

Sykes revealed a cold smile, with an inexplicable tone of confidence.

I talk a lot? Which b\*stard spread that rumor... no, that’s not the main point. Han Xiao regained his wits and immediately understood what Sykes was hinting at. A sense of helplessness spread across his face as he commented, “Who have you captured?”

The corners of Sykes’ mouths curled up, and he pressed a button. The screen revealed a jail cell with a group of people tied up together.

Taking a closer look, this bunch was probably the players, no doubt about that. It should be a group of players that were headed for another mission and were ambushed halfway by Sykes’ people. In that case, the other party definitely had people that had successfully infiltrated the Garton Star System.

“Black Star, hand over Befuli, or you can forget about seeing the mercenaries under you ever again.”

The screen disappeared, and Sykes reappeared on the screen.

“Oh, we can discuss this...” Han Xiao deeply sighed before saying, “How about you just kill all the hostages?”

“News regarding you is being spread all over the galaxy, do you treat me as a fool! You have tens of thousands of immortal warriors under your flag, completely unkillable! However, I believe there will be many organizations that wish to experiment on such immortals and will be willing to fork out the cash. So, you’d better listen to me. I’ll only give you five days to escort Befuli to the coordinates of a barren planet. If I do not see him, or if you play some tricks, my Space Pirates will specifically target your mercenaries and sell them to the other Star Clusters.”

Sykes’ tone carried some threat, immediately cutting off any possible thoughts of rebellion from Han Xiao.

“... Fine.” Han Xiao’s mouth twitched.

“Remember, five days’ time!”

After stressing that once more, Sykes immediately cut off the communication.

If it was not for the fact that his right-hand man had been captured, Sykes would not have antagonized Black Star. Luckily, he did not need to hand over the hostages in person. Sykes was not prepared to go in person, getting someone to go over to the Garton Star System to handle everything whilst he stayed in the Gavin Star System. After all, safety was paramount.

Han Xiao rubbed between his brows, looking helpless. The players were still not strong enough. To allow them to explore and complete missions, he had been expecting such a matter to occur, but he did not think that it would come this quickly.

To have the players be killed because of being unable to repay the ransom, this was considered their own personal encounter. He was no nanny, and by rights, he should not care about this kind of matter. However, Sykes was a Calamity Grade, and for him to target the Black Star Army was a hidden danger. It seemed as though he would have to move out this time.

“F\*ck, I can’t even take a few god-damned days to rest! Right now, even the time taken to build my little cuties has been deprived!”

With an expression full of grievances, Han Xiao came to the cell where Befuli was being held at. Looking at the unconscious person, he threw an [Observer’s Mark] on him.

“Isn’t it good to be alive? I had almost forgotten about looking for trouble with you guys.”

...

In the Garton Star System, a spaceship that the Purple Snake Space Pirates had taken over was floating quietly in the Universe.

In the dim spaceship cell, a bunch of players were tied there with space pirates on guard at the door.

“President, it seems that we’ve been down on our luck recently.”

Poseidon, one of the core members of the Guild of Gods, turned his head to address Jupiter, who was beside him.

Recently? F\*ck that, our luck has been bad the whole time. Who are you looking down upon right now? Jupiter had a dark expression, not even bothering to reply.

He had originally chosen a mission that was quite good and had prepared to bring his core members of the guild to complete the job. However, he had not even reached the place of employment when he was suddenly captured.

The universe was actually this dangerous?

The law and order there could not even be compared to Planet Aquamarine!

The vice president Shiva had an indifferent expression on. “It seems that we have encountered an emergency. Maybe it’s a hidden mission.”

“The last time we got into trouble, you said the same thing.” Poseidon was not polite in his rebuttal.

At this time, a guard outside bellowed, “Who allowed you to talk? Shut your mouths!”

Everyone only turned to look at him before ignoring him, continuing to chatter on.

The guard could only spit out a sigh of resignation. He wished that he could pull out his guns to shoot the hostages into smithereens, but his leader’s orders were to not kill even one of them. Killing them would be equivalent to setting them free. Since they were not afraid of death, what could they use to threaten them?

The guards were helpless and could only silently watch on as this group of people behaved more arrogantly than the pirates themselves.

Bang!

At this point, the spaceship suddenly shook, and screams of misery could be heard.

“What happened?”

The guarding pirate lost some color in his expression, hurriedly running over to check it out. However, upon turning his head, he found a majestic figure blocking his way, covering all the light from outside. The pirate’s height only reached the figure’s belly...

“I’m taking over this ship,” the figure stated indifferently, his voice like thunder.

Before waiting for the pirate to respond, a strong blow shot to his side, the speed too fast for him to avoid.

The burly tall figure slapped the guard out of the way, splattering him into meat paste on the side of the wall.

Jupiter and the rest stared at this figure.

With his back to the light, no one could see his looks. They could only see what seemed to be a pair of curved horns on his head, one of which was broken in half.

#### **Chapter 594: Malekith’s Ambush! (1)**

The exchange location was an uninhabited planet, and both parties would not meet each other. After putting Befuli down, Han Xiao left the planet. The space pirates would then fetch Befuli before releasing the mercenaries that they had caught. They would then contact Han Xiao to pick up the mercenaries.

Sykes had done so to be on the safe side. While honesty was not his strongest point as a space pirate and he frequently went back on his word, he was truly sincere this time. He only wished to get Befuli back and did not wish to provoke Black Star completely.

As long as he could get Befuli back, he would immediately pull back his forces in the Garton Star System and not provoke the Black Star Army again.

However, this was not what Han Xiao felt. It was truly wishful thinking if the other party thought that he would just forget about this matter.

Not too far away from the planet, the BlackLight Stealth was floating in space silently.

Through the window of the spaceship, Han Xiao monitored the planet silently.

He did not bring anyone along with him and moved out alone this time. Furthermore, he also brought the BlackLight Stealth out, which specialized in speed. His objective today was not only to exchange hostages.

Befuli had an [Observer's Mark] placed on him and was no different from Han Xiao's surveillance device. Han Xiao was planning to make use of his Chaos Observer innate talent to tail these space pirates and find Sykes's nest.

He had never juiced a Calamity Grade Super before.

He needed to exchange hostages in order to make Sykes let his guard down. While the players were not afraid of threats, Han Xiao did not wish for anyone to ruin the first mission for the players.

"It's about time..."

Han Xiao piloted his spaceship into the atmosphere of the planet and flew to the designated location.

As he approached the surface of the planet, Han Xiao was taken aback. The space pirates' spaceship was still at the designated spot.

"Didn't we agree not to meet? Why are they waiting for me here? Could it be that they want a face to face exchange instead?"

The doubt flashed past his mind, and Han Xiao parked his spaceship slightly further away. He then picked up the weak Befuli before disembarking from the spaceship.

Ta, ta...

Han Xiao stepped onto the brown sandy surface and kicked up a cloud of dust. The spaceship of the pirates was a few thousand meters away, and a couple of pirates were waving at him.

Han Xiao frowned.

"This feels strange. Risda, don't turn the engine off. Take off immediately if anything happens."

"Alright." Risda took over the command of the spaceship.

Han Xiao took Befuli and approached the pirates' spaceship. When he was near the spaceship, he looked at the few pirates and said in a deep voice, "I have brought the person you want. Where are my mercenaries?"

Since he was close enough to the pirates, Han Xiao immediately noticed something strange about all the pirates. They all seemed to be extremely afraid of something!

Before he could even make a move, something immediately went wrong!

Bang!

A large hole was suddenly made in the pirates' spaceship, and a black figure shot out like a meteor. This figure appeared in front of Han Xiao the next instant, and his fists that were wrapped in a thick layer of metal smashed heavily on Han Xiao's chest.

His frightening strength exploded forth from his fists.

Boom!

Han Xiao's body flew back like a cannonball and smashed into a stone mountain more than a thousand meters away. His entire body became covered in the rubble of shattered rocks with a huge dust cloud being formed.

The individual who had ambushed Han Xiao was standing in Han Xiao's original location. He was clad in heavy metal armor and looked as though he was from the Demon Race. Of the two horns on his head, one had broken in half. He was one of the eight Vanguard Officials of the Bloodshed Land, broken horn Malekith.

The force generated from his attack had sent the space pirates flying as well.

A couple of weaker space pirates had fractured their bones and were currently groaning in pain. They hurriedly scurried away to avoid the battlefield.

Swoosh!

The pile of rubble shook slightly, and Han Xiao burst out of the rocks.

*This damage... Grade A Super? Is Sykes here personally to kill me?* He then looked at the notification on his interface and was surprised. *It isn't Sykes but Malekith? Who is this fellow? He doesn't seem like a subordinate of Sykes, and this name seems a little familiar.*

*How strange. Why would someone who I have never seen before want to deal with me? Is he an assassin sent by someone to deal with me? That's not right. A single person wouldn't be enough to kill me...*

Han Xiao looked at Malekith with his brows locked in deep thought.

Both of them looked at each other from afar without saying a single word.

"I can feel that my previous attack didn't do much damage at all. The 'Undying' Black Star truly lives up to his name."

Malekith was the first to speak.

*Undying? Is this my new nickname?* Han Xiao then narrowed his eyes and asked, "Who are you? Why did you attack me?"

"You will know when we are done fighting." Malekith did not say another word, and his body burned with black Pugilist flames. He then took large strides forward and rammed into Han Xiao like a shooting

star. The heavy armor on his body then sprang into action, and its structure suddenly seemed even more complicated as though it had entered combat mode.

Han Xiao cursed under his breath and activated his mechanical suit. The black Berserk Ape was equipped, and he received Malekith's punch.

Han Xiao immediately felt a huge surge for force pushing him back. Han Xiao's weight and strength could not be compared to Malekith's, and he was immediately pushed back with his feet forming two long ditches on the ground.

Hum!

Right at that moment, the figure of a Godoran appeared behind Han Xiao.

He activated the Nagakin Character Summon Card.

Muscle Is Truth!

Han Xiao could clearly feel the muscles in his body expanding and his entire body being filled with a never-ending supply of strength! His Strength attribute also shot up rapidly!

The instant Han Xiao stopped getting pushed back, he slammed his feet into the ground. The Berserk Ape mechanical suit suddenly revved up, and his waist and arms got into a throwing position. Both his hands grabbed Malekith's fists, and by making use of the other party's force, he did an overhead throw and threw Malekith in the opposite direction!

The instant Han Xiao released his grip, a loud sonic boom could be heard, and Malekith shot toward the sky at an extremely high speed. In just an instant, Malekith had already become a small little dot on the horizon, crashing into a mountain not too far away.

This was a skill that came along with the mechanical suit: Berserk Throw!

Han Xiao glanced at the other party's information only to be greeted with a bunch of question marks.

This meant that Malekith's level far exceeded his.

Han Xiao was still clueless about why the other party would be at the meeting point to ambush him. However, since Malekith did not want to give an explanation, he could only fight Malekith first.

Han Xiao threw out all the useless thoughts in his head and entered a battle focus mode. He then threw out a dozen compressed orbs, and his fully repaired Oathkeepers appeared beside him. The Hovering Shield Shuttle floated behind him, and they glowed with a golden light.

Because this incident was an unexpected one, Han Xiao did not have enough time to completely repair his Mechanic Army. He also did not have the time to improve his current machines and was still using old equipment from the past. The only exception was this Berserk Ape suit.

However, this suit alone should be enough to deal with the battle.

The other party was a Calamity Grade Pugilist and did not seem to have any killing intent. Thus, Han Xiao could not be bothered to take out anymore machines as he would feel the heartache if they got destroyed.

Malekith wore a set of heavy armor, and his defense was extremely high. Furthermore, he had the bloodline of the Demon Race, and his recovery strength was extremely powerful.

In just a few short breaths, his injuries were recovered.

Malekith then dusted away the rocks and dust on him indifferently before charging forward again!

## **Chapter 595: Malekith's Ambush! (2)**

Bang bang bang!

Both of their figures clashed with each other over and over again like a dragon brawling with a snake. They exchange blows as they traversed the brown surface of the planet. Heavy blows landed on both of their bodies as powerful shock waves reverberated through the battlefield.

The shockwaves of the battle had destroyed the original surface of the planet, and craters could be seen all over the surface of the planet.

Malekith's total level was extremely high and was extremely powerful. While a head-on brawl was not Han Xiao's strength, thankfully, he had the Berserk Throw skill to throw Malekith around like a ball and break his Pugilist combos.

Han Xiao could choose to transform into the shuttle mode and escape from there at any time. However, he was extremely interested in Malekith's origins and so decided to have a good fight with him. In any case, the BlackLight Stealth was already hovering up in the sky, and Han Xiao could escape whenever.

Han Xiao then activated the nano transformation ability of the Berserk Ape mechanical suit and transformed into the [Giant Ape Form]. The mechanical suit then expanded rapidly, and various components seemed to have appeared out of nowhere to form thick layers on top of the existing suit. Han Xiao rapidly grew until he was a mini giant that was a head taller than Malekith. His Strength attribute skyrocketed once more, and the strength of [Berserk Throw] was increased.

Both parties were Calamity Grade Supers who had powerful defense and recovery. As such, the battle was stuck in a stalemate.

After battling Han Xiao for a long while, Malekith's eyes lit up, and he said with great excitement, "You are even stronger than in the rumors. I am going to get serious now. Please don't die so easily."

Malekith was a battle maniac, and the pleasure from finding a partner to have a refreshing battle was even greater than mating.

The next moment, Malekith began chanting a demonic incantation, and the flames on his body burned even brighter and greater. His eyes seemed to be burning with flames, and a dark red flame burst forth from the gaps of his armor. His aura was elevated a notch, and the temperature of the surroundings rose rapidly with the atmosphere being contorted by the heat.

"Talent of the Demon Race, high grade True Liberation!" Han Xiao's eyes narrowed. When they were in such a state, the combat strength of the Demon Race would increase greatly. With Malekith's Calamity Grade strength, the increase to his strength was frightening.

Bang!

Han Xiao could see the ground beneath him passing by rapidly, and he was sent flying despite being in the Giant Ape Form. The next second, Malekith narrowed the gap between the both of them in an instant, and the dark purple flames surrounding Malekith lashed out like a blade toward Han Xiao's neck.

If Han Xiao was struck by that blow, his cervical vertebra would probably fracture and his entire body paralyzed. He would need half a second to recover from the blow, and this half a second would be sufficient for a Pugilist like Malekith to perform a simple combo.

Han Xiao deactivated the Giant Ape Form, and his entire body shrank down. The attack brushed past the top of his helmet with only millimeters to spare.

With his attack missing, Malekith locked his fingers together and was about to hammer Han Xiao toward the ground.

At this moment, Han Xiao's helmet suddenly opened up, and two flaming whirlpools could be seen in his eyes. The next instant, two balls of white flame shot out from his eyes toward Malekith.

Boom!

Malekith's attack was interrupted again.

There were different kinds of demons within the Demon Race. When they unleashed their True Liberation talent, the difference between the different races would become obvious. For example, the demons that spat fire would be Fire Demons, and the demons that spat ice would be Ice Demons. Malekith was obviously a Fire Demon, and his fire resistance would be extremely high. Thus, Han Xiao's attack was not able to deal much damage but was able to successfully push him back.

Han Xiao had loaded some Genetic Medicine into his mechanical suit, and he had injected himself with Befuli's Genetic Medicine previously to use his one-off Character Summon Card.

With the small window that Han Xiao created for himself, he did not hesitate in the slightest and activated the Berserk Overload Form of his mechanical suit!

The nuclear reactor of his mechanical suit revved up at full power, and his speed, strength, and weapons all received an increase in attributes!

Han Xiao placed his arms together, and his nano weapons module was activated. His arm transformed into a large cannon barrel, and a brilliant beam of light shot toward Malekith.

Boom!

Malekith tanked the cannon fire and continued his charge, raising his hands to send out balls of Shockwave Blasts.

Explosions surrounded the two as both of them exchanged fire, with one of them advancing and the other retreating. Malekith's speed rose rapidly after unleashing his True Liberation talent, and the distance between the two quickly closed up. Very soon, Malekith appeared before Han Xiao again.



His fist that was wrapped up in flames was aimed right at Han Xiao's chest.

Hum!

Right at this instant, Han Xiao's body exploded forth with a blinding electrical bolt, and his fists actually landed on Malekith's face first like a bolt of lightning.

Boom!

His fists exploded in midair like a bolt of violent lightning.

The shockwave of the attack spread out from underneath Han Xiao's feet in all directions and formed a crater that was a hundred meters in diameter!

As for Malekith, he was already a shooting star in the horizon that quickly disappeared from one's sight.

[Power Detonation]!

If the attack was a close ranged one, said attack would gain 650 to 700 percent additional damage, power detonation damage, and sputtering damage. On top of that, it gained a sixty-five percent chance of critical damage as well as the ability to inflict status effects like knock up, knock back, suppression, and dizziness.

He did not only use this skill but also activated [Gene Liberation]. This was [Flaming Will] that had been strengthened by the Skill Level-up Card!

The accumulated strength of this attack was truly frightening!

Malekith was sent flying a dozen kilometers at the very least!

He would probably fly for a day in the sky before landing on the ground!

"Huu... huu..."

Han Xiao panted lightly. Hand to hand combat drained him of his stamina the most. His HP and Energy were still at a healthy level, but his stamina had been exhausted greatly.

Thankfully, the higher one's stamina was, the faster the recovery rate.

"This fellow is truly powerful. He is much stronger than Degulish and Nagakin. I am afraid that my previous blow was only able to give him light injuries."

Han Xiao wondered if he should continue the battle, and all of a sudden, he remembered Malekith's origin.

"A core officer of the Bloodshed Land, one of the eight Vanguard Officials under Heber. He is the subordinate of a beyond Grade A Super?"

Han Xiao immediately became wary. Why would the officer of another beyond Grade A Super fight him?

At that moment, a large trail of dust could be seen from the wilderness, and it was Malekith running back from afar. This time, he did not charge forward but stopped a few meters away from Han Xiao. He had already deactivated his True Liberation state, and there was a red fist mark on his face.

“Well done, Black Star. You are an opponent worthy of my full strength. I truly enjoyed our battle.” Malekith revealed a smile of admiration.

Even when in the True Liberation state, he was not able to suppress the opponent entirely and had even taken a small loss. Black Star was extremely powerful and even more powerful than people thought.

The objective of his visit had been met.

“I know your status already. Malekith, a member of the Bloodshed Land.” Han Xiao did not want to continue fighting and only wanted to know Malekith’s objective. “Why did you ambush me? Why would you appear here?”

“I am here specially for you.”

Black Star was one of the Dragon Emperor’s trusted aides, and the Black Star Army had become extremely famous recently. He had been instructed to observe Black Star and find a chance to test him.

When the Purple Snake Space Pirates abducted the mercenaries of the Black Star Army, the intelligence net of the Bloodshed Land had picked up this piece of news. Since Malekith was nearby, he had decided to snatch the spaceship of the pirates and wait for Black Star to find him. Then, he would be able to test Black Star’s strength without anyone disturbing them.

If he was sufficiently powerful...

“Floating Dragon would only bury a talent like you. You should have greater ambition. With your strength, it is sufficient for you to be equal to me and become the ninth Vanguard Official.” Malekith revealed his intentions and extended an olive branch. “So... are you willing to join the Bloodshed Land?”

### **Chapter 596: Stalling and Luring**

Surprised, Han Xiao sized up Malekith from head to toe.

“You’re here to poach?”

Han Xiao did not expect this at all. After all, he was an officer of Floating Dragon—regular forces would not be so reckless. Now, a core officer of Bloodshed Land had come to invite him and offered him a very high position as one of the Vanguard Officials as soon as he joined.

The Bloodshed Land and Floating Dragon were on different levels. Floating Dragon had always been supported by Ames’ reputation alone. However, not only was Tyrant Heber Beyond Grade A, he was also the most senior among the four Beyond Grade A Supers in the Shattered Star Ring. The Pugilist class trained one’s body and elevated one’s life, so his life span was very long. Hence, the one thing that was Floating Dragon’s biggest strength, Bloodshed Land had it too.

Furthermore, Bloodshed Land was an important ally of a Star Cluster civilization. They had rich resources, wide connections, and very strong military power. They had created many divisions in various Star Systems in another Star Cluster. Just from its size alone, it was already a giant in the Shattered Star Ring. Plus, unlike Floating Dragon, which was uncompetitive, they were still actively expanding.

For example, in the previous set of Wayne Cards' Shattered Star Ring card set, there were three cards under the Floating Dragon Island camp: Force Card [Floating Dragon Island], Individual Card ['Dragon Emperor' Ames], and Mercenary Card [Black Star Mercenary Group]. As for Bloodshed Land, there were fourteen cards under their camp!

*I've been attracting quite the attention lately and shown my abilities—that's probably the reason I'm being noticed by stronger people.*

Although things like this were rare, it was not unprecedented. Once Renown and Legendary Points reached a certain level, there was a chance for similar events to occur. All kinds of people would approach when one was famous.

The fact that Bloodshed Land had come to scout him proved that his position had gradually increased.

"I'm a little curious, aren't you people afraid that this will anger Ames?" Han Xiao smirked.

Malekith gave a faint smile, showing his absolute confidence. "You think that his excellency Tyrant would be afraid of Ames? Plus, this isn't the first time."

Han Xiao immediately grew curious. "You people poached someone from Floating Dragon before? Is that person still alive?"

"Of course he's alive, and his position now is very high."

"Did Ames not act on it?"

"Hmm, you do know her very well. Indeed she did. Back then, she dragged Floating Dragon Island along and fought her way through to our headquarters. Then, His Excellency Tyrant struck."

"How did it end up?" Han Xiao's eyebrows raised.

Malekith smirked with great admiration and said, "The original Floating Dragon Island was double its size now."

Ames had the lower hand...

This was a piece of secret information unknown to players in his previous life. It turned out that there was beef between Floating Dragon and Bloodshed Land. No wonder they had come to poach from Ames.

*Wait a minute, if I reject the offer, will Bloodshed Land see me as an enemy?*

Han Xiao became alert and asked in a serious tone, "Thank you for your invitation, but what if I refuse?"

Malekith wiped away his smile and stared at Han Xiao. His tone became assertive as he slowly said, "Reconsider it."

The hundreds of thousands of immortals under Black Star had attracted the attention of Bloodshed Land, but Heber rejected slowly convincing them one after another, so their leader Han Xiao had become the target.

Malekith did not want to return empty-handed with the mission given by the Tyrant personally.

*Now, this is threatening...*

Han Xiao frowned and slowly measured the pros and cons.

If he turned to Bloodshed Land, he would face the fury of Floating Dragon. The connections that he had made because of Floating Dragon would all disappear, and the Black Star Army and Planet Aquamarine would all lose their privileges with Floating Dragon. To Ames, he was quite important. Once he betrayed her, she would be even more furious, and the consequences would be dire.

The pros... seemed quite high too. The risk was accompanied by profit. Bloodshed Land's forces were much stronger than Floating Dragon's. He could build even wider connections, and Bloodshed Land could provide even better support to Black Star Army with their resources, he would be able to regain all the losses he made. The only problem was, he might have to move to the Star Cluster that Bloodshed Land was in to expand and develop.

*Since Heber dared invite me, if Ames' revenge is successful, Heber will lose a lot of reputation. So, Heber will probably protect me at all costs...*

After some consideration, Han Xiao said, "I've thought about it."

His brows loosened, and he smiled at Malekith.

"I decline."

Although he had analyzed the pros and cons out of habit, it was nothing more than a habit. Han Xiao had never planned to leave Floating Dragon from the beginning, and he was not someone so easily convinced.

Ames had provided him with so much help, all favors, and their relationship had been slowly but surely building. If it switched to Heber, he would have to build a relationship with his boss once again. Furthermore, the title 'Tyrant' did not sound very friendly. Bloodshed Land had way more rules than Floating Dragon, so it was impossible for them to show tolerance as Ames did for him.

*Most importantly... I'm the one and only leader of the Floating Dragon Field Team. It'd be crazy for me to go to your place and be your number nine!*

Malekith's smile completely vanished, and he glared at Han Xiao directly with a cold expression.

Han Xiao did not retreat and stared back while secretly prepared for combat.

The atmosphere became stiff.

Just as Han Xiao thought they were going to have a battle, Malekith suddenly snorted heavily and walked away.

Han Xiao loosened up and exhaled through his mouth.

It seemed like there was not going to be a fight. Black Star Army was going through a very important phase of its development, so it was best not to be on bad terms with Bloodshed Land.

This time, a spaceship with the marking of Bloodshed Land flew there from the sky. This was Malekith's real ship, hidden on the other side of the planet.

Malekith walked up the stairs. Suddenly, he stopped the hatch that was about to close, looked at Han Xiao, and said with a deep voice, "Black Star, we will meet again very soon."

Then, without concern about Han Xiao's reaction, he let go of the hatch and let it close. Bloodshed Land's spaceship quickly rose up and disappeared.

*Meet again very soon... What does that mean? They're going to find a chance to deal with me? Or does it mean something else?*

"Never mind, Bloodshed Land's territory isn't in Colton Star Cluster anyway, so it's very unlikely for them to come here for me. Since Floating Dragon and Bloodshed Land are peacefully coexisting, they definitely will not make big moves because of me."

Han Xiao shook his head. After he thought it through, he was not worried about it anymore.

"Right, I'm here to hand over the hostage." He suddenly remembered his original reason for being there.

After fighting with Malekith, he had almost forgotten the purpose of this trip.

Han Xiao went back to near the galactic pirate spaceship. Befuli was lying on the ground not moving, surrounded by a few lightly injured galactic pirates. They glanced at the BlackLight Stealth hovering above them. It looked like they were uncertain as to whether they should take Befuli away or not.

Upon hearing the footsteps, these galactic pirates turned around and saw Han Xiao walking toward them. They shivered as fear emerged in their eyes. Their bodies stiffened on the spot, and they did not dare move even an inch.

Initially, they did not have to meet, so their safety was ensured, but now that Han Xiao was right in front of them, they were afraid that would be the end of their lives. Furthermore, Befuli's skeletal appearance horrified them. They did not know what torture Befuli had gone through for him to end up like that, but they were certain that they did not want to experience the same.

Han Xiao glanced at them and casually grabbed a galactic pirate. They walked up the pillaging ship. The galactic pirate pointed the way, shivering, and they soon arrived at the prison cell.

However, the cell was empty.

"Where are my people?" demanded Han Xiao with a threatening tone as he pressed onto the galactic pirate's scalp, tightening his fingers slowly.

"I—I don't know... they disappeared one and a half days ago!"

Feeling like his head was going to explode, the galactic pirate quickly explained.

*Disappeared?* Han Xiao raised his eyebrows. Then it occurred to him. *Damn it, these kids logged off! He let go of the galactic pirate.*

They probably went to sleep.

“One and a half days ago, which means they’ll be coming online pretty soon. I could wait for a while...”

Han Xiao realized a problem, and he grabbed the galactic pirate’s head once again.

“The hostages are gone, but you still want to make the deal. Are you mocking me?”

The galactic pirate was on the verge of crying.

*We were all controlled by that demon. How could we tell you?*

This time, flashes of white light appeared in the cell. A few Guild of Gods players came online and saw Black Star immediately—they were overjoyed.

“Quick, tell the leader. The Hidden Storyline is finally here!”

Less than twenty seconds later, more white light flashed. Jupiter and the others came online at the same time. They were all thrilled to see Han Xiao.

“What?” The galactic pirate rubbed his eyes to make sure that he was not hallucinating.

Han Xiao opened the cell and took the others out of the spaceship, throwing the galactic pirate in his hands onto the ground.

“Contact Sykes, our deal remains.”

The shock on this galactic pirate’s face turned into surprise.

The hostages had been snatched away, and they were in Black Star’s hands. There was nothing to threaten him. Yet, Black Star still wanted to let them go and give them Befuli?

“Yo—You still want to carry out the deal?” A galactic pirate could not help but ask. It was hard to believe.

“What, do you not want to?” Han Xiao asked back.

“No no no, you misunderstood, let’s go according to the deal.” The galactic pirates hastily denied it. They were filled with the joy of escaping death.

A galactic pirate quickly contacted Sykes and explained the situation.

Sykes was stunned. He had never expected Bloodshed Land’s people to interfere, which completely came out of nowhere.

However, even though the deal was affected, Black Star surprisingly did not change his mind...

*Were my threats effective?*

Sykes could only think of this as the reason.

He suddenly felt much better about himself. *Haha, I managed to threaten someone so renowned.*

Without caring about the communication between the galactic pirates, Han Xiao took Jupiter and the others aside, had the BlackLight Stealth land, and opened the hatch.

“You guys go into the ship. Risda will take you to the nearest city planet.”

Jupiter’s eyes gleamed and passionately said, “We want to help you to fight the enemies. Please let us assist you.”

This was such a rare opportunity. He felt that he could definitely trigger the hidden mission.

Han Xiao saw right through Jupiter’s intentions. Speechless, he wrote a mission on the spot and gave it to these players.

You have triggered Hidden Mission [Retreat]

Mission Introduction: You’ve been dragged into a storm, but you still can’t interfere with your current strength. What you need to do now is retreat from here as soon as possible.

Mission Requirements: Leave in the BlackLight Stealth

Reward: 350,000 Experience, +200 Black Star Army Favorability

“Let’s go!” Jupiter turned around and walked into BlackLight Stealth without hesitation.

The Guild of Gods players followed and all boarded.

Poseidon gave Jupiter a thumbs up. “If we boarded the ship without saying anything, we wouldn’t have triggered this mission. Thank you, leader.”

Jupiter smiled smugly and pointed at his temple. “This is experience. Learn from it.”

Although this mission was quite different from what he had thought it would be, Jupiter felt that it was very likely a high level event after he read the mission introduction, but they did not meet the requirements to trigger it. Hence, it had become [Retreat]. Although it was quite a shame that was the case, they could only follow the mission. It was better than nothing, after all.

Han Xiao was still standing outside waiting for the galactic pirate’s reply.

After a while, a galactic pirate trotted over and cautiously said, “Your Excellency Black Star, if there’s nothing else, we will be taking Befuli away.”

“Go, don’t mess with me again. I won’t let you go next time.” Han Xiao waved and boarded his spaceship.

Only then did the galactic pirate breathe a sigh of relief. He quickly went back and notified his friends. They started up the pillage ship, hovering above the surface.

Just as the pillage ship was about to speed up and take off, behind the BlackLight Stealth hatch, gray light appeared in Han Xiao's eyes. He activated his Racial Talent and turned into Chaos Body. His physical form was gone, and he turned into gray fog.

Advanced Void Travel!

Entering the Void Vision, time seemed to have stopped. Han Xiao controlled his Chaos Body and left the BlackLight Stealth. As the duration of [Advanced Void Travel] was longer, he had more than enough time to cross a large distance and go near the pillaging ship.

Void Travel allowed him to go through walls. His Chaos Body went directly through the pillaging ship hatch, then found a distant cabin to hide. He deactivated Void Travel, without triggering the alarm, without getting noticed by the galactic pirates.

Hu!

The next moment, the pillaging ship quickly rose into the sky and flew away.

Chapter 597: Behind Enemy Lines Alone

The BlackLight Stealth took Jupiter and the others to the nearest planet with a city.

Jupiter and the others walked around the interior of the spaceship curiously. This was Black Star's personal spaceship, and it was extremely rare for players to board it.

Risda locked up the doors to a large portion of the spaceship, and the players were only able to explore some unimportant public regions.

"This spaceship must be extremely precious, right?" Poseidon muttered.

"I searched it before. This spaceship is the model of an advanced civilization." Jupiter nodded in agreement.

Now that the players had their own communicators, they could connect to the galactic network, getting rid of their status as a backward aboriginals. All the various channels of information were finally opened to them, and their knowledge increased every day. Together with Phillip's ability to search the web, they were able to search for any information they wished, and the players gradually grew used to searching for any questions they had.

"A spaceship is far too expensive. Who knows when we will be able to afford one?" Poseidon shook his head.

"Not necessarily. As long as we complete a few missions and raise some funds from the guild, it would be possible for us to buy a basic spaceship."

Jupiter was the guild leader of a prestigious club and would always have some plans. The resources that he had control over were also something that an ordinary player would not be able to compare to. A spaceship that had a sky-high price in the player's eyes was just about achievable as long as he gathered



funds from the guild. After all, the guild of a club was essentially a company. All the core members of the guild were employees of the guild, and redistributing resources was an extremely simple affair.

He was considering the type of advantage having a spaceship earlier would bring him and whether it was worth the resources.

Right at that moment, a core member with the name of 'Michael' said, "Guild Master, we can actually buy a functional model instead. I previously checked the market for materials and fuel. Many large corporations are collecting these resources without any limit. While the prices are low, the profits are stable."

Jupiter's eyes lit up, and he said, "You mean we should buy a mining spaceship?"

"Yes, we should organize a mining expedition and mine for resources on an uninhabited planet. We can then sell these resources to earn a steady profit."

"We wouldn't be able to recover our costs too quickly at the start," Michael added. "However, if we complete missions while mining for resources, we would be able to gather enough funds to purchase more mining spaceships. After a period of accumulation, our profits will increase and snowball. If we can form a whole fleet of mining spaceships, our profits will definitely increase exponentially."

Jupiter was moved by this proposition. "So, the earlier we buy a mining spaceship the greater our profits?"

"That's right." Michael nodded. "Presently, everyone is focused on completing employment missions, and the benefits are plentiful. However, unions like Dynasty and King City, which are able to mobilize a large number of players, will be looking for other ways to make money as well. Time waits for no one."

Apart from making money, their responsibility as the guild of a club was also to provide better logistical support for the professional players. Jupiter could not help but fall into deep thought.

Poseidon then looked at Michael and said, "Are you in cahoots with the members of the other guilds? Quickly exit the group chat to prove your innocence!"

"Scram to the side." Michael showed his middle finger in response.

Poseidon then looked at the luxurious interior of the spaceship and said, "Wouldn't we be able to make heaps of profit by snatching this spaceship? We should be able to leave Dynasty far behind in the dust."

Everyone looked at him speechlessly.

"You are actually the spy, right?" Michael teased back in response.

"Tsk, a casual remark of mine has all of you so anxious." Poseidon clicked his tongue in response.

...

Going from the pickup point to the Fawn Star System required one to go through a few stargates, and the journey was not a short one.

However, in order to get rid of Sykes, a hidden danger, Han Xiao decided to wait patiently.

The pirates' spaceship was flying in space, and Han Xiao's Chaos Body was stuck to the wall of the spaceship in a very concealed spot. This made Han Xiao realize that the talent of the Chaos Observer was extremely suitable for conducting such non-rigorous stealth operations. To him, any operation that did not end up with him silencing all eye witnesses was considered non-rigorous.

Because he was currently in his Chaos Body form, Han Xiao did not have anything to do. As such, he could only scroll through the forums every day and understand how the players were doing in their various missions through the posts. Because they had not entered the galaxy for a long time, the players were pretty obedient, and most of the missions went pretty smoothly. Everything was also going smoothly with the 200,000 mercenaries on Planet Sunil.

The situation made Han Xiao feel at ease.

Apart from looking through the forums, Han Xiao spent his time looking through the [Observer's Mark]. He spied on Aroshia, Serbia the Fifth, and Herlous to pass the time.

After around ten days, the pirate ship finally left the Garton Star System and entered the Fawn Star System. Soon, they linked up together with the main troops.

The Purple Snake Space Pirates had more than forty battleships with the majority being small to medium sized pillaging ships. The flagship was a modified Crow Grade battleship, which was the main battleship model in the Fawn Star System. A space pirate fleet of such a scale was not one to be underestimated.

The spaceship flew into the fleet and met up with the flagship. A few space pirates supported the feeble Befuli through the walkway to the main hall of the flagship. Sykes was already waiting there with all his subordinates filling up the main hall. The other three Grade B Officers were standing beside him.

The moment Sykes saw the frail Befuli, he stood up abruptly and ran over with a questioning gaze.

"Befuli, how were you reduced to such a state?"

Befuli looked at Sykes with his lips trembling and tears in his eyes. He said in a choking tone, "Black Star is a demon!"

"What exactly did he do to you?" Sykes sized Befuli up from head to toe. In his memory, Befuli was a burly well-built man, but the Befuli before him looked like a rack of bones that would crumble at any moment.

Not just him, even the other space pirates looked over with disbelief in their eyes. They did not dare believe that this powerful comrade of theirs would be reduced to such a state.

Just what could have happened that would reduce a Grade B Super to such a state?

The moment Befuli thought about his hell-like days, he could not help but reveal a face full of fear as he trembled.

"He... he locked me up in a dark cabin, and I don't even know how long had passed since then. He used some equipment to extract my Super-Gene, and my recovery speed became slower and slower. Even now, I have only been able to recover a little bit..."

Those who had strength would fear losing it the most. Every time he recovered a bit of strength, it would be mercilessly taken away from him again. After experiencing this endless loop of hopelessness together with the fact that he was locked up in a dark chamber, he lost all sense of time and suffered a huge psychological blow.

Upon hearing that, Sykes could not help but tremble slightly and regret his decision of provoking Black Star.

He had never imagined that Black Star was not only powerful but a pervert as well!

Sykes had only taken the risk to threaten Black Star because of Befuli's strength as a Grade B Super. However, Befuli was as good as crippled already and would need a long time to recover. Sykes only needed a useful Officer, not a crippled subordinate.

Even the other Officers who had friction with Befuli could not help but feel a sense of fear in their hearts when seeing Befuli in such a state.

"Black Star probably insisted on doing this exchange by making use of Befuli as an example to threaten us," another Grade B space pirate said.

Sykes nodded heavily.

"What are we going to do now? Are we not going to take revenge for Befuli?" someone suddenly asked from within the crowd.

Sykes face immediately darkened. He naturally did not wish to provoke Black Star again, but he was truly put in a tight spot at the moment. If he said that he did not want to get revenge on Black Star, would it not make him lose his prestige and leadership abilities?

"I have my own plans." Helpless, Sykes could only give a vague reply and attempt to change the topic.

Right at that moment, the same individual asked again, "What kind of plan? What exactly will we do?"

You again! Can't you just shut up!

"Is this something that you have the right to ask?" Sykes expression was ugly as he looked in the direction of the voice. He wanted to see which subordinate of his dared talk back to him.

Seeing their boss flying into a rage, all the space pirates made way to reveal the individual who was talking. The gazes of all the pirates in the room were also drawn over to this individual.

Eh... he seems like a member of the Galaxy Human Race, wearing a black windbreaker, and his looks... eh? Why does he look so familiar?

Sykes glared at this individual with doubt in his eyes. The next moment, the doubt turned into shock, and he let out a loud roar.

"Black Star! What are you doing here?"

All the space pirates in the surroundings jumped away as though they had seen a ghost, and the area around Han Xiao became empty.

The entire hall became silent and Han Xiao looked at Sykes. Stroking his chin, he said slowly, "You don't need to be anxious. I am here to make a deal with you."

"What deal?"

"I want you to pay the price of freedom in exchange for..." Han Xiao snickered. "Your life!"

Buzz! Pa!

Just as he finished his sentence, he equipped the Berserk Ape suit immediately and took out his High Energy Concentrated Particle Cannon. The blast from the cannon broke through from the interior of the spaceship and out into space.

The suction force from the vacuum came like a powerful gust, and the pirates in the spaceship were all sucked out by the frightening suction force and thrown into space. A portion of the weaker Supers froze up immediately with their blood vessels rupturing. The environment of space was fatal to some low-grade Supers.

Only Sykes and a couple of the more powerful pirates were able to stabilize their bodies and resist the suction force. Only those who were at Grade B were able to barely endure the treacherous space climate.

The mechanical suit had its own regulation mechanism, and space did not affect him in the slightest as he floated in space.

Sykes had a face full of fury as his mouth opened like he was roaring. However, the violent gust from air being sucked out of the spaceship completely drowned out his voice.

Without saying another word, Han Xiao sent his fist toward the alloy ground and activated the Power Detonation skill!

Boom!

The shockwave of his punch spread out in all directions with bolts of lightning accompanying it, shattering the alloy floor!

With the shockwave spreading, the destruction of the spaceship hastened, and hole enlarged even further.

Without solid ground beneath their feet, all the pirates apart from Sykes were sucked out. Only Sykes was able to send out a sticky, purplish substance toward the alloy wall to stabilize himself.

This sticky, purplish gel-like substance was Sykes' Esper ability. This sticky gel was extremely poisonous and corrosive. It was also able to solidify in an instant to take the shape of various things. Furthermore, the purplish gel excreted could be stored for a very long time. Sykes could control the corrosiveness of this purplish gel, and this was where his title of 'Purple Snake' came from.

Despite Sykes being an Esper, he had his own armor as well. However, because he was not a Mechanic, the armor could not be compressed into a compressed orb. At this moment, his armor was in his personal storeroom.

While he hated Han Xiao to the core, he knew that the most urgent matter was for him to put on his armor. At the very least, he would be able to move around in space freely with it. He immediately made use of his purplish gel to scale the wall and sprint toward his personal store room.

Hu!

Han Xiao's thrusters were activated, leaving behind two trails of fire as he rapidly approached Sykes.

Right at that moment, Sykes waved his arm, and a wave of purplish gel shot toward him. As it came into contact with the walls of the spaceship, thick purple smoke was released as the alloy walls melted.

This ability is interesting. Han Xiao's eyes narrowed, and his arm transformed to reveal a pipe.

The inside of the spaceship had not become a vacuum yet, and air was sucked into his mechanical suit through the nanoparticles. The air that was sucked in was then channeled to the pipe, and a high-pressure air cannon was fired to scatter the wave of purplish gel.

The corrosive gel splattered everywhere, and the entire place became filled with smoke.

Han Xiao sped up further and caught onto one of Sykes's arms.

Mechanical Force exploded from his entire body, and his thrusters started to shoot flames in the opposite direction. He then grabbed onto Sykes' arm and got into a throwing posture.

Berserk Throw!

...

"Will the flagship please respond! Please respond! What is the current status?"

The ships of the Purple Snake Space Pirates surrounded the flagship in space.

A few seconds ago, they had all lost contact with the flagship and could not get a response no matter how hard they tried.

Just when the ships were about to board the flagship to check what had gone wrong, the exterior armor of the flagship suddenly exploded, leaving a large hole behind. All the junk items from within the flagship were sucked into space, and many of their comrades were included.

Before the other spaceships could react, a large hole was also created at the bottom of the spaceship over a thousand meters away from the main hall. Broken metal bits and a human figure were sent flying out of the hole. That human figure was their boss, Sykes!

Sykes had been sent flying through half the flagship with a single Berserk Throw from Han Xiao!

**Chapter 598: Man vs. Fleet**

It had all happened so quickly and so suddenly that the galactic pirates inside the pillaging ships around were stunned for a moment. When their boss Sykes were rolling in the vacuum space, only then did they realize that this was an attack.

“Quick! Help boss!”

“The enemy should be in the main ship. Surround it and don’t let him get away!”

As the galactic pirates yelled at each other, two pillaging ships closed in on Sykes, and the rest of the pillaging ships quickly formed a surrounding formation.

Through the porthole, Han Xiao saw the pillaging ships turn around and aim their cannons at him. Unworried, he smiled and contacted Phillip in his helmet.

“Phillip, assist me in virtual hacking.”

“Order confirmed. Switching to virtual sights, hum...”

The tactical screen inside the helmet showed the hacking interface with a complex data stream. Green beams of light shot out from the chest of the mechanical suit and formed a virtual control panel. Han Xiao quickly typed the code.

The first one that he was going to hack was the Purple Snake Space Pirates’ main ship that he was on.

You have used [Virtual Intrusion] on Purple Snake Battleship.

Beginning to crack firewall (Level 2).

Undergoing level 1 authentication... Authentication passed!

Undergoing level 2 authentication... Authentication passed!

Intrusion successful! You have obtained the operational authority of Purple Snake!

Authority Level: Highest

Data has been sampled!

Backup generation complete!

+10% Success Rate, +25% Speed when hacking machinery controlled by the same artificial intelligence.

Your authority has been blocked by the other party’s artificial intelligence, undergoing authentication...  
Authentication successful!

You have successfully retained your privileges!

Time till next authentication: 140 seconds

The artificial intelligence used by the galactic pirate spaceship was clearly way worse than DarkStar’s—their firewall was only level two. Han Xiao was already Calamity Grade, and his virtual hacking ability

was also largely enhanced. Hacking a galactic pirate spaceship was a piece of cake, and he immediately obtained the highest authority level.

The higher the authority level obtained on the first intrusion, the lower the difficulty of hacking, and vice versa. This meant that the artificial intelligence of Purple Snake Space Pirates was no match at all.

The model of Purple Snake appeared on the control panel; all the modules were usable. Han Xiao clicked on the shield module.

“Activate shield with full power output.”

The next moment, an oval-shaped light blue electromagnetic shield shrouded the entire spaceship.

Dong! Dong!

Outside the porthole, the tens of pillaging ships started firing immediately after seeing the shield activated. Cannons exploded on the shield nonstop, and the inside of the spaceship was trembling.

“The shield can last a few minutes, so there’s more than enough time.”

Without any worry or panic, Han Xiao started to hack the other targets.

He did not throw Sykes out just because he wanted to but to obtain control of this main ship and defend against the focus fire from the galactic pirates.

Sykes was one of the weaker ones in the Calamity Grade, so Han Xiao had a very high chance of winning if it was a duel. However, this was not a duel.

He was facing an entire galactic pirate fleet!

Han Xiao’s initial plan was to snatch an advantageous location and make use of his ability as a Virtual Mechanic!

Not far away, Sykes was still floating in space. Although he could move by using energy, he was not a Pugilist, and his Esper ability did not enhance his movement speed.

As soon as he turned, he saw two pillaging ships piloted by his subordinates approaching that were clearly there to fetch him. Sykes’ eyes gleamed, he used his energy and approached them.

Only at this moment did Sykes have the time to think of what to do next.

He initially did not want to become Han Xiao’s foe, but now that Han Xiao had approached him, this could no longer be resolved peacefully. They were enemies!

Sykes was boiling, clenching his teeth. The fact that Han Xiao had come alone made him feel like Han Xiao did not take Purple Snake Space Pirates seriously at all.

Since that was the case, he would get rid of Black Star immediately without caring about anything else!

Murderous intent appeared in Sykes’s mind.

The two pillaging ships finally drew close, so Sykes stopped his train of thought and prepared to wait for his subordinates to open the hatch for him.

Suddenly, something unexpected happened!

The two pillaging ships fired light cannons one after another, toward Sykes. His vision instantly became filled with white as a sense of burning quickly approached.

Sykes's expression changed drastically!

Inside the under fire Purple Snake, two more virtual models of pillaging ships appeared on Han Xiao's control panel. He had noticed the spaceships heading toward Sykes long ago, so he had first obtained authority over them. He did not want Sykes to end up in another ship.

His fingers danced on the control panel so quickly they left blurry silhouettes behind—his typing speed was astounding, and the artificial intelligence of the pillaging ship was no match. The pillaging ships became Han Xiao's one after another. Fewer and fewer attacks were aimed at the main ship. Instead, the pillaging ships controlled by Han Xiao started firing at the other galactic pirates. The galactic pirates were in a panic.

A Calamity Grade Virtual Mechanic could easily deal with an entire galactic pirate fleet alone!

This was especially so in the late stages of the Mechanic class, when at this level, their combat capability was extraordinary, able to adapt to both duels and team fights.

The situation changed completely. A few people realized that things were going south and immediately escaped with their ships. There was no such word as 'loyalty' in the galactic pirates' dictionary.

The battle lasted more than ten minutes. The cannon fire gradually lessened. Other than the spaceships that escaped or were destroyed, all the other spaceships were now controlled by Han Xiao.

Han Xiao walked through the captured ships one by one and carried out the remaining work—dealing with the galactic pirates inside. Some stronger ones were not killed, including the Grade B officers of the galactic pirate group. They were all tied and thrown into the Purple Snake. As for the hole in the ship, it had already been repaired by maintenance robots.

Capturing Sykes was not much trouble—Han Xiao used many ships and focused their fire on him. Although the power of the cannons of those spaceships was thousands of miles away from the DarkStar main cannon, they had the quantity to make up for it. Sykes had a huge mobility problem in space, so it was very difficult for him to dodge. He was basically a live target. It was brutal, and even Han Xiao did not have the heart to watch it.

After making sure that Sykes was almost done for, only then did Han Xiao control the spaceship to drag Sykes back to Purple Snake. He then threw him aside with the other galactic pirates.

"Bo—Boss..."

All the captured galactic pirates looked at the burnt, almost dead Sykes. They could not help but feel terrified.

Grade As rarely became galactic pirates. The unity of the Purple Snake Space Pirates came from how strong Sykes was—he made his subordinates feel very confident.

However, Sykes had easily been defeated, so his strong image in their mind had shattered.



The more they admired Sykes before, the more they were afraid of Han Xiao now.

“Some escaped, but they were all unimportant minions.”

Han Xiao stood in front of them as he took off his Berserk Ape. All living galactic pirates were before him, so there was no need to hack anything anymore. The spaceship was in his hands.

Taking account of the spaceships that had escaped, he had seized twenty-four spaceships. Although most of them were cheap pillaging ships, there was the main ship that was a Grade Crow battleship, so it was not a bad return.

Sykes was heavily injured; his limbs were all locked by electromagnetic cuffs. He lay sideways on the floor and glared at Han Xiao with hatred and rage.

“Don’t look at me like that. You messed with someone, so you should have been prepared for this.” Han Xiao shrugged.

Sykes chortled with despair, speechless.

“Calamity Grade Supers should be able to last longer,” Han Xiao murmured.

He was not going to go easy on a captive. With bright eyes, he took out the Super-Gene Extractor and approached Sykes step by step.

Seeing Han Xiao’s passionate eyes, Sykes suddenly felt a chill run down his spine. He then recalled Befuli’s terrifying state, and his expression instantly changed. Trying to be tough, he yelled, “Don’t come closer! I will kill you! I will kill you for sure! Don’t! Don—”

Han Xiao ignored it all and plunged the Super-Gene Extractor right into Sykes’ veins, extracting his Super-Gene. The product was three tubes of dark red Ability Potions, thick as blood.

Sykes felt a sense of weakness coming directly from his bones. The little energy he had left was gone. The Esper power that he was so used to using could not be sensed anymore. It was like he had suddenly lost his body’s senses, and he panicked.

This time, Han Xiao took out a fresh new Ability Potion and gulped it down.

Sykes’ entire body trembled. Looking at Han Xiao gobbling his blood, he was submerged in horror. His eyes widened, and his lips shivered.

Not just him, all the other captive galactic pirates saw this and felt terrified and uneasy.

You have received [Character Summon Card – Sykes (Temporary)]

[Character Summon Card – Sykes (Temporary)]: Purple Poison – Tide

Release a large amount of liquid poison, spreading out in all directions from the user. This acidic poison causes continuous damage every five seconds. The poison will not disappear after being released. It can be used to form acidic terrain or reused.

Damage: 580 – 920

This Character Summon Card will expire in 15 days.

Skills had many abilities. The abilities extracted by the Ability Potion were random, but they were all different ways to use the Esper power.

This was the type of Esper ability that could produce physical materials. Although it was comparatively weak in battle, the produced materials would not disappear, so there were many more ways to use it.

*The destructive power of this Esper ability is actually really high. As long as he has enough time, he can make enough poisonous liquid to cover an entire land or even an entire planet, making it lifeless...*

The way Han Xiao looked at Sykes changed. It was like he was looking at a biochemical weapon, with slight disappointment.

*You have such a strong Esper ability, but you chose to be a galactic pirate?*

Not long after, Ability Potions were made from all the captive galactic pirates. Han Xiao checked all the abilities then imprisoned everyone. Sykes received special treatment from him.

*The Purple Snake Space Pirates have finally been dealt with. That cost me more than half a month...*

Han Xiao looked on the forums. Other than Planet Sunil, the other players' first mission had mostly been completed. Most of them were successful, with a few of them triggered new events, but most of them had returned to Base No.1 to receive new missions. While doing so, they also updated their equipment and brought Han Xiao another wave of profit. Everything was on the right path.

*I got more than twenty ships this time. Maybe fighting galactic pirates is also a way to make a fortune,* Han Xiao pondered. He had not been strong enough back then, but now that he was Calamity Grade, regular galactic pirates would be a piece of cake. Not only could he take their spaceships, he could also capture the galactic pirates and turn them into sources for Ability Potions or even exchange them for bounties.

Sykes had a bounty of 2.8 million Enas in Black Raven Civilization, but Han Xiao did not plan to exchange him for the bounty now. He wanted to drain Sykes dry first before giving him in for the bounty.

After arranging the loot, Han Xiao brought along the twenty or so spaceships and headed back to Garton Star System.

...

A few days after Han Xiao left, when the escaped Purple Snake galactic pirates shared their experience, only then did the Fawn Star System hear about this. Black Star had beaten up the entire Purple Snake Space Pirates alone!

This was not big news but not insignificant either. The Purple Snake Space Pirates had constantly been committing crimes in the Fawn Star System, so they were quite well known. When such a large galactic

pirate group was defeated by a single person, there was quite a number of people who paid attention to it and were curious about the reasons.

Some people said that Sykes kidnapped Black Star Army's people, some said that this was a hire accepted by Black Star, and some even said that Black Star was picking on galactic pirates to rob resources and the Purple Snake Space Pirates were the victims instead. All sorts of rumors were going around.

No matter what, a large group of galactic pirates being defeated was a good thing for the citizens of Fawn Star System.

Black Raven Civilization received this news and waited for Black Star to approach them and exchange the prisoner for a bounty, while they could take this opportunity to form a relationship with the rising Black Star.

However, after waiting for many days, they received the message that Han Xiao had returned to the Garton Star System.

The employees of the Bounty Department of Black Raven Civilization were confused. *Black Star isn't coming to change for bounty. Does he not want it?*

*Since he does not want the bounty and the Purple Snake Space Pirates are gone, does that mean we can just cancel the bounty?*

This was common. When some wanted criminal was killed and no one came to claim the bounty, the bounty would be considered complete.

However, this was denied by the superiors of the related departments in Black Raven Civilization. They decided to keep the bounty and wait for Black Star to claim it.

There were many reasons. One was to use this opportunity to bond with Black Star. This amount of money was going to be there waiting for Black Star to claim it, so he would most likely come in the future.

Another reason was that they were interested in the relationship between Black Star and Godora. When Black Star was attacked by DarkStar back in the day, the Dragon Emperor had acted and shocked the world.

In that incident, Black Raven Civilization's competition, the Holy Stone Civilization, seemed to have some sort of dispute with Black Star. This was an opportunity, and if they could get a connection with Godora from Black Star, they could be above the Holy Stone Civilization.

With Han Xiao's current position and fame, every move he made was connected to the nerves of many forces. What he represented was no longer just himself.

## **Chapter 599: Stepping onto the Right Path and Expanding Blueprints**

Back on Planet Golden Gate...

The round trip had taken him close to a month. The twenty-four spaceships that Han Xiao had taken returned to Base No. 1. The pillaging ships were smaller in size, and after modifying the messy coating on their exteriors, these were absorbed into the assault fleet.

The Crow Grade ship was on the same grade as a Violent Falcon Grade battleship, so it was stored in the hangar. After it was repaired, it could be put into use.

Including those spaceships, Han Xiao had close to a hundred spaceships under his fleet. It was divided into four divisions. One was the strategic core division that was made of the Fortress Grade flagship alone. The second was the battleship division formed by Violent Falcon Grade and Crow Grade ships, in charge of guarding and direct combat. The third was the assault fleet formed by the seized DarkStar assault ships and the galactic pirate pillaging ships, with speed superiority. The fourth was the rented carrier spaceship division used to transport manpower.

As for the BlackLight Stealth, it was for Han Xiao and Han Xiao only. Made by the Federation of Light, its grade and performance were way ahead of all other spaceships in the Black Star Army. Also, Risda was not willing to let too many people use his body.

Watching the last spaceship being parked in the hangar, Han Xiao had Phillip close its gate and locked Sykes and the other captives in the secret cell of Base No.1.

This cell had been built from an extremely strong alloy, covered with many automatic weapons such as cannons, nerve gas, sedative injectors, large vacuum gravity field, and many others. Inside the walls were many mini cameras monitored by Phillip at all times. The security was extremely tight to prevent the captives from escaping.

Because he had extracted the Super-Gene of those captives every day on the way back, they all were weak, including Sykes.

Since Calamity Grades were able to recover much faster, Sykes received special treatment. His production rate was more than five times that of the others.

Han Xiao had stored hundreds of Ability Potions that were categorized. Some were for his own use; some were sold in the faction store.

The interior of Base No.1 was filled with bridges like a beehive. As Han Xiao walked on the streets, players could be seen everywhere, getting used to the new Main City.

Many people looked at Han Xiao. He was a renowned NPC in the eyes of the players, and he was the leader of the faction. When the players saw him, they all felt a sense of closeness to him, and quite a number greeted him, to which Han Xiao nodded back in reply.

There were many issues in the faction waiting to be resolved. Han Xiao checked through Sylvia's homework then returned to his room. He took out a concentrated nutrition bar and started chewing while settling these issues.

The first issue was to clean up after the missions carried out by the many players.

Other than Planet Sunil, most of the players carrying out missions around the Garton Star System had completed and returned. This was the first large scale hiring event for Black Star Army, so Han Xiao took

it quite seriously. He told Phillip to filter out the problematic records in it and browsed through them one by one.

Of course, not all players were doing well. Some of the players had a rather low mission completion percentage. Furthermore, there was even a small group of people that messed around and completely messed up the mission, sullyng the name of the Black Star Army. For the former, Han Xiao told Phillip to send a sincere apology to the employer on behalf of the Black Star Army. As for the latter, the Credibility Rating of their mercenary profile was deducted, and the grade of the missions that they could accept was lowered.

Since Han Xiao wanted to expand the Black Star Army with the help of the players, he was prepared for the problems that came with it. The issues now were all small problems. The effect brought by the players was much more beneficial than detrimental.

The first large scale hire event stabilized the name brought by the Godora award ceremony.

When looking for mercenaries, the employers in the Garton Star System all chose the local Black Star Army as their first choice. The Mercenary Alliance recognized the Black Star Army's position in the Garton Star System as the top of the industry and provided them with a continuous supply of high-quality employment missions.

The result of this was that the business of the Garton Star System mercenary industry was practically monopolized by the Black Star Army. Although the population of a Star System was very high, not many people needed mercenaries. The freelance mercenaries in the Garton Star System suddenly started to notice that they could hardly find high-quality hires anymore. The list given to them by the Mercenary Alliance consisted of most low reward jobs.

The freelance mercenaries were very jealous of the business enjoyed by the Black Star Army. Many people had realized that if the Black Star Army continued to grow at this pace, the available jobs in the Garton Star System would all be finished sooner or later, and the new jobs would then be taken by the Black Star Army as well. Then, the freelance mercenaries could very likely end up with no job, which was a very horrible future to think about.

The rise of the Black Star Army could not be stopped. The freelance mercenaries had to choose one of three paths. First was to not care about future developments and continue doing what they were doing; second was to leave the Garton Star System and find jobs in another place; third was to request to join the Black Star Army.

Quite a few freelance mercenaries took the third path. The Black Star Army was increasing in size and had an extremely good name, and since Black Star Army was on its way to monopolize the entire mercenary industry of the Garton Star System, joining them did not seem like a bad choice after all. From the victims of the Black Star Army's rise, there could be some who benefitted from it and enjoyed the Black Star Army's businesses.

In Han Xiao's plan, there was a part of it that included increasing their name with the players in order to attract freelance mercenaries. After the players joined, their size exploded to hundreds of thousands of members. The facilities of their base were mostly complete, and they had ample funds, so he was not planning to control the Black Star Army's number of members. He told Phillip to filter the background of

the freelance mercenaries that requested to join, who then deleted some that were clearly incompetent and were there just for the easy missions, leaving those who were skilled and had good records.

About 7,000 freelance mercenaries were left after the first selection.

However, this number was still not decided yet. Han Xiao told Phillip to send a notice to those mercenaries to come to Base No.1 for an interview fifteen days later. Some would be disqualified again, and only the ones who remained after that would be recruited by the Black Star Army.

Recruiting more freelance mercenaries was a very important step of the Black Star Army's expansion.

The second issue waiting to be resolved was also related to the players.

After the first independent hiring event, these players were more familiar with the galactic environment and mission flow. Many players shared the difficulties that they met during the hires on the forums.

Han Xiao paid attention to these problems. In his previous life, he had also experienced the stage of not being used to the new environment after first entering the universe, so he had expected this. He knew about most of the difficulties the players faced.

As early as one year before Version 2.0 started, a part of his machinery production line had been building support items, which were intended to help with the players' ability to carry out missions.

Now that there was finally a demand for this, Han Xiao planned to put these mechanical items into the faction store as well. The timing was perfect—the players were just done with their first hire, and most of them had to return to Base No.1. The sales were definitely going to rocket.

...

In the store area of Base No.1, many people were going in and out. This was the place with the highest player density.

Although they could shop online through Phillip, they could only see the physical item at the store, which was also the collection point.

Many players used their latest earnings to buy equipment.

At this time, the faction store suddenly refreshed. A number of new items were placed at the top of the list with a very visible 'NEW' sign in their top right corner.

"New items so soon?"

"Let's see what they are."

Every update to the store would attract attention from a large number of players, and this time was no exception.

Di di di...

The sound of communicators rang continuously in the crowd. Many people took out their communicators to take a look. It was Phillip's supporting program that announced the update of the store, which could be browsed through the pre-order list.

Very soon, players realized that the new items were surprisingly not combat equipment.

They looked at the introduction of the new items.

[Mini Land Flattening Core]—Quickly changes the terrain of a small area into flat ground suitable for a temporary stronghold. The specific measurements are...

[Multi-functional Airdrop Bag]—Includes many machines needed for airdrop, suitable for various situations occurring during airdrop...

[Portable Mini Folded Fortress]—Can be expanded on unoccupied land, forming a temporary alloy fortress to be used as a stronghold, equipped with stronghold weapon slots and basic security functions...

[Automatic Guarding Cannon Turret]—Large caliber cannon, includes 1,000 Iron Core Shots, 300 Armor Piercing Shots. Provides firepower support...

[Patrolling Sentry]—Mini scouting robot, able to scout, patrol, and alert, can be used as a sentry for a stronghold...

[Interference Resistant Electromagnetic Bracelet]—Resists electromagnetic interference and data hacking to a certain extent...

[Portable Strong Electromagnetic Interference Device]—Interfere with the functions of the machines within a certain range...

[Nuclear Flying Backpack]—Provides long duration flying ability, includes self-destruction option...

[Force Resonator]—Adjustable vibration frequency, able to shatter metal and concrete buildings within a large distance...

[Worker Bee Armor]—Single Unit Mining Armor, used to gather minerals and fuel. Equipped with multi-functional digging tools and mineral firearms. High weight, suitable for handling ores...

The players faced complex environments while carrying out the missions. The mission requirements varied, including but not limited to infiltration, pursuit, mining, scouting, assassination, combat, and others. Sudden developments often occurred.

Although these mercenaries added by Han Xiao were not equipment that heightened one's combat capability, they could allow one to adapt to many situations. These were tactical items that could efficiently increase the players' ability to deal with accidents, enhancing their performance as mercenaries.

The technology used in these machines was not advanced, but they were things the players needed very much. They were cheap, useful support items.

For machines such as the turret, they were something that Han Xiao had created long ago. He had been using the turrets, but only now did he sell them to the players in large quantities. He was not yet selling the more advanced electromagnetic turrets and energy turrets but gunpowder turrets. The average level of the players now was around seventy, so the gunpowder turrets were still quite useful.

Some Mechanic players at the time could also build some of these products, but in terms of quality, cost, and price, their products were grossly inferior compared to those on the Black Star Army store.

These functional items were just right for the new needs of the players.

“These seem very useful.”

“I was just about to accept a job. These new items came right on time.”

The players were pleasantly surprised.

Not only the players in Base No.1, but the players who were on Sunil or doing missions on other planets also received Phillip’s notification. They were all very tempted.

Especially the 200,000 players in Planet Sunil. They were dealing with the Catastrophe, so they had to deal with the complicated wilderness situations and even clear out the underground Prophecy Stone Mine. The addition of [Worker Bee Armor] was absolutely perfect.

Stock was limited, and the players hastily bought what they needed. The prices of these new products were very low, so their demand was high. Within twenty minutes, the inventory was cleared out, and many who could not buy them pre-ordered the next batch.

The players were used to the special ‘Growing Faction’ attribute of the Black Star Army. They felt that the reason that these new items appeared was because the players of the Black Star Army had worked together to develop the faction. Looking at the new items of the faction store, many players felt a sense of achievement.

...

After adding these support items, Han Xiao observed the sales. Since they were functional items, their price was low and affordable. Nonetheless, the entire inventory was sold out within half an hour. His funds rose nonstop as the players’ money flew into his personal account.

This sale had made him an astonishing total of 6,600,000 Enas!

Including Noriosse’s investment and the income from the last sales, Han Xiao had a total of 44,000,000 Enas!

This was a lot of money.

“Funds are abundant. With this money, I can build my Mechanic Army any way I want.” Han Xiao was very content.

With so much money, if he was the only one using it, it could last him a very long time. However, of course, these funds had to be used to operate the Black Star Army and support the Black Star Army’s expansion.



The blueprint that Han Xiao had set for the Black Star Army's development was gigantic. He planned to use the Garton Star System as a foundation, choose dozens of important NPC resource planets, and keep building sub-bases. He would turn the Garton Star System into the Black Star Army's headquarters, controlling the mercenary business there tightly or even monopolizing it.

Then, he would expand the business to other Star Systems and build sub-bases in other Star Systems, expanding step by step. Many parts of this plan required a lot of money, such as adding a large number of spaceships, recruiting, building partnerships with more organizations, and so on.

The identity of a mercenary group was just a stepping stone; Han Xiao's real target was to develop enormous military power, like Bloodshed Land.

The funds required for this blueprint was a number that he could not calculate or imagine.

The only thing he knew was that the money that he had now was far, far from enough.

His mission was heavy, and the road was long.

"This won't be completed within a short time. The sales route is already built anyway, so profit will keep coming. There's no need for me to be too tight on spending."

Han Xiao smiled. He took out his communicator and ordered a large number of materials from the raw material provider that he had been working with.

Finally, he had some free time to strengthen all his combat equipment to the Calamity Grade standard!

"Let's hope something like the Purple Snake Space Pirates incident doesn't happen again..."

## **Chapter 600: DarkStar Remnants**

In Star Zone 4 of the Garton Star System was a Godoran public space station containing a certain erotic clubhouse.

Colorful and lively lights flickered, and the energetic, exciting music elevated the atmosphere. Ladies of different races with minimal clothing danced seductively on the round, rectangular shaped booths all around the place. Under them was a screen introducing, or making up, each lady's background, age, and so on, filling them with all sorts of terrible and erotic stories, stimulating the audiences' lustful thoughts.

Every booth was surrounded by a large group of males not taking their eyes off the dancer for a second. Their laughter was rough, and some even reached out to touch the dancer from time to time. Not far away was the bar with semi-private seats. Most of the people in them were males too, hugging and moving their hands around the alluring-eyed ladies accompanying them to drink.

Waitresses in revealing clothes carried drinks around, and the male customers from all sorts of races occasionally groped them.

The sound of laughter, mumbling, and teasing filled the extravagant atmosphere. It was like the air was painted with a layer of seductive pink.

At a luxurious table, a few males were chatting loudly and gulping down one drink after another. They were clearly mercenaries.

These people all had ladies in their arms. Their groping was rough and aggressive, such that pain could be seen in many of the ladies' eyes, but they did not dare to say anything. They could only smile.

These ladies knew who these mercenaries were; they were from a relatively well known mercenary group and were all Grade B Supers. In the eyes of these regular people, Grade B Supers were someone they absolutely could not mess with.

However, among these mercenaries looking for fun, there was an outcast.

At the side of the table, there was a tall and skinny man without any lady beside him. The drink in front of him was untouched, too. He was sitting up straight with his hands on his thighs. He was the odd one out in this environment; the others were having a whale of a time, but his expression was so serious as if he was doing scientific research. Even the passion of the other mercenaries was brought down.

"Come on Reynold, don't be so serious, drink some booze. It's on me anyway. Have as much fun as you like," the captain of this mercenary group said as he looked at his odd comrade. His tone did not sound like superior but instead was almost fawning.

Reynold's body did not move—only his neck turned as he looked over. His eyes were bright and sharp, like an owl in the night. Monotonously, he said, "Alcohol slows down my brain, makes me think slower. I need to keep myself sober."

"Er, then you can find a woman..."

Before the captain finished, Reynold said, "Women distract me and break my thoughts. Biological desire also affects my clarity."

"Alright then..." The mercenary captain giggled. He could not do anything about Reynold. Reynold's position in his mercenary group was very high and irreplaceable.

That was because Reynold was a Grade B Mechanic.

In the universe, the number of Mechanics was relatively low. They were rare, especially high-level Mechanics. Unlike Pugilists, Espers, and Psychics, Mechanics needed tons of knowledge. Only Mages could be compared with the amount of knowledge Mechanics needed. To Mechanics, knowledge was fundamental to becoming stronger.

His team had worked together with Reynold for quite a long time. Reynold had been providing them with weapons, devices, and repairing their spaceship and machines; he basically took care of the logistics of the entire group. Plus, he had Grade B combat ability. Reynold's position was even slightly higher than his, the captain.

If not because Reynold was so important, the mercenary captain would have been done with his strange personality long ago.

"Have you heard? Many freelance mercenaries want to join the Black Star Army. They say Black Star will monopolize the Garton Star System's mercenary business. What do we do?" a mercenary asked.

“Ignore them. It’s still a long way to go for Black Star to monopolize Garton Star System even if he wants to. By then we will just go to another Star System to find work.” The mercenary captain curled his lips and did not care.

Then, Reynold spoke with an expressionless face. “Let’s join Black Star.”

It was silent.

The mercenaries looked at Reynold in shock.

“What do you mean? I’m the captain, don’t make decisions for me,” the mercenary captain said with a displeased tone.

“Okay.” Reynold nodded. He instantly took out his communicator, pressed it a few times, then stood up and walked away immediately after.

“Wait, where are you going?” The mercenary captain suddenly felt something was not right.

“I’ve left the group.” Reynold walked further and further.

The mercenaries were stunned. Did he just quit the group without any hesitation because of a single disagreement? So decisive?

The mercenary captain panicked. He quickly stood up and yelled, “Are you out of your mind? No matter what, we’ve fought alongside each other for so long. We all took you as a friend, and you’re just leaving like this?”

“Me and you, we were cooperating equally. I did not sell myself to you, so why can’t I leave?”

Without even turning his head around, Reynold walked out without stopping at all. Every step felt like it was measured precisely with a ruler. His back disappeared at the door.

The group of mercenaries exchanged looks with confusion.

“What the hell is Reynold thinking? Does he think there’s no future working with us?” one of them said frustratedly.

The mercenary captain’s face was gloomy. He threw the lady in his arms onto the floor without looking and heavily bashed the table.

Clank!

Cracks spread out on the table, startling everyone.

“That asshole!”

Without Reynold, the strength of his group was hugely reduced. Knowing that, the mercenary captain was furious, but there was nothing he could do.

...

Inside a passenger room on a galactic traveling spaceship in the Garton Star System, Brock looked at the interview notification from the Black Star Army on his communicator, and his eyes flickered.

He was a hybrid Godoran, a freelance mercenary. His resume had passed the first round of selection, and he had been notified by Phillip to go to the interview.

However, being a mercenary was just part of his fake identity. Brock's real identity was a hidden member that DarkStar had left in the outside world. Before he became a mercenary, he had been an elite member trained by DarkStar.

DarkStar's fleet had been wiped out, and almost all his superiors had been captured, but there was a group of DarkStar members who did not follow the fleet and hid in the outside world, keeping up their fake identities. These people had once been DarkStar's intelligence network, and now they were DarkStar remnants. Since the leader had gone bankrupt and bolted, they now had no leader and could only be concerned with their own safety.

Recently, Godora had been cleaning up the remaining DarkStar forces, and it was quite effective. Many of DarkStar's hidden intelligence channels were torn down.

For safety, the DarkStar remnants had stopped contacting each other. Some wanted to escape, some wanted to clean their background, and some wanted to change sides.

Brock was one of the people who hid very well. Not long after DarkStar was destroyed, he had actively broken away contact with the other remnants. His mercenary resume had nothing suspicious. On the surface, he had no connection to DarkStar—his identity was well hidden.

However, he did not plan to clean up his background.

Before DarkStar was attacked, Brock had accepted a mission to infiltrate Black Star, and he had decided to continue carrying out this mission.

With the help of his clean identity, he planned to pass the interview, become a member of Black Star, and stay hidden.

The first reason was that Godora was very close to Black Star, so with the identity as a Black Star mercenary, he could protect his secrets better.

The second reason was Brock's main motive. He was loyal to DarkStar and loathed Black Star; he strongly believed that the DarkStar leader would one day return!

With a gloomy expression, Brock thought, *The Black Star Army is an obstacle. If I infiltrate it, maybe I can climb up to become a team leader or even an officer. I can split the Black Star Army from inside. Once the leader returns, it will be time for me to fulfill my duty. I will become a nail in the heart of the enemy...*

...

The players bought the new equipment and excitedly started new missions.

While doing the missions, they were also exploring the universe. They were still at the first stage of familiarizing themselves with the universe, and it would probably take two to three more missions for them to fully get used to the galaxy.

On the other side, the hundreds of thousands of players on Planet Aquamarine were passing the test one after another. Every so often, tens of thousands of players would join the Black Star Army. These

players were considered newbies, but they at least knew how to start a mission with the help of the forums, so they did not start with nothing. If there was anything they did not understand, they could even ask the first group of players that joined the Black Star Army.

Hence, Han Xiao did not have to worry about the players for some time. It was going in the right direction; he just had to leave them be and let them have fun.

Fifteen days passed by quickly, and it was finally the day to interview the newcomers.

Over the past two weeks, Han Xiao had placed himself in solitude and built many new machines. However, updating all his equipment was a very demanding task, so he had yet to complete it. He had no choice but to pause for a moment and take the time to interview these mercenaries.

In the base's vast hall, thousands of mercenaries waiting to be interviewed had gathered. There were humans, beasts, and insects, women, men, or sexless. They sized each other up.

"So, this is Black Star's headquarters."

"Looks quite grand, not bad."

Brock looked around. When he followed the big group in, he had kept observing the structure of the base, looking for weak spots and memorizing them, forming a map in his mind.

After waiting for a while, the alloy floor in front of the thousands of people opened up in a spiral manner, showing a circular hole. Dressed in his windbreaker, Han Xiao slowly flew up and landed in front of everyone.

The eyes of the thousands of people concentrated on Han Xiao. Some were curious, some were passionate, and some were filled with admiration.

With Han Xiao's current fame, strength, and position, he was indeed an important person in the Garton Star System.

"So, he's Black Star..." Brock narrowed his eyes slightly. He had seen a recording of Han Xiao before, but this was the first time seeing the real person. He sized Han Xiao up secretly.

Han Xiao glanced over the people, turned around to look at Sylvia, and nodded.

Sylvia nodded in return, then walked forward, cleared her throat, and spoke in her crisp voice.

"Welcome, everyone. You are all experienced senior mercenaries, anyone that passes the interview will become a member of us Black Star Army. You will need to sign the Mercenary Alliance's contract; all the benefits and privileges are stated inside. Of course, so are the rules and regulations of the Black Star Army, as well as your responsibilities."

Then, Sylvia stepped aside. Herlous was not there, so Han Xiao was using her as an assistant.

Han Xiao glanced over the crowd again and loudly said, "You all know the rules. If you have any problems, you can leave now."

The thousands of mercenaries murmured, but none left.

“Okay, we shall not waste any more time. Let’s start the test.” Han Xiao raised his hand. “It’s simple. Every one of you will walk in front of me and let me tap you. Through the tap, I can roughly sense your Energy Rank. Those who pass will wait to the side.”

The mercenaries had no problem with that. No one there questioned the ability of a Calamity Grade.

However, many were unconfident. This kind of test depended purely on Black Star’s judgment. If he said that someone passed, they passed; if he said someone failed, they failed. There was no physical standard.

This time, Han Xiao said again, “Don’t worry, for those who do not pass, I won’t allow you to have wasted your time coming here. You will have two choices. One is, of course, to leave. The other is to accept training from the Black Star Army and increase your strength through high-intensity training. During that time, you won’t be allowed to accept missions until you pass the test. Only then will you be allowed to use the Black Star Army’s name to accept missions.”

He took talents seriously. Clearly, the more strong freelance mercenaries, the better, but he knew that not every skilled mercenary would be willing to be under his command. Talents needed to be cultivated.

Therefore, Han Xiao had decided to create the Mercenary Training Camp.

The Great Mechanic Han had thought of this long ago; it was an important part of his expansion plan. In his plan, the sub-bases were not only strongholds but could also recruit and train people.

His recruitment target was not limited to mercenaries; he was going to recruit people from different planets. Planet Aquamarine was one example. Other than the players, there were also the planet’s natives that wanted to enter the galaxy. Planet Sunil was the next target for that.

Upon hearing this, many mercenaries’ eyes gleamed. The fact that they could still join Black Star even if they did not pass wiped away their worries.

They queued up properly to be tested by Han Xiao.

This interview method was to look at their attributes through the combat information triggered on the interface through touching.

While these mercenaries were clueless, Han Xiao knew their every ability back and forth, even their trump cards.

Testing one person took two seconds. There were six to seven thousand people there, so it would take many hours. This method was very troublesome, but the origins of freelance mercenaries were extremely complicated. Many of them were not citizens of the Garton Star System, so God only knew what their background was. Hence, Han Xiao felt he had to be careful. Plus, it had been peaceful recently, so he was able to squeeze out the time.

After some time, it was finally Brock’s turn.

Without panic or worry, he walked forward and let Han Xiao tap him.

There was no risk of being exposed through testing his Energy Rank. After all, it was absolutely impossible for Black Star to know that he belonged to DarkStar just by touching him.

Brock was confident.

An opportunity to observe Black Star so closely was very rare. This was even an amazing chance for assassination. However, Brock suppressed those dangerous thoughts and prepared to wait by the side like the person in front of him.

The moment he turned around, Han Xiao's voice came behind him.

"You... wait!"