

## The Mechanic 61

### Chapter 61: Thanks for the Gift!

Feng Jun arrived late to the party with his team of fully-equipped field agents. When he saw the blood on Han Xiao's mask, his first reaction was to feel Han Xiao's chin for any wounds.

"Are you hurt?"

"Are you blind?" snapped Han Xiao, pointing to the graze on his cheek.

"That's good..." Feng Jun heaved a sigh of relief before looking at Han Xiao apologetically. They had failed in their duty to keep him safe.

"It's not your fault," consoled Han Xiao.

"This man is the Germinal Organization's executor," he explained, pointing toward Norsa's corpse. "He's an assassin who has never failed."

"Norsa Connor?"

Norsa was widely feared even among the Six Nations. Once, he had gunned down a high-ranking Stardragon official in broad daylight despite tight security.

Upon confirming the identity of the corpse, Feng Jun's shock turned into amazement.

"Hold on, he came to assassinate you... but you killed him instead? Are you really that strong?"

"You only realized that now?"

Han Xiao glared at him as he checked the interface for the quest reward.

—

Character Summoning Card: You are able to use this character's ability once.

Character: Norsa Connor

Ability: Illusory Power (E) – Only targets with more than 50 INT can resist this ability.

Usage Count: 0/1

Character Summoning Cards were quite uncommon in Galaxy. They only dropped from special quests, and their function was to allow the player to use the ability of the NPC character stated on the card. In Galaxy, people farmed and sold these for money, but it was only the rich players, who could afford to indiscriminately use them, who bought them. Although not Han Xiao's style, it was always better to have more tools at one's disposal.

Fortunately, Han Xiao had assigned all his stat points to INT beforehand, otherwise things would have played out very differently.

'Germinal Organization, thanks for the gift!'

—

Do you wish to accept your reward now?

Y/N

'Yes.'

It was a 'use' item that could be stored within the interface, allowing Han Xiao to pull it out whenever he needed it.

Meanwhile, Frenzied Sword was still trying to comprehend the situation. When he used the examine function to learn that these mysterious men in black were aligned with the 'Stardragon Strategic Defense Initiative', he couldn't help but look toward Han Xiao in wonderment.

"You know this guy?" Feng Jun asked Han Xiao curiously as he pointed at Frenzied Sword.

"Just ignore him."

As Han Xiao wiped the blood of his face with a handkerchief that Feng Jun passed to him, he frowned.

"If Norsa has found me, then it means the Germinal Organization must know exactly where I am."

"Not necessarily," replied Feng Jun. "The intelligence department has the network locked down. Any mention of you is blocked from being transmitted out."

Han Xiao's spirits immediately lifted.

"Are you sure?"

Feng Jun nodded.

"But... Norsa definitely wasn't operating alone. He must have passed the intel on to Germinal spies hiding within the capital. It'll probably be a matter of time before they relay the information."

Han Xiao abruptly started to run out of the alley.

"Hey, where are you going?" called out Feng Jun hastily. "I still have to take you back to HQ for debriefing!"

"No time to explain! Quickly request for permission to seal all of the city's exits!"

It was possible that Norsa had learned of his whereabouts from the spies in the city, and that he had come straight for him right after. In that case, it was not too late to take action!

Han Xiao knew exactly who the head honcho of the spy network was. The reason he had not taken action against him so far was that the Germinal would simply send a replacement to take over. On the contrary, leaving him alive had its advantages.

Norsa's death would confirm Han Xiao's presence in the Western Capital, but if he could stop the intel from getting out, the Germinal would not be able to pinpoint his location.

Of course, all of this was simply guesswork; it was possible that a spy had already left the city to deliver the intel. Nevertheless, it was worth a shot.

"Li Ya Lin, tell the others to meet up with me at District 8. These are the coordinates... Remember to drive a car!"

"Of all places, the slums? I was expecting at least a fancy restaurant!"

"There's no time, just do as I asked!"

After hanging up, Han Xiao smashed the window of the nearest car by the roadside and jumped in.

The owner was making a phone call right beside his car when the sudden sound of shattering glass gave him a fright. He immediately ran over to the driver side and grabbed Han Xiao by the collar.

"You! Get out now!"

The next second, he found himself yanked halfway into the car with his head pinned against the steering wheel, causing the car horn to bellow noisily.

"Nice timing!"

Han Xiao immediately began to search the poor car owner's body for the car keys. Upon finding them, he ungraciously shoved him out of the window and sped off into the distance.

As the car owner sat dazed on the floor with a big bruise on his face, he wondered aloud, "Damn, since when were car thieves this brazen?"

...

As Han Xiao weaved through traffic at high speed, he soon noticed the wail of a police siren.

"The car in front, stop right now!" yelled the traffic police officer on his motorbike.

Han Xiao tossed the car owner's driving license out of the window and yelled back, "Deduct as many points as you like!"

The officer ended up tailing Han Xiao all the way to District 8, where Han Xiao quickly got off and began to stride off in big steps. The persistent police officer ran up to him to block his path.

"You! Stop right now!"

Han Xiao rolled his eyes in exasperation. With a quick chop that the police officer could never have seen coming, he knocked him out cold.

Through a series of twisting alleys—in the process, disposing of three muggers—Han Xiao soon arrived at a small, dilapidated church building. It was now used as a means of shelter by some homeless people.

In the warring period of the old era, religion had served as a means of mental support for many. At one point, this church in particular had managed to amass millions of believers.

However, the 'savior' that they believed in never appeared, so eventually, people stopped believing.

There were a number of vagrants in the building, but when Han Xiao could not see the one that he was looking for, he abruptly grabbed the nearest one up and questioned, "Have you seen a tall, bearded man with the tattoo of a red wolf on the back of his hand?"

The vagrant shivered at the sight of the blood covering Han Xiao.

"You mean Lu Gao En?" he answered meekly. "We call him 'Tongueless' because he never seems to speak. I think he went somewhere in the afternoon."

Afternoon?

Even regular citizens needed to go through lengthy checks at one of the three guard post in order to leave the Western Capital. As it was currently only 2PM, there was still a chance for Han Xiao to stop him.

He could not count on Division 13 to pass a restriction order. Even if they were willing to, it would take some time for them to come to the decision. By then, Lu Gao En would most likely have left the capital.

Han Xiao furrowed his brows. Which of the three exits was Lu Gao En at? Time was ticking.

## **Chapter 62: Interception**

Lu Gao En left less than two hours ago, meaning that he must have received Norsa's intel just then.

Since Norsa had come directly to assassinate him, he must have tasked Lu Gao En with reporting the information back to their organization. Lu Gao En would definitely not have expected Han Xiao to know of him, so he would not see a need to deliver the intel with haste. Under such circumstances, the city pass that he would use would most likely be the one nearest to him—the Northwest Pass.

However, it was still possible that he would choose to use either of the further passes.

There was no way to tell.

"Ay, Han Xiao, we're here. What did you call us here for?"

Li Ya Lin, Zhang Wei, and Lambert arrived. They had managed to come on time thanks to Li Ya Lin's ride, a yellow convertible sports car.

"An emergency mission. One of Germinal's spies here acquired some important information. There's a chance that he hasn't left the city yet, but he could be at any of the three passes."

Li Ya Lin wiped the playful smile off her face upon hearing the severity of the situation.

"Do you have a picture of him?" she asked.

Han Xiao picked up some scraps of newspaper around him and began to draw out a rough image of Lu Gao En from his faded memory. He then yanked the homeless guy from earlier on up and barked, "Look at this, does it look like Lu Gao En?"

"The eyes should be lower... his nose is a little crooked... hair is shorter..."

With the man's help, Han Xiao was able to produce sketches of Lu Gao En with a 70 or 80 percent resemblance. He then passed them to the trio and instructed, "Let's split up and get the security officers to keep an eye out for this person. Li Ya Lin and I will take her car to the furthest city entrance, while each of you will go to the other two."

Zhang Wei's face twitched as Han Xiao gave them the orders. 'Am I still the leader of this team?'

Nonetheless, he let it slide as it was an emergency.

As they set off, Han Xiao immediately hopped into the driver's seat of Li Ya Lin's car.

"Hey, it's my car!" grumbled Li Ya Lin immediately. "I'll drive."

"You drive too slow."

"You don't trust the driving skills of a top agent?" Li Ya Lin was so outraged that her eyebrows were almost contorted upside-down. Unfortunately, she knew that there was no time to argue, so she grudgingly got into the passenger's seat.

"Tighten your seatbelt," reminded Han Xiao.

Li Ya Lin rolled her eyes at him, replying, "You must be joking. I'm a pugilist; I'll be fine no matter how fast you go."

"Suit yourself," replied Han Xiao with a plain nod as he stamped on the accelerator.

...

Half an hour later, a yellow sports car appeared at the South Entrance. Spinning almost full-circle, the car left four sizzling, black tire marks on the road as it came to an abrupt stop.

"Bleargh—"

"Hey, hey, I thought you were a pugilist?"

"You... don't talk to me n— bleeaarrgh—"

Li Ya Lin puked non-stop as she leaned on the car door.

"Half an hour, and 27 car accidents... or was it 28? My head's spinning so much that I can't even count.

"Who taught you to drive?"

Han Xiao raised an eyebrow.

"Does driving have to be taught?"

"D-doesn't it?"

“The first driver didn’t have anyone to teach him, did he?”

Li Ya Lin gaped in the face of Han Xiao’s perfect logic. She was about to shoot back at him when, suddenly, the urge to vomit kicked in again, causing her to throw her head back to the side.

“Really? I only drove a little fast, that’s all.”

“A little fast? I doubt the word ‘brake’ even exists in your vocabulary!”

“Fine, fine, let’s stop wasting time.”

As Li Ya Lin tried to get back on her feet, she lost balance and almost tripped into her own pile of vomit. Fortunately, Han Xiao was able to provide support in time. Shaking his head, he began to drag her along with him toward the sentry post.

As they neared the post, the stationed troop yelled out, “Stop! Show your ID!”

As Han Xiao reached into his pockets to take out his ID card, his expression froze as he realized that he had forgotten to bring them along. Without asking, he directly reached into Li Ya Lin’s pockets to find hers.

Top pockets... none.

Bottom pockets... none.

“Where’s your pass?” he asked.

As Li Ya Lin still seemed too dizzy to think straight, Han Xiao continued feeling around that dynamite body of hers for it.

‘I— I’m being taken advantage of?’

“Ah! I found it,” rejoiced Han Xiao. He then held the pass up toward the guard, who had been gulping at the show.

“Oh, you guys are agents. Come on in.”

As Han Xiao took a few steps forward, he discovered that Li Ya Lin was still rooted to the spot, giving him a deathly stare.

“What’s wrong? Hurry up.”

Li Ya Lin took a deep breath to compose herself.

“Give me my ID back,” she said stiffly.

“Why so fussy?” replied Han Xiao impatiently. He then casually walked back toward her and slotted the pass back into her rear pocket.

Li Ya Lin’s eyes widened.

‘I— I’m being taken advantage of again?’

Han Xiao then strode toward the sentry post to give the military officer in charge of security the sketch of Lu Gao En.

“Please wait a moment as the system performs a footage scan.”

Li Ya Lin entered the sentry post still biting her lips. The way that Han Xiao had felt her up did not seem to contain any ill-intentions at all. As such, she was having a hard time even getting angry at him. She was just very unhappy, for some reason, and she continued glaring at him.

...

Lu Gao En worked for an intelligence organization known as Storm Eye, one of the many sub-groups that were secretly under the wing of the Germinal Organization.

In most cities, Storm Eye had one ‘head contact’ in charge of relaying information back to the Germinal Organization, as well as a few covert agents who gathered intel and only reported back to the head contact.

One of Lu Gao En’s agents had reported seeing someone matching Zero’s description in District 7. While at first unclear of Han Xiao’s location, Lu Gao En had discovered, after repeated investigations, that there was an area in District 7 that seemed to be cordoned off and watched closely by Division 13. It was most likely where Zero was hiding.

Upon finding out that transmissions leaving the city were being blocked, he realized that Division 13 must have gotten wind of him somehow. Hence, he decided to go offline and take his computer apart in order to prevent being traced before heading toward the city entrance to leave.

At present, Lu Gao En was blended in with a crowd of people approaching one of the city’s entrances.

‘Norsa must have completed the assassination by now.’

Suddenly, the great metal-fenced gate before him closed up.

“What happened?”

“Why are we being stopped?”

“We have orders to temporarily seal the exits,” announced a soldier, starting a commotion among the crowd.

‘Why would they close the gates?’ Lu Gao En was shocked. ‘Did Norsa fail?’

Still, as he had been extremely careful for the past two to three years, he was not worried of being discovered.

“He’s the one!”

The sudden shout from behind caused Lu Gao En to turn around. There was a bunch of troops walking menacingly in his direction. They were obviously after him.

‘Impossible!’

Lu Gao En immediately looked around him to find an escape path, but it was too late. Not only was he surrounded by the crowd, there were simply way too many troops in the vicinity. As despair filled him, he allowed a soldier to pin him onto the ground without resistance.

As Han Xiao appeared at the scene, he sighed a breath of relief.

“We made it in time.”

“You really did!” Li Ya Lin was amazed.

“How did you guys know it was me?” asked Lu Gao En as he raised his head to look up at Han Xiao.

Han Xiao looked back at him plainly. In Galaxy, Lu Gao En was the primary contact for all Germinal-allied players in the Western Capital.

As Lu Gao En resigned to his fate, he decided to activate the poison sac stored in his tooth. He would rather die than divulge any information regarding the organization that he had dedicated his whole life to.

Suddenly, Han Xiao pulled out his handgun to fire a shot at Lu Gao En’s head, sending a trail of blood and brain matter spurting out.

—

You have killed Lu Gao En (Lv.12), gaining 3,500 experience.

Han Xiao raised his gun up to blow off the smoke from its barrel.

‘If you want to die, at least give me the experience.’

“Why did you kill him?”

Li Ya Lin was stunned by Han Xiao’s sudden action. Division 13 could obviously have extracted a lot of vital information from him.

“There’s poison stored in his teeth, his nails, and he even has some needles concealed in his clothes. We wouldn’t have been able to stop him from killing himself.”

Han Xiao shook his head.

In any case, Lu Gao En’s death was truly insignificant to him; he already possessed all the information that he needed. Nonetheless, things were getting a bit dicey.

‘Looks like I’d better speed things up,’ he thought.

### **Chapter 63: End of the Beta Test**

In Black Raven Valley Base, the Throne of Gods guild had gathered together for a meeting in-game.



Things had not gone according to plan. As the other beta testers were all preoccupied with leveling up, their call for information had gone unanswered. Just as Jupiter was fuming over what to do, someone shouted, "Leader! The quest hint changed!"

Jupiter gave a start. Upon checking the quest tab, he discovered that the quest location had actually been updated. It now stated that Zero was inside the Western Capital.

"The mission was updated?"

Jupiter scratched his head. However, while he was confused, he was not upset. It was the 12th and last day of the beta test, and they had barely made any progress thus far.

"We'll send members to search the Western Capital after the official launch."

Once the game launched, the guild would be able to make full use of its advantage in numbers. With so many members, there was no way that they would not be able to find him.

Jupiter clenched his fists.

"This B-class quest is ours for the taking!"

This was their chance to take a step ahead of their rivals.

...

In Germinal's headquarters, a report was being read out to the boss.

"Commander Rosa was last heard from in the Western Capital. Another man also disappeared along with him: Lu Gao En, our head contact in Storm Eye. Li Ruo has said that he will find a replacement for him immediately..."

"It's Zero," said the boss abruptly. "He silenced Rosa and Lu Gao En in order to keep his exact location a secret. Humph, so you are in the Western Capital. Stardragon's Division 13 must be keeping him under their protection!"

Rosa was the ace assassin of the Germinal Organization, while even Lu Gao En had given the boss a favorable impression. It was a huge loss.

That blasted Zero!

The boss was furious.

'Zero... did you think that you would be safe as long as you found protection?'

While he had at first belittled Han Xiao, over time, he had come to recognize the threat that he posed.

According to the analysis of the security footage from the Valkyrie Laboratory, Zero had never displayed any unusual behavior. Where he had gotten hold on their intel from remained a complete mystery.

"Order Storm Eye to pinpoint Zero's location. I don't care if he's hiding within Division 13's HQ, find him no matter what it takes!"

The boss' voice was filled with murderous intent.

As there was no way to know exactly what other vital information Zero possessed, getting rid of him before he caused further damage was the only option.

“Get five commanders and two hundred Night Owls ready to take action as soon as he is found. I will permit the use of guided missiles.

“Zero, you’re dead meat!”

...

‘The beta test is ending.’

00:00:00:30

Frenzied Sword sighed as he watched the countdown timer. If only he could have just a bit more time to train.

Of course, he was overall still quite happy with the progress that he had made. Han Xiao’s quests might have been very unseemly, but they sure did give a ton of experience. Furthermore, all the equipment that he had purchased from him helped to boost his combat power significantly.

Although the skill set of the Mechanic class revolved largely around crafting, which he disliked, seeing Han Xiao’s strength had given Frenzied Sword all the affirmation that he needed.

‘I, too, will gradually become that strong!

‘There will be a spot among the pros for me!’

...

—

Beta Test Concluded. Countdown to Game’s Launch: 122 Days, 1 Hour, 23 Mins.

Han Xiao shook his head upon discovering that the discussion board button had been grayed out.

‘Looks like I was right, the amount of time between version changes in the real-world is not synced with my current time.’

“Why are you shaking your head?” asked Gu Hui suddenly. “I wonder what other information you possess.”

Han Xiao was currently inside a conference room back at Division 13’s headquarters. There were three big shots seated in front of him: Gu Hui, the Division Director, as well as the two heads of the Intelligence Department and the Secret Ops department.

Division 13 had known all along that Han Xiao must possess some degree of combat ability, but he had completely exceeded their wildest imaginations. Yet, what was more perplexing was the degree of ease at which he had been able to single out Lu Gao En.

Lu Gao En had been operating from within the city for over two years without ever leaving a trace. Division 13 had attempted to look for him many times, but they had all ended up in failure. The fact that Han Xiao could so easily locate him served as solid proof that he knew way more than even they themselves.

And so, this meeting had begun. Simply put, Gu Hui wanted to learn more of Han Xiao's intel.

Breaking out of his daze, Han Xiao stroked his chin as he evaded the question. "My location is now exposed. Germinal might not know exactly where I live, but they will definitely send even more killers into the city."

Gu Hui furrowed his brows. Although unsatisfied with Han Xiao's reply, he followed Han Xiao's lead.

"Then what do you intend to do?"

"There's no more need for hide-and-seek. I want to participate in the next operation."

"It's too dangerous!" protested a livid Gu Hui. "If you show yourself, that will only give them the chance to take action."

Han Xiao faked a cough.

"Can we talk alone?"

The two department heads exchanged exasperated glances. 'Do we seem that untrustworthy?'

Han Xiao glanced at his surroundings before whispering, "I can change my appearance."

Gu Hui was visibly shocked.

"You have superpowers?"

Han Xiao shook his head.

"I can create a gadget that allows me to alter my looks, so there's no way that they will be able to find me."

'A skin mask? Not a bad idea,' thought Gu Hui. However, Han Xiao sounded as though he meant something more advanced than a simple skin mask that Division 13 already employed.

"Even if you use a mask, it's still too risky. You will have to take it off eventually."

The corner of Han Xiao's lips curled up.

"My mask is more convenient than that."

"Alright, then show it to me before I approve."

There were two reasons behind why Han Xiao wanted in on the action. The first was, of course, for the experience. The second was that he did not want to remain cooped up inside the Western Capital. This was the only way that he would be able to participate in more incidents.

Ever since the assassination attempt, Han Xiao had been spending a lot of time thinking about his next move.

The Black Raven Valley Base was situated near the border of Hesla, one of the Six Nations. It was a major base on a completely different scale from the three sites that Division 13 had taken action on previously. Not only were the security and defenses extremely tight, the commander of the base was a superhuman! He was known as the Sword Phantom, Pan Kuang, a Pugilist close to reaching D-level.

Near Black Raven Valley was a gathering spot for many wanderers known as Black Raven Village Town. It was a beginner starting zone.

Han Xiao planned to destroy Black Raven Valley Base as it would prevent a substantial number of new players from joining the Germinal Organization simply because of the base's proximity. This idea had occurred to him upon discovering the Throne of God's post, after which he had given it some proper thought and became fond of it.

It was not only an act of revenge toward the Germinal boss, but it was also a preemptive strike that would have unseen but deadly impacts.

Han Xiao grinned with glee at the prospect.

#### **Chapter 64: Accelerated Learning!**

"Near Hesla's border?" Gu Hui slammed the desk. "We will need to get in touch with them before making a decision."

"I await your decision," declared Han Xiao as he took his leave.

Feng Jun was waiting for him outside with a gloomy face.

"Why didn't you tell me about the assassin immediately? Because of that, I had to endure a yelling from my superior."

"Why would I inform you? It's not like you could have helped," teased Han Xiao, causing Feng Jun to become enraged.

"We might be buddies, but I'll still get angry if you insult me!"

Han Xiao smirked.

"Perhaps I should have a talk with the director over how my location got exposed..."

"Oh you—hahahaha—you little devil. I was just kidding."

Han Xiao rolled his eyes.

Under Feng Jun's subservient escort, Han Xiao left the headquarters to return to the workshop.

Altering his appearance was an idea that he had thought up a long time ago. He had known all along that the Germinal would resort to drastic measures against him once his location was discovered.

As it was more likely than not that the operation would be passed, Han Xiao also needed to prepare new equipment. The mecha arm and the retractable knife would not allow him to keep up with the level of the opponents they were about to face. It would also be nice if his current team was able to participate in the operation.

Thinking about his team reminded Han Xiao of the need to upgrade Zhang Wei's power suit.

The cost of the upgrade would not come cheap.

As Han Xiao stroked his eyebrows, he searched through his memories for blueprints suitable for this mission.

"Looks like it's time to learn a bunch more stuff."

Suddenly, someone knocked the door. It was Old Lu, with a chicken leg in one hand and beer in the other.

"Little brat, what are you doing here?"

"I want to borrow a few mechanic knowledge books," replied Han Xiao as he turned his attention back to the bookshelf, expecting Old Lu to chase him out.

To his surprise, he instead said, "The key is in the drawer. Just remember to return it when you're done."

Han Xiao's jaw almost dropped.

"You actually agree?"

Since when had they been on such good terms?

Old Man Lu put down the chicken leg in his mouth and snorted. "Treat it as a show of thanks."

'Thanks?' Han Xiao frowned.

"Are you still trying to promote your granddaughter to me?"

Old Lu's face immediately stiffened. 'What's so bad about my granddaughter that's stopping you from falling for her?'

But that wasn't why he wanted to thank Han Xiao. Instead, it was because the tall old man had told him that back then, Han Xiao had lured the assassin away from the workshop in order to prevent Lu Qian from getting involved. This alone had changed Old Lu's impression of Han Xiao considerably.

"Not bad, kid," praised Old Lu with a satisfied smile. He gave Han Xiao a pat on the shoulder before leaving him to his own devices.

As he left, Han Xiao noticed an oily handprint on his shoulder.

"That old imp."

He proceeded to unlock the cabinet with the key in the drawer, picked out seven books, and headed back to his room.

Back in his room, Han Xiao took a deep breath as he prepared to ‘learn’ all of them at once.

–

Do you wish to spend one talent point to learn the Energy Talent, [Basic Energy Theory]?

... Energy Talent, [Basic Biochemistry]?

... Energy Talent, [Basic Optics]?

“Yes!”

Large streams of information began to fill up Han Xiao’s mind, causing him to feel like his head was about to explode. After a short period of recovery, Han Xiao gritted his teeth and continued with the other books.

–

... Manipulation Talent, [Basic Electromagnetism]?

... Manipulation Talent, [Basic Mechanics]?

... Manipulation Talent, [Basic Quantum Electronics]?

... Manipulation Talent, [Basic Spatial Sense]?

Seven sets of basic knowledge!

However, the process did not stop there. Han Xiao decided to level up these new talents.

–

[Basic Energy Theory] has been raised to Lv. 3!

[Basic Electromagnetism] has been raised to Lv. 2!

[Basic Digital Electronics] has been raised to Lv. 2!

[Basic Mechanics] has been raised to Lv. 2!

As well as some previously learned talents!

–

[Basic Weaponry] has been raised to Lv. 3!

[Basic Material Composition] has been raised to Lv. 3!

[Basic Assembly] has been raised to Lv. 2!

[Advanced Material Synthesis] has been raised to Lv. 2!

Just like that, Han Xiao spent 20 of his 21 talent points.

—

You have learned a new technique: [Novice Programming]

You have learned a new technique: [Energy – Magnetism Strengthening]

[Novice Programming] was unlocked from learning [Basic Digital Electronics]. Like Basic Assembly or Basic Enhancement, it was an integral technique for a Technician, necessary for the making of both chip sets and system interfaces.

[Energy – Magnetism Strengthening], on the other hand, was a passive ability that unlocked upon learning an Energy Manipulation talent. It did have a prerequisite, which was, of course, for the player to possess affinity with magnetism. On top of strengthening the user's control of magnetism, it also gave a boost to machinery crafting speeds and machinery damage output, 3% per level.

Han Xiao was currently sitting on 38,000 experience, accumulated from mass producing incendiary bullets. His daily experience gain was about two to three thousand. As for money, that was the least of Han Xiao's concerns; he had earned a whopping \$3,600,000 thus far.

"It's time to try and get the disguise blueprint!"

Before he started, Han Xiao invested a few thousand experience to raise [Basic Programming] to level 3.

—

Proceed with fusing of [Lv. 1 Basic Biochemistry], [Lv. 1 Optics], [Lv. 3 Material Composition], and [Lv. 2 Digital Electronics]? (20,000 experience will be consumed)

Talent combination, also known as talent fusing, was not only limited to the fusing of two talents. However, the cost for adding additional talents was extremely high; adding a third would only cost 5,000 experience, but the cost of subsequent ones increased exponentially. A fourth one would cost 40,000 experience.

Generally, lower leveled Mechanics would perform talent fusion with only two talents because fusing more was not guaranteed to give better results.

However, some blueprints, like the one that Han Xiao was aiming for now, could be crafted easily with the correct talents.

—

Fusion successful! Congratulations on inventing [Smart Optical Mask]!

The Smart Optical Mask made its first appearance in Version 3.0, when players had just stumbled upon multiple-talent fusing. Not only did it require the leveling of four talents across all three talent trees, it also required [Intermediate Machinery Affinity], 55 INT, Lv. 3 [Basic Programming], and last but not least, for the player to be a Technician.

Nevertheless, the Smart Optical Mask's usefulness befitted the effort needed to obtain it.

### **Chapter 65: Smart Meta-Optical Mask**

Han Xiao passed a list of items to Feng Jun.

"Oh my god! BOK-recombiner, Farer IV Solvent, and 12 microchips? Do you know how expensive these things are?"

"I'm paying," replied Han Xiao plainly, instantly reminding Feng Jun that they were not on the same pay scale.

One hour later, he arrived at Han Xiao's workshop with three briefcases in hand.

The first briefcase contained three ten-centimeter-long transparent tubes that were filled with an opaque white, sticky fluid. This was the BOK-recombiner.

The second briefcase contained a small vial of pale blue solution. This was the Farer IV Solvent.

These two materials could only be made within an equipped laboratory and were extremely valuable. These two tiny vials had cost Han Xiao \$120,000.

The third briefcase contained the 12 microchips. Each one was only about the size of a fingernail, and they were extremely thin. Upon closer observation, one would find that they were jam packed with circuit lines. They were commonly used for small and complex gadgets, and the set of 12 cost \$60,000.

Han Xiao immediately began working on the mask.

He started by opening holes on the thin plastic mask for his eyes, nose, and mouth. Then, he carved out 12 small holes on various locations of the mask for embedding the microchips in.

Before putting the microchips in, Han Xiao uploaded the data from a scan of his own face to his computer. Using a library of over thousands of faces, he then spent two to three hours linking them up to a simple facial recognition and projection program on his computer.

When he was done, Han Xiao retrieved some laboratory apparatus and began to work at mixing the BOK-Recombiner and the Farer IV Solvent together. After some time, he managed to produce a composite material that was neither white nor blue like its constituents, but instead, the color of flesh.



This was the key material for making the Smart Meta-Optical Mask. Not only did it possess some of the useful properties of the BOK-recombiner and the Farer IV Solvent, it had, most importantly, good conductivity.

Han Xiao proceeded to embed the microchips beneath the mask before pouring the flesh-colored mixture over it. After a few more finishing touches, he left it to set within a special freezer.

A short while later, Han Xiao opened the freezer and reached in to retrieve the mask. Apart from where the microchips were located, the mask was extremely smooth. On its thin surface, Han Xiao had installed an advanced crystal display that, upon being pressed, caused a spectrum of colors to appear on the spot.

–

You have crafted [Smart Meta-Optical Mask], gaining 5,000 exp!

–

[Smart Meta-Optical Mask] – Face Equipment

Allows the user to change the appearance of his face when worn, concealing his identity. Charge 5 minutes for 10 hours of usage.

This mask had cost a whopping close to \$200,000 to make.

Han Xiao picked up the mask and walked over to the mirror to test it out. A cool sensation enveloped his face when he put it on, and he pressed gently onto the micro-chip on the cheek area to activate it. The appearance of his face immediately transformed, and it continued to change into a different face with each press.

This was by no means an ordinary mask of disguise! It was a godly piece of equipment that allowed the user to change his appearance at will!

The [Smart Meta-Optical Mask] would only ‘transform’ into the faces of humans, as Han Xiao had only fed the program data of human faces. Apart from randomly changing, it was also able to store up to three different faces for the user to access and could revert back to the last three faces used. It also had an additional function that allowed it to scan a target’s face and transform to it with a 70-80% accuracy.

After playing with the mask a bit more, Han Xiao removed it and headed back to headquarters to look for Gu Hui.

“You’ve created your mask?” asked Gu Hui.

Han Xiao smiled and put the mask on.

As Han Xiao did not intend to reveal the mask’s transformation capabilities just yet, he had prepared it to display the face of an ordinary-looking young man beforehand.

To Gu Hui, it simply looked like an extremely realistic mask. However, while Division 13 could already make such masks, none of them were as realistic as Han Xiao's. Furthermore, not only did it seem to be extremely portable, it was clearly very easy to wear.

"Interested in selling the blueprints to us?"

Han Xiao faked a burst of laughter.

"It's just a simple mask, why would I need a blueprint to make it? You guys can make them too, right?"

'That's true,' thought Gu Hui to himself.

Inwardly, Han Xiao let out a breath of relief upon seeing Gu Hui give up the idea.

'I managed to fool him!'

"Then," continued Han Xiao, "can I join the operation?"

Gu Hui thought for a moment before nodding.

"The Hesla Intelligence Service has decided to join us for this operation. You will come along with your team."

Han Xiao had known that Hesla would agree to taking action. It was the Germinal Organization, after all.

Suppressing the excitement in his heart, Han Xiao asked, "When do we depart?"

"There's no rush. It will take some time to arrange our forces, plus, we will both have to work on a proper strategy first. It'll most likely be half a month before deployment."

'Half a month,' thought Han Xiao. 'That will be enough time for me to finish up my equipment.'

...

Back in his workshop, Han Xiao wrote his goals down on paper.

One, to obtain even more rare blueprints.

Two, to purchase a vehicle for his team. As a logistics personnel, a vehicle equipped with all the maintenance and crafting tools he needed would be invaluable.

Three, to upgrade the [Fighter Suit].

"Ah, so much to do. One at a time, I guess."

Han Xiao shook his head.

The most important thing was still to raise his own combat ability. There were a few ways to do this.

The first and most important way, in Han Xiao's opinion, would be to improve his defensive capabilities. After all, survival was key.

The second was to enhance his long-ranged offensive capabilities. For this, Han Xiao planned to enhance his Berserk Eagles.

While Han Xiao did prefer fighting from a distance, close-combat ability was still important on the battlefield, so he also planned to upgrade the Mecha Arm.

As for mobility, the Swallow Gliders that had been collecting dust in his inventory were finally going to see use. As the terrain around the Black Raven Valley Base was extremely rough, they might end up proving invaluable to have.

Han Xiao also decided to prepare a little something in the event that the battle did not go their way, a little something explosive.

After giving it quick thought, Han Xiao scribbled down another list of materials for Feng Jun to help him procure. The total cost of the items on the list cost around another \$300,000.

Feng Jun found himself growing more and more exasperated at Han Xiao, but fortunately for him, the higher-ups had known before that Han Xiao would be a pain to deal with, so they had given him a raise. For the sake of his \$25,000 monthly wage, plus insurance, he relented to act as Han Xiao's errand boy.

Feng Jun sighed as he looked up to the sky dramatically.

'With great power comes great responsibility, I guess.'

## **Chapter 66: Upgrades (Part 1)**

Feng Jun immediately got the items delivered to Han Xiao, prompting Han Xiao to sarcastically praise him for being an exemplary worker. He joked that he would shower him with a pennant, among other rewards, causing Feng Jun to roll his eyes. After teasing him, Han Xiao returned to his workroom to begin work on his equipment.

Having leveled up both [Basic Weaponry] and [Basic Mechanical Engineering], the effectiveness of Han Xiao's enhancement was now much higher than before. He took out the two Berserk Eagles and began to perform modifications on them, upgrading them with better materials and spare parts.

'My days of poverty are long gone; I'm a rich man now!'

With Han Xiao's proficiency in modifications, the process was completed in no time.

—

Berserk Eagle (Enhanced)

Grade: Uncommon

Base Stats:

Damage: 74-87

Fire Rate: 1.5/s

Magazine Capacity: 8

Range: 50m

Power Output: 45

Prerequisite(s): Lv. 3 Precise Shot

Stat Bonus: +2 Dexterity

Length: 0.21m

Weight: 1.9kg

Additional Effect: Backfire – The recoil of this gun is extremely powerful, requiring 30 STR to overcome.

Additional Effect: High Impact – When attacking, 10% chance to deal bonus 15 damage if the target is within effective range.

Additional Effect: Dual-shot – This gun has been modified with the capability to fire up to 2 bullets per shot (20% damage penalty).

Tooltip: Come on, we all know what gun this is based on. Desert— cough.

With Han Xiao's current skill levels, there was a 30-40% chance of upgrading a common equipment to uncommon when performing enhancement. Although Han Xiao was now the proud owner of two uncommon guns, they came with the prerequisite of Lv. 3 Precise Shot. Even though this prerequisite did not prevent Han Xiao from wielding them, it would cause their effectiveness to be greatly diminished.

Shaking his head in exasperation, Han Xiao inputted some experience to raise Precise Shot to Lv. 3, which gave him an additional 3% Accuracy and 4% Critical Chance.

—

As you have achieved Lv. 8 in Basic Shooting and Lv. 3 in Precise Shot, you may learn one of the following three advanced skills:

Sniping

Gunfighting

Suppression

For the first time, Han Xiao found himself in a dilemma over which skill to pick.

Although shooting skills were essential to Cannon Masters, they were also important for Technicians. The three abilities displayed before Han Xiao clearly represented different styles of combat.

As the Berserk Eagle was made for close-combat, Gunfighting would make for a logical choice. However, Han Xiao also needed to think further ahead.

At end game, Technicians were strongest at long-ranged combat, so they rarely had use for risky, close-combat skills. Suppression would aid in sieging or holding forts, but it would only be effective with a partner to provide tactical support. In contrast to these two skills, Sniping was far better suited for solo action.

Han Xiao scratched his head as he thought about it.

‘I’ll have to work alone sooner or later anyway, plus it’s better for me to keep myself far from danger, unlike a player who doesn’t have to worry about his life. For me, sniping is the best option!’

In Han Xiao’s previous life, the dazzling and breathtaking style of Gunfighting was a popular choice among players, and even professional Cannon Masters would learn it just for the cool factor.

However, as a pragmatist, Han Xiao could hardly give two hoots.

‘Who cares about looking good during combat! It’s not like I’m doing this to see the stream chat praise me.’

At this thought, the Great Technician Han finally made his decision.

–

You have learned an advanced skill:

Sniping (Lv. 1)

+4% Fatal Shot

+5% Shooting Range

Han Xiao nodded in satisfaction. Done!

Next, Han Xiao crafted the Swallow Gliders, earning 1,500 experience in the process. He also modified them to give them the ‘retractability’ of the Retractable Knife. Indeed, the good thing about being able to actually learn knowledge in this life was that Han Xiao could implement concepts and technology from his blueprints into other inventions.

With the added retractability, they could now be worn on the back like a parachute before deployment. Once activated, the two 1.2m long ‘wings’ would extend out to allow the user to freely glide in the air.

After the gliders, Han Xiao proceeded to work on his close combat gear. The Mecha Arm actually formed a set with the Mecha Leg, and their blueprints were obtainable through the same combination of talents. They were also necessary parts for creating an Exoframe. However, that would require advanced knowledge, and Han Xiao did not even have the necessary skills to craft a proper Mecha Leg yet. At best, he would be able to craft one that could travel long distances, but it would lack the mechanisms that allowed for nimble movements.

Han Xiao planned to upgrade the Mecha Arm by making it lighter and smaller. While making it smaller would cause it to lose some power, Han Xiao had something in mind to compensate for it.

–

Do you wish to proceed with talent fusion?

(Lv. 3 Basic Weaponry + Lv. 2 Basic Assembly + Lv. 2 Basic Mechanics)

This fusion will cost you 15,000 experience.

–

Fusion Success!

Congratulations, you have discovered [Air Motor]!

“Wow, first try!”

Han Xiao rejoiced. This particular combination of talent could yield quite a number of different blueprints, and he had not expected to obtain it using so little experience.

The Air Motor converted compressed air into vibrational kinetic energy that, when harnessed as a weapon, could essentially bypass the armor of normal armor to cause direct damage.

Han Xiao spent a good half a day working on the Mecha Arm. He refitted it to slim it down but also lengthened it to cover the entire arm. He also reinforced its casing with platinum to cover up its internal mechanics, giving it a huge durability boost.

When he was done, the Mecha Arm looked vastly different from its crude form from before – it was now a shiny, silver metallic arm.

–

Lightweight Mecha Arm (Left) – Motor-enhanced

Grade: Average (White)

Base Stats:

– Damage: 30-48

– Defense: 10-13

– Power Level: 33

– Durability: 470/470

Prerequisite(s): 24 STR

Bonus Stats: -2 Attack Speed

Length: 0.87m

Weight: 5.2kg

Additional Bonus: +7 STR

Additional Effect: Vibration – Every 15 seconds, your attacks inflict an additional 23-45 direct damage onto the target. (Ignores Defense)

Additional Effect: Increased Durability

Tooltip: Realistic looking.

Although it was only an average ranked piece of equipment, Han Xiao's modifications had given it three useful additional effects.

So far, all the upgrades that Han Xiao had given his gear were nothing too fancy, but now, he was about to craft something special, something specialized for a Technician!

Han Xiao took a deep breath.

"Amitabha... God, please let me get that blueprint in one try. This fusion is just too expensive..."

—

Do you wish to proceed with talent fusion?

(Lv. 2 Advanced Material Composition + Lv. 2 Basic Magnetism + Lv. 2 Basic Assembly)

This fusion will cost you 70,000 experience.

### **Chapter 67: Upgrades (Part 2)**

The amount of experience required for fusing higher-leveled talents did not simply increase linearly.

An advanced talent or knowledge cost 50,000 more experience to fuse than a basic one. Moreover, fusing a basic talent with an advanced talent also caused the base cost of the basic talent itself to increase, rising from 5,000 to 10,000. If even higher leveled talents were to be used, the fusion costs would skyrocket further.

"Confirm!"

Han Xiao stared at the fusion window with bated breath.

—

Fusion success!

Congratulations, you have discovered [Magnetism Armor]!

Han Xiao jumped up with joy.

This was the blueprint that he had been aiming to get, and it was actually something that a player at Han Xiao's current level should not be able to possess. Indeed, it was a high-level piece of armor! This would help to guarantee his safety!

Of the \$300,000 that Han Xiao had spent on upgrade materials, \$250,000 alone went into the making of this armor.

As it was an advanced blueprint, it was much more complex to craft than a basic one, so even Han Xiao, who possessed the required knowledge to craft it, needed to spend an entire hour just to fully understand the blueprint's contents. After learning it, Han Xiao lifted his head to reveal a bitter smile; by his estimations, it would take at least three days of non-stop work to craft it.

He quickly got started.

...

Three days later, the doors to Han Xiao's workroom opened. Out came a tired Han Xiao with listless eyes and dark bags under his eyes. He looked as though he were in a daze, as if he didn't even know who, or even where, he was. In fact, looking at him, one might wonder if he had just woken up from a beating.

Han Xiao received a call as soon as he turned on his phone. It was Li Ya Lin, and she did not sound pleased at all.

"Han Xiao, why were you unreachable for the past few days? You have dozens of overdue orders! You'd better not take the cash and run away when I'm putting my own reputation on the line for your business! Also, don't forget that you promised to make a set of specially tailored equipment! Oh, right, we've been given a mission! We have to leave for Hesla in ten days. Leader is furious that you didn't show up for the meeting yesterday, so you'd better keep that in mind..."

Han Xiao could barely open his eyes. Ignoring her as she rambled on, he climbed into his bed and curled up under his blanket to fall asleep instantly.

"Hey, hey, hey— why are you not saying anything? Urgh, don't think I've forgotten how you took advantage of me the other day..."

...

'What's the first thing you do when you get out of bed?

'Open your eyes?'

When Han Xiao finally woke up, the first thing he did was to make his way to the toilet in his dreamlike stupor. After washing his hands, he stretched, yawned, and proceeded to brush his teeth.

Afterwards, with eyes still half-closed, Han Xiao went over to the kitchen in the main workshop where he pushed Lu Qian off her seat at the dining table with his butt and helped himself to the remainder of her breakfast, all the while ignoring her feeble protests.



When he was done, he simply cast her an unapologetic glance before strolling out as though nothing had happened.

“Ah, such carefreeness reminds me of when I was young,” reminisced Old Lu aloud as he stroked his head.

“Ahhhhh! I want to change the keys...”

“Perhaps this is love,” remarked Old Lu with a profound look on his face.

“It is not!” Lu Qian yelled out in exasperation.

...

Back in his workroom, Han Xiao opened up a small box. Inside were the fruits of his labor, what appeared to be numerous thin scales of metal. They looked black, but on closer observation, they were actually an extremely deep shade of blue. Although they resembled nothing like ‘armor’, these tiny pieces of metal were, without a doubt, the Magnetic Armor—well, unassembled, and still quite incomplete, to be exact.

Han Xiao took a deep breath before placing his hand an inch above the case. He then began to summon the energy of magnetism within his body toward his arm.

What happened next was quite a sight to behold.

The metal scales began vibrating in response to Han Xiao’s magnetism, and in the next second, they actually started flying toward his palm as though they were being sucked in! Upon coming into contact with Han Xiao’s skin, they seemed to come alive and began dancing up and around his arm energetically, as though they were live fish.

“Form,” commanded Han Xiao, and the metallic scales instantly spread along his arm to form a thin, scale-patterned sleeve of armor. It was perfectly smooth and uniform.

The armor appeared to be skin-tight, but as it was controlled by magnetism, there was actually a gap of a few millimeters, allowing its user complete freedom of movement.

Han Xiao drew his Platinum Retractable Knife out and viciously slashed upon the sleeve. It produced a crisp ring, but there were no sparks, and the armor was completely undamaged.

“Good defense!” exclaimed a jubilant Han Xiao.

—

Magnetism Armor (Incomplete)

Type: Armor (Bulletproof)

Grade: Uncommon (Green)

Base Stats:

– Defense: 75

– Durability: 1600/1600

Requirement(s): Magnetism-affinity Energy, Intermediate Machinery Affinity

Ability: Can be controlled by magnetism to move across the user's body and transform into armor. Costs 10 energy/min to maintain shape.

Additional Effect: High Resistance – This armor is capable of withstanding high temperatures and is not easily penetrated or damaged.

Additional Effect: Magnetic Repulsion – Damage inflicted on the user is partially negated (reduces damage by 20-30 points).

Additional Effect: Unique Magnetic Field – When worn, envelopes the user in a magnetic field that attracts electricity.

Tooltip: A friendly reminder – don't use this on a rainy day.

In Galaxy, equipment that required energy to use was known as Superhuman Equipment.

The material used to make the metallic scales of the Magnetism Armor was an exceedingly rare, naturally-occurring metal. Not even Division 13 possessed much of it in their inventory, and \$250,000 was only enough for Han Xiao to make a partial version that could at best cover his entire back.

Nevertheless, although the theory behind the Magnetic Armor was simple, crafting it was an entirely different matter. Even if Han Xiao did possess enough resources, he would still not be able to craft the complete version, not with his current level of expertise in both knowledge and skill.

In spite of that, crafting the incomplete version earned Han Xiao 40,000 experience, even more than when he had crafted Rover 1.

Han Xiao proceeded to test his control over the armor.

While such high-level Superhuman Equipment would usually take a low-level player quite some time to get used to, Han Xiao, with his years of experience, was able to quickly get the hang of it.

With this armor, Han Xiao now felt much safer than before.

It was both inconspicuous and highly portable, and Han Xiao thought of it as a trump card. He planned to keep the armor a secret from everyone, including his allies. After all, who could say for sure that today's friend wouldn't become tomorrow's enemy?

Now that he had addressed the issues of mobility, defense, as well as both melee and ranged combat, all that was left for Han Xiao to do was to prepare some art.

As Han Xiao was already quite satisfied with the bombs provided by Division 13, he only planned to make some simple modifications, nothing too fancy.

### **Chapter 68: Upgrades (Part 3)**

Sixty black, glossy, round-shaped objects lay neatly within the two cases before Han Xiao. These were the ‘Highly Explosive Delay-action Shrapnel Bombs’, known as time bombs for short, that he had purchased from Division 13, and their unnecessarily long name, if anything, was telling of their destructive capabilities.

“Each bomb costs \$800, so sixty of them amount to \$48,000. Hmm, yep... this calculation should be right.”

Although the bombs were ready-to-use, Han Xiao decided to perform some modifications on them. With [Basic Mechanical Engineering], he made them flight-capable by installing mini-propellers on them, along with power supplies. This greatly improved their range of attack.

The only downside to this modification was that it made them look... rather comical. They now almost seemed like the kind of gadget that a certain likable, blue, robotic cat (A Doraemon reference) would pull out from his pouch.

With the additions of the enhanced Facial Simulator, Desert Eagle, Lightweight Mechanical Arm, Foldable Machete, Sky Swallow Gliders, Magnetically-controlled Armor, and last but not least, these flight-capable bombs to his arsenal, Han Xiao had finally finished with all his upgrades. Although Division 13 would definitely still provide them with more equipment, at Han Xiao’s current level, his gear could be said to be semi-godly already. He was currently—without a doubt—the strongest person in his level range.

“This equipment will suffice.”

Han Xiao crossed out ‘Personal Upgrades’ on his to-do list. The next line read ‘Transport Vehicles’.

Creating an entire vehicle from scratch would take too much time, so it was better for Han Xiao to directly purchase one from Division 13 and then perform modifications on it.

Quality-wise, Division 13 would definitely not disappoint. After spending some time looking at the available options, Han Xiao decided that a detachable cargo truck would best suit their needs. It would act as a mobile warehouse and a workshop—a logistics vehicle for the team.

Han Xiao could buy the truck with either money or exchange reputation points for it, which was essentially requesting that Division 13 give him the truck.

Currently, he had a whopping \$2.8m to spare. Already, the money-spending ability of the Mechanic class was starting to shine through. Of course, none of this would have been possible without Han Xiao’s prior experience that helped him in accumulating money.

Without happily spending all their money and getting used to living paycheck to paycheck, one could never become an excellent Mechanic.

Nonetheless, he decided to pay with reputation points; that’s what they were meant for, after all. In comparison, paying with money would set him back an unnecessary \$800,000. Han Xiao rang Feng Jun up.

...

“Give me the vehicle. How long will it take for you to deliver it to my place?”

“I will need to pick it up from the military factory. About two hours.”

Feng Jun’s punctuality was proven time and again; exactly two hours later, Feng Jun arrived at Han Xiao’s doorstep in the very truck.

A problem immediately presented itself: the truck was too big to enter the garage.

Han Xiao and Feng Jun stared at each other, dumbfounded. They had carefully accounted for every single detail except for this issue.

“What now?”

“How about you guys expand the garage for me?”

“Come on, do you think that Engineering Department staff have that much free time to spare?”

As Han Xiao rubbed his chin, his eyes suddenly lit up.

“Didn’t you bring in an undercover squad to watch over this district? Where are they now?”

“Be more rational jackass! Don’t you think we are grabbing too much attention!”

Han Xiao looked away from Feng Jun and began to size up the military truck. It was 4 meters tall, 3.5 meters wide, and attached with an 11 meters long container that extended beyond the width of the front of the truck itself.

“What attention-grabbing? I don’t think so.” Han Xiao was not at all flustered when bullshitting.

“Only the blind would not see such a huge truck!” Feng Jun basically spouted saliva all over Han Xiao’s face.

“What is with the saliva-spitting when you speak?” Han Xiao grabbed Feng Jun’s sleeve, wiped his face, and said with a look of disdain, “Not that I am criticizing you, but the volume of saliva that came out of your mouth is huge.”

Old Man Lu walked out at this moment and exclaimed, “What a huge truck.”

“Why don’t we just demolish the whole garage?” Han Xiao’s eyes glittered.

“Get lost,” Old Man Lu scolded sulkily. He then rubbed the bald area on his head and pondered for a moment before he dug out a key from his pocket and threw it to Han Xiao.

“I have a garage a few blocks away. I will lend it to you.”

Han Xiao was utterly shocked. “So generous! Old Man Lu, are you on wrong medicine today?”

“Get lost!” Old Man Lu was swearing again. He then pushed them away as they were blocking his way, and he walked out for a leisurely stroll.

...

Han Xiao drove the truck and arrived at the garage ten minutes later.

“Bleurgh—”

“Hello. Do you really have to do that?”

Feng Jun’s face was as pale as a sheet as he leaned out the car window. He waved his hands hysterically while he continued vomiting.

Han Xiao could not understand what Feng Jun was trying to convey. Does he mean that he will not sit in my car every again, or is he saying that I don’t have to care how he feels?

Han Xiao shook his head and threw the unimportant question to the back of his head. After he sent the nauseated Feng Jun away, he began modifying the heavy military truck.

He checked every inch of the truck and found no hidden cameras or bugs.

Products made by the military factory were of excellent quality. The truck was equipped with numerous parts, including ten cylinders and turbochargers, which enhanced its horsepower. It could move at a top-speed of 135km/hr. The truck had five heavy-duty, slip-free tires on each side. The cargo compartment was large, and it could contain quite a few pieces of equipment. Han Xiao wanted to modify it into a small workshop, so he needed to move the workshop equipment up.

The base plate of the truck was modified for multi-terrain use, with parts like spring suspension and air damping suspension, which allowed the truck to move smoothly on bad terrain. The truck was also equipped with an anti-sliding gadget, which would prevent small vehicles from sliding under the truck. The movie scenes of protagonists driving sportscar under the villain’s car to fight would never happen with this truck. Hold on... why am I naturally picturing myself as the villain?

The driving cabin was not at all small—it could easily fit six people. It was equipped with a ten-gear gearshift, so there was a suitable gear for any type of movement.

Han Xiao checked the air bags. There were eight of them. As long as the passenger did not fly out of the vehicle upon collision, they would definitely not be injured. Plus, this passenger could enjoy the pleasure of being squashed in between a big ‘chest’.

Speaking of car collisions, the front of the truck was not strengthened with a front bumper. Han Xiao needed to add it himself. He then looked at the truck windows—they were bullet-proof. Division 13 did not cut corners.

Overall, the truck was up to standard; it did not need any major modification. Han Xiao decided to add a few nitro-boost cylinders to the truck for additional thrust. The thought of having a nitro boost for the truck already excited Han Xiao greatly. His truck could be the ultimate king of the road.

Han Xiao started modifying the truck.

The inside of the cargo compartment was made into a small-scale workshop. Han Xiao also strengthened the base plate and the front bumper—the thick and heavy armor looked rather sturdy. Four nitro-boost cylinders were installed in the truck for additional thrust during crucial moments. Furthermore, Han Xiao bought spare tires, and he installed a radar with an antenna for receiving radio signals and sending wi-fi signals.

With these numerous upgrades, Han Xiao spent more than 10,000 dollars. He could not help but shake his head. Upgrades sure were costly.

Gazing upon the black truck before him, he rubbed his chin as the idea of giving it a name suddenly occurred to him.

Han Xiao decided to go with the simplest and most obvious one.

“Big Black!”

Hmm, not a bad name at all.

### **Chapter 69: Before Move Out**

“Oh my god, Xiao Han, you bought a heavy truck?”

The four teammates were invited to the garage, and Li Ya Lin and Lin Ya’s faces were soon filled with surprise and excitement. They climbed all over the heavy truck. As Lambert was particularly interested in the engine, he opened the car hood to admire it.

“Thank you,” said Zhang Wei solemnly to Xiao Han.

A logistical vehicle was a very luxurious item for a team like them. Zhang Wei felt embarrassed that Xiao Han had bought it with his own money.

Xiao Han laughed it off. “Hehe. Just treat it as my way of helping impoverished teammates.”

Zhang Wei’s mouth started twitching as he was lost for words. Although Xiao Han was saying the truth, it was still agitating for Zhang Wei.

“I wracked my brain to come up with a name for this truck.”

Zhang Wei listened expectantly.

Xiao Han cleared his throat and said in a serious tone, “Big Black.”

Zhang Wei’s body jerked upon hearing the ridiculous name. He gave an unwilling half-smile. “Nice... what a nice name.”

“Oh. You think so too? This name is very catchy and concise. I am quite proud of myself for coming up with this name,” Xiao Han said in a satisfied tone.

“I’m glad you are happy with the name.”

“Wow. The driving space is huge.” Li Ya Lin was having a lot of fun when she suddenly thought of something. “who is going to drive the car?”

“This is my truck. Obviously, I will be driving it,” Xiao Han said.

Immediately, Li Ya Lin’s face paled, and her body started trembling. “Can... can I not travel in the car?”

Zhang Wei frowned and reprimanded her. “Xiao Han spent so much money to let us enjoy some comfort and convenience. How can you reject this?”

Li Ya Lin's face was now as pale as a sheet. She felt that nothing was more horrifying than this.

"You guys will regret this," she mumbled.

*Regret? Zhang Wei was puzzled. Is Xiao Han a terrible driver?*

*Then it's nothing serious. How bad can his driving be? Everyone here is a well-trained agent in excellent physical condition. Nobody gets dizzy on roller-coasters. There's nothing to fear about this, Zhang Wei thought to himself.*

"Oh yeah. Our boss told us that we will be moving out in four days," Lin Yao said suddenly.

Xiao Han's eyes lit up. He had spent about ten days giving the truck an overhaul. He still wanted to install heavy firepower on truck. He had already mastered the knowledge required, but there was simply not enough time. He thought for a while and said to Zhang Wei, "Bring the Combatant Armored Suit to me. I will help you improve it."

Zhang Wei's eyes lit up. He had confidence in Xiao Han's mechanic skills.

Li Ya Lin overheard their conversation. She jumped at Xiao Han and nudged his shoulder. "What about me! What about me! You promised to customize some equipment for me!"

"You have to wait till I have some inspiration."

*As a Pugilist, you should focus on using your fists to punch people. Why are you always eyeing my mechanic equipment? Xiao Han pushed the noisy Lin Ya Lin aside.*

The original Combatant Armored Suit was brought out right away by a staff member from the logistics department. Just like the armor exhibited in museums, it was propped up with a plastic skeleton and stored in a human-height metal box.

"Since time is running out, I will have to focus on the most essential modification. Firstly, I will increase the energy capacity. Then, work on the structure will begin to reduce the weight and upgrade the skeleton of the mechanical parts. This will help to improve your overall movement."

"That will be great!" Zhang Wei's face brightened with happiness. The suit was extremely heavy for him. After every use, his whole body would ache badly, worse than after running ten kilometers.

"Next, I will modify the sensing system. I will fit a simple chip onto the suit to survey the situation outside, and I will personally donate a firepower control system, which will give your long-range weapons an auto-aiming ability.

"Lastly, if time permits, I will also add a simple close-combat weapon."

"Sounds great!" Zhang Wei was exhilarated.

But suddenly, Xiao Han changed his tone. "And, of course, all of these things are chargeable. The total cost will be \$360,000."

"How... how much?"

Zhang Wei stared him, his mouth agape in disbelief. His total saving had not even reached a million dollars.

“Do you think this is too pricey?” Xiao Han narrowed his eyes at Zhang Wei.

“Are your parents still alive?”

“Why are you asking about them? They have already passed on.” Zhang Wei was startled by the strange question.

“Do you have any siblings?”

“No. I’m their only child.”

“Do you have a wife or a girlfriend?”

“N...No. I’m all alone.”

Xiao Han shook his head with a perplexed expression. “Then what’s the point in saving so much money?”

The comment shot right to his heart!

“Fine. Fine... Stop talking. I will pay!” Zhang Wei gripped his chest in pain. He felt like his heart was being stomped on by a thousand rhinos.

...

Like an unscrupulous business man, Xiao Han received the payment from Zhang Wei’s trembling hand before he commenced the modification of the suit.

[Basic Energy Theory] Lv. 3 had given Xiao Han the ability to strengthen energy mechanics. However, he didn’t want to give Zhang Wei’s suit a mighty modification, so there was no need for a new energy blueprint. Good stuff had to be kept for personal use.

To build in a weight-bearing mechanical skeleton and a sensing chip, one could actually use blueprints. These two were rather common.

—

Do you wish to proceed with talent fusion?

(Lv. 1 Basic Spatial Sensing + Lv. 1 Basic Virtual Electrical Engineering)

This fusion will cost you 10,000 EXP.

—

Do you wish to proceed with talent fusion?

(Lv. 2 Basic Dynamics Principle + Lv. 4 Basic Mechanical Engineering)

This fusion will cost you 10,000 EXP.

—



Fusion Success!

Congratulations, you have discovered [Low Level Smart Chip]!

—

Fusion Success!

Congratulations, you have discovered [K600-type Mechanical Skeletal System]!

These two were common mechanical blueprints, so most Mechanics would have them. Xiao Han achieved fusion success on his first try without any hiccups.

[Low Level Smart Chip] was also sold on the market. However, by unlocking the blueprint, Xiao Han could tweak it by writing his own code. The words 'low level' indicated that there would be more advanced versions of it, such as highly intelligent AI for large robots or even intelligent system control for huge space vehicles and war machines.

On the other hand, [K600-type Mechanical Skeletal System] was one of the basic models of inner mechanical skeletal systems.

The outer mechanical skeletal systems were worn directly on the body, while the inner type fitted the whole body seamlessly, hidden inside of the external armor. It retained the same functions as the external skeletal system but provided extra mechanical power. The inner skeletal system was a must for making a Mechanical Armored Suit. Needless to say, the more advanced versions were applied to small, medium, large, and extremely large armored suits.

Xiao Han removed the exterior of the combat suit, exposing the intricate parts in the interior. Xiao Han observed for a moment before he began his work.

First, he increased the energy capacity, then he added in the skeletal system and the smart chip, and lastly, he purchased some imaging devices, cameras, and infrared sensor for the sensing equipment.

On dawn of the fourth day, he finally finished upgrading the Combatant Armored Suit.

Despite the same old, black, and heavy primitive suit exterior, the inside of the suit had been changed tremendously. It finally resembled a powerful and advanced mechanical armored suit.

But time constraints did not allow Xiao Han to add a close-combat weapon. Xiao Han was not bothered by it. Not delivering the promised product after payment was not new to him; he had already delayed the delivery of a High-Explosive Gunpowder for more than half a month.

Xiao Han yawned and looked at his interface.

[Combatant Armored Suit: Deriving progress 2%]

Retro-derivation of equipment was one of the methods for Mechanics to obtain blueprints. The requirements were very stringent because the progress would usually halt when they could not fulfil the

pre-set conditions. Sometimes, just as the progress reached 30%, it would sometimes ask for INT to reach XX before it could continue the derivation. Furthermore, even when the progress reached 100%, a huge amount of EXP would have to be consumed in order to officially master the blueprint.

The core of the [Combatant Armored Suit] was part of the Advanced Mechanic Knowledge [Heavy Machine Modification]. When the progress bar reached 50%, it looked like this knowledge would be required. Since the blueprint for the suit was not essential for Xiao Han, he was not bothered with that.

It was move-out day. The team of four gathered in the garage. Lin Yao looked at the computer screen and said suddenly, "The department has gathered. The gathering point is the East Sentry Post."

"Okay. Let's board the truck!" Zhang Wei said solemnly.

As soon as he gave the instruction, Li Ya Lin moved rapidly onto the driver's seat and stared at Xiao Han anxiously. "Can... Can I drive the truck?"

Xiao Han rubbed his eyes. He had been burning the mid-night oil for the past few days, so he was sleepy beyond measure. Thus, he did not insist on driving. He told her to drive steadily before moving to the back of the truck. He used a few backpacks as blanket and lay on the floor to sleep.

Li Ya Lin sighed in relief at once. She felt as if she had just escaped death narrowly. She didn't even have the energy to point out the irony in Xiao Han's words "drive steadily."

Upon seeing that Xiao Han wanted a good sleep, the rest all sat in the driving space to avoid disturbing him.

...

West Capital, East Sentry Post, Military Train Station.

The superiors highly valued this attack on the base at Dark Crow Valley. Division 13 sent three covert ops teams to take part in this large-scale mission.

The first was Zhang Wei's team, and the other was Ma Qing Yang's team, the one that saved Zhang Wei's team.

The last team was Covert Ops' ace team, led by the team leader, Di Su Su.

The two ops teams were waiting at the train station, accompanied by an officer from the Staff Department. His role was to give advice and supervise the operations in order to keep the agents in check.

There were instances in the past where every team had a strong-opinionated elite agent, resulting in many differing opinions that led to poor teamwork and caused many hiccups to their missions. To counter this problem, Division 13 had modified their mission procedure: when there were multiple teams working together, a staff officer would be the overall brain of the mission.

Officers from the Staff department learned how to command on various battle situations all year round. Before the mission, they would study each and every agent from the respective teams to better evaluate mission plans. Although the agents all believed that the staff officers only knew how to write mission

report and take responsibility, they had to obey orders from the superior. As long as the staff officer didn't control them too much, everyone would be at peace with him.

"Why is Zhang Wei still not here? He's very late."

Ma Qing Yang looked at the Sun and took a puff on his cigarette. He was quite good friends with Zhang Wei, and their teammates had friendly relationships, too.

Di Su Su and her team waited on the other side. She was playing with a coin in her hand. The coin, reflecting beams of sunlight, was turning and moving rapidly under her agile hand. She was eager and excited to meet Li Ya Lin because it meant that she would get to bully and tease her again. Plus, she was quite intrigued by her new teammate, Xiao Han.

The leading staff officer, Qi Bai Jia, rubbed his good-looking brows. His eyes were irritated by the flickering reflections of sunlight from the coin. He had no choice but to turn his face toward the other side.

A loud engine sound travelled from afar. Everyone could hear the huge horsepower of the incoming vehicle. They felt the floor shaking as the vehicle got closer. Qi Bai Jia looked up at the source of the sound and saw a gigantic and ferocious military truck approaching.

Ma Qing Yang flicked his cigarette butt off and crushed it with his heel.

Di Su Su clenched her fingers tight, gripping the coin in her palm.

Qi Bai Jia adjusted his collar.

"They are here."

## **Chapter 70: On the Train**

Big Black slowly came to halt. Zhang Wei and his team alighted from the front of the vehicle.

Qi Bai Jia saluted and introduced himself. "I am Qi Bai Jia, the staff officer who will be leading this mission."

"Greetings. Happy to be working with you." Zhang Wei nodded. Then he turned his head and smiled at Ma Qing Yang heartily while giving Ma Qing Yang a big hug.

On the other side, Lin Yao's eyes glittered upon seeing Di Su Su, his gaze tightly locked onto her. He waved his arm shyly. "Hello, Su Su Jie."

"Little Lin Lin." Di Su Su just ignored Lin Yao and walked past him toward Li Ya Lin while he was still mesmerized by her. She pinched Li Ya Lin's cheeks. "Tsk tsk. You have grown prettier since the last time I saw you."

"Screw off. We are not that close." Li Ya Lin frowned and shoved Di Su Su's annoying hand away.

Di Su Su was not bothered by it. She scanned around and asked curiously, "Where is your Mechanic? Where is he hiding?"

Li Ya Lin crossed her arms in front of her chest. She gave a cold look and refused to answer.

Zhang Wei answered, "He's a little tired, so he is still sleeping on the truck."

"This truck is....?"

Zhang Wei stood upright and said with a face full of pride, "Our logistical support vehicle."

Jealousy filled Ma Qing Yang and Di Su Su's teams. They gave their team leaders a bitter look.

"We want our own logistical support vehicle, too."

Qi Bai Jia clapped his hand. "Okay. Time is running out. Let's move out."

A military-use train was parked at the station. Instead of transporting the items using airplanes or regular cars, forty well-trained field personnel are loading boxes of firearms and ammunition onto the train.

Since the major expressways were destroyed, the Six Nations had focused on the development of railway to connect various destinations. Military-use trains ran designated military railways, which made them faster than civilian trains. Three days was all that was required for the train to reach its destination.

The first five carriages comprised of the driving cabin, two bedrooms, the restaurant, and firearm storage respectively. The last few carriages were open air – specially made for carrying other vehicles. Li Ya Lin drove Big Black up onto the carriage. The field personnel locked it in place tightly and covered the truck with a dust-sheet.

Once everyone had boarded the train, it moved off. The train radiated under the fierce sunlight and drove into the dangerous and treacherous forested fields.

....

Han Xiao woke up soon after he felt the vibration of the train.

The ceiling of the carriage was installed with lamps that illuminated the room under a soft white light. The carriage was filled with lifeless, ice-cold machines and mechanical weapons, but they actually gave him a sense of security.

Han Xiao rubbed his eyes forcefully before he got his full concentration back. He opened the carriage door only to realize that he was on a high-speed train that was already on the move. The wild wind gushed toward his face, blowing his messy hair all around. The floor was vibrating non-stop and the riotous sound of the train movement rushed into his ears. The train moved smoothly along the rail toward their destination.

A galaxy of stars illuminated the dark sky.

Mountains could be seen on the distant horizon.

*Have I slept for the entire day?*

For a while, Han Xiao was slightly startled. He then put on his Facial Simulator and adjusted his face to that of a regular man from his memory. After which, he placed a mask over the Facial Simulator. He had

always been this careful. Afterwards, he followed the trail of light and entered the carriage from the front.

The sound from the wind disappeared the moment he entered the carriage; noisy chatter filled his ears instead. He felt as if he had just transmigrated from the stone age to a modern civilization.

As soon as Han Xiao walked in, everyone stopped talking. Every pair of eyes was fixated on Han Xiao. They scanned him with curiosity.

Di Su Su was the first person to stand up. She moved her beautiful waist and moved seductively toward Han Xiao.

“So, you are Han Xiao?” she asked curiously.

“I think you’ve got the wrong person,” Han Xiao replied nonchalantly. Han Xiao knew that he would lose a lot of face if he answered all the questions directed at him truthfully.

Everyone’s face stiffened. What a blatant lie! Everyone was here in the cabin. Who else could he be?

Li Ya Lin was instantly delighted as she saw the scheming Di Su Su getting rejected. She waved at Han Xiao. “Xiao Ge, come here and sit.”

Han Xiao nodded and moved beside Zhang Wei and the others. Li Ya Lin whispered to Han Xiao, “Great job! You just embarrassed that scheming Di Su Su.”

“Scheming?” Han Xiao was surprised by her description.

“That’s right. Di Su Su is a scheming, cunning, and sly snake!” Li Ya Lin said with a mouth full of detest.

Han Xiao squinted. “Are you describing yourself?”

Lin Yao could not agree more. However, he dared not add anything for fear being beaten up by Li Ya Lin. He secretly looked at Han Xiao with respect. *That’s my Xiao Ge—full of balls—a courageous man who never filters his words.*

When Di Su Su saw Li Ya Lin and Han Xiao’s intimate gestures, her face turned black. Traces of anger flashed in her eyes.

On the other side, Ma Qing Yang extended his hand and smiled. “Hey, brother. Nice to meet you. I’m Ma Qing Yang.”

Han Xiao shook his hand as he held back the enraged Li Ya Lin, unflustered. “Technically, we never met.”

Ma Qing Yang was dumbfounded. He surveyed around Han Xiao’s mask, not knowing whether to laugh or cry. “Oh. You are right.”

Qi Bai Jia clapped his hand. “Since everyone is here, I will now explain the details of this mission. Field personnel please take your leave.”

Field personnel knew that this was the rule, so they left this carriage without hesitation. The place immediately quieted, as only the three covert ops teams and Qi Bai Jia were left inside.

“This is a joint mission between Hesla’s Intelligence Department and us. Hesla’s troops are stationed at the border, and they could move out at any moment. Our job here is to infiltrate the enemy base to gather information about their defenses so that we can provide the troops with intelligence support.

“Hesla has sent us a map of the Dark Crow Valley. This place is easy to hold but hard to attack, and with deep forests, we will not be able to locate the coordinates of the base with our satellites. We have zero information about their troop number and location. We can only attack from land.”

Everyone was very serious when it came to their mission. Di Su Su scratched her forehead and frowned. “This sounds like a heavily-guarded best. Is it possible for Hesla’s troops to storm the base on the ground?”

“They refused.” Qi Bai Jia shook his head.

Everyone understood the reason; as long as Hesla could take down the enemy with two thirds of their effort, they would never deploy their full strength. Furthermore, when there was too little information about enemy’s power and location, Hesla would not allow its troops to go in prematurely for fear of suffering too many casualties. The Covert Ops department would be brought in to do the dirty work like such an infiltration.

Li Ya Lin grumbled, “Then where is the infiltrating point?”

Qi Bai Jia pointed at a spot on the map. “On the west side of the valley, there is a large town called Crow’s Forest. The fact that they have the courage to build a town near a base of the Germinal Organization suggests that the two parties are colluding. Therefore, there must be a few scouts from the valley base stationed in the town. This is our opportunity to obtain crucial intelligence.

“And according to intelligence from the higher ups, there are three noteworthy enemies from the Dark Crow Valley base.”

Qi Bai Jia gave out a folder of information sheets to everyone. As everyone was reading through the sheets, he summarized the gist of the information. “Pan Kuang—head of the base, 35 years-old, Asian, E+ Pugilist—is one of the Germinal Organization’s executive officers. His weapon is a blade, nicknamed Blade-soul. His last recorded feat was three years ago, when he defeated twelve Theseus agents at the border alone. Four of them were superhumans.”

The page showed an emotionless man. He looked like any ordinary man but gave off an extremely fierce vibe.

“Ji Jie, deputy head, male, 29 years-old, mixed Asian and Caucasian, limited information. We only know that he seems to be a relative of the leader of the Wind Eye Organization, Ji Nuo.

“Dormund, captain of the security force, 43, from Raylen. He specializes in different firearms, and he is an extremely elite special agent. He used to lead a whole Night Owl squad.”

Doubt filled Ma Qing Yang’s face. “I thought we did not have much information regarding the internal situation of the base? Where did all this detailed information come from?”

Everyone was wondering the same thing.

Qi Bai Jia shook his head. "Not sure. The higher ups said it was classified."

Everybody stopped their questioning.

Han Xiao pricked up his ears slightly. *The source of this intel is sitting right beside you guys.*

Qi Bai Jia added more pointers for everyone to take note. Suddenly, his tone changed. "For this combined exercise, Hesla will be sending teams of agents from the intelligence department. They will move with us when we meet at the rendezvous point."

Zhang Wei's expression became unnatural, and he questioned, "Agents from two countries working on this mission together?"

Qi Bai Jia was feeling embarrassed and coughed. "Yes."

That was just courting trouble!

Hesla was unsatisfied with the intel from Stardragon. Also, they didn't want to expend much of their own force, so they requested that Division 13 deploy manpower for this mission.

The agents looked at one another with unease. The relationship between the two countries were rather stale. The agents even seemed hostile toward one another. It seemed like the mission would turn out to be a flop.

None of this intel was useful for Han Xiao. He yawned and looked out of the window. He squinted after he caught sight of something. He immediately interrupted the discussion and shouted, "We are under attack by beasts!"

Everyone was stunned and could not react. The train vibrated violently, causing the agent to almost fall. At the same time, there was a loud and horrible cry from the field personnel in the back carriage.