

The Mechanic 81

Chapter 81: A Bug Named Giggs

As expected, Carl did not choose to wait; instead, he ordered the early deployment of his troops.

Zhang Wei violently slammed the table and screamed, "Damn it! It took Han Xiao so much effort to obtain the critical intelligence, but now this lot are going to leave us in the lurch!"

Such a scenario had been predicted by Han Xiao, and therefore, he looked rather calm. The rest were puzzled when they saw Han Xiao being so composed. Through the communication set, he ordered Lin Yao and Lambert, "You guys remain undercover. Always keep your safety at the front of your mind. We are going to retreat soon."

"Copy that!"

There was an air of uneasiness around Zhang Wei and Li Ya. The truck was parked not far away from the Dark Crow Valley base, and once the base entered the battle mode, more enemy troopers would be deployed. The tracks of the truck would definitely be discovered quickly.

There was no time to waste.

"Li Ya Lin, you are in charge of driving the truck!"

Li Ya Lin was a pugilist, and she would not be able to launch attacks while they were driving anyway. Therefore, she did not disagree with Han Xiao's decision.

Han Xiao and Zhang Wei stayed in the container, where they were able to carry out their strikes at the enemy.

Li Ya Lin stepped hard on the accelerator, making no effort to cover their tracks. The engine of the truck blared, and the tires started to spray the mud and soil from the ground. The truck moved forward loudly.

In a while, the sounds of approaching vehicles could be heard. The retreating party could feel the heavy beating of their hearts. Through the window, Han Xiao could see a large group of armored jeeps chasing behind their truck. The headlights of these jeeps could be seen flashing around the truck. There were more than ten jeeps around, and each had a heavy machine gun attached.

"We have been discovered." Zhang Wei's heart sank.

Han Xiao was not affected by the heavy rocking of the moving truck. He started preparing the weapons to be used for the impending battle.

"Drive fast, Ya Lin!" Zhang Wei yelled.

"I know!" Li Ya Lin replied, biting her lips. She was trying to change gear to speed up even more. The full power of the truck's engine was unleashed, and it growled like an enraged beast. The anti-slip tires left deep marks in the moist ground. The uneven, hilly terrain and winding paths caused the truck's body to

spring away from its tires as a result of the shock absorbance effect created by the vehicle's suspension. Even with the suspension working well, the truck rocked violently.

Han Xiao peeked out of the window in the container and saw the enemy's jeeps closing in.

"Can't you go faster?" Zhang Wei shouted.

"This is a truck, not a sports car!" Li Ya Lin was evidently irritated by Zhang Wei's comments.

"The four buttons beside the gear lever can be used to activate the nitro boost," Han Xiao said.

"You added nitro boost to the truck?" Li Ya Lin was shocked yet excited to try it out.

"Do not activate the boost now. We are still travelling through dense vegetation, and you may destroy the truck with it. Use this to pick up more speed once we reach the plains!"

Da da da da...

The enemy troopers from the jeeps started firing their machine guns. Thick smoke emerged from the guns' barrels. Countless enemy bullets were sprayed at them. However, the shots fired from further away were largely inaccurate. The firing encompassed a huge radius, and trees along the way were getting destroyed. Some bullets also managed to scrape the surface of the container, and sparks were created from friction.

Li Ya Lin glanced at the rear mirror, and the next moment, the rear mirror was destroyed by a bullet. She cursed in silence. The heavy truck was difficult to control; it rocked violently as she tried to evade the oncoming trees that were obstructing the path. She could feel the pain in her butt due to all the incessant vibrations of the vehicle. The contents of the truck were flying all around, and Han Xiao had to use locks to fasten the weapons and machinery in place.

The two prisoners were sitting at the corner of the container, trembling profusely.

The Sun was setting, and it looked as if the skies had been stained red with blood.

Dozens of armored jeeps were engaged in the intense pursuit of the fleeing truck. The enemy troopers were fast approaching, and bullets were fired everywhere; gunshots could be heard all over the forest. The blares of the engines sounded like the roars of a wild dragon. The Wanderers who were at Crow Forest Town could hear the sounds of battle and started to search for the source of the faint sounds.

Closer and closer... closer and closer!

Suddenly, a truck emerged from the forest and entered Crow Forest Town like an uncontrollable rhinoceros. It crashed into a building, which instantly crumbled under the huge impact. The shape of the crash barrier at the head of the truck became warped.

The truck sped past the streets.

The Wanderers on the streets were shocked and quickly searched for shelters to hide. Only after confirming that the truck had driven past did they come out of hiding. Many of them were confused and astonished. Before they could even calm down, the armored jeeps entered the town, driving recklessly. Many buildings were destroyed, and it was a complete mess.

It was raining bullets, and many Wanderers were shot by stray bullets. Screams of pain could be heard all around, and the ground was drenched with blood.

The final rays of light from the sun disappeared, and night fell. The truck was finally at the edge of the forest, and the obstacle-free plains appeared before it. The headlights from the armored jeeps illuminated the darkness like a Light Dragon.

There was no obstacle blocking the way on the plains, so it was easier for the armored jeeps to close the gap.

Nearer and near they came. Six hundred, five hundred, four hundred meters!

“Zhang Wei, change into your armor!”

Zhang Wei felt a surge of adrenaline. Even before the command, he had prepared for the moment of his ‘suit up’. Upon activating the armor, he noticed an immediate difference. The internal skeletal system provided power for all movements, and therefore, there was no need for his own strength to be used. His vision was also enhanced with the analysis interface. Chains of battle data flashed on the display. There was even an enhanced scope that offered greater shot accuracy.

Zhang Wei widened his eyes in disbelief.

“It is so powerful!”

Han Xiao loaded the high-explosive rounds into his sniper rifle and replied confidently, “This is only a simple modification.”

It was right to have spent the \$36,000 on the suit.

Ding ding dang dang!

The clanging of the bullets that were crashing against armor became denser!

“Retaliate now!” Han Xiao growled, and following that, Zhang Wei kicked open the door of the container. He had a clear vision of what was in front of him. The head armor covered the fury in his eyes. He lifted the triple barrel machine gun and started firing.

“Tu tu tu tu—”

The high frequency gunshots created thunderous blasts. Thick ember emerged from the wild firing formed around the gun’s barrel. Shells were spat out of the gun and fell to the ground. The large, long bullets coupled with traces of ember were directed at the armored jeeps.

Boom! The bulletproof windows of two jeeps were shattered, and the passengers of the jeep were crushed.

Zhang Wei held two chains of bullets tightly. The chains extended all the way behind his back and led to a box. The box contained the ammunition that Han Xiao prepared; Zhang Wei had sufficient ammunition to spray to his heart’s content.

The dozens of armored jeeps dispersed from their formation to evade the shots from Zhang Xiao. The enemy troopers fired back using the machine guns mounted on the jeeps.

Zhang Wei was standing right at the opening of the container wearing his armor. The exterior of the suit was made up of the Platinum Alloy. Zhang Wei mounted the hexagonal shield before his body to shield himself from the bullets. Most of the bullets were blocked by the thick armor.

Han Xiao raised the sniper rifle and started firing the high-explosive rounds. The rounds set the jeeps aflame. The enemy drivers started panicking, and once the flames reached the jeeps' engines, they were forced to stop.

However, more jeeps were approaching, and bullet holes could be seen on the external armor of the truck.

The distance was sufficient!

Han Xiao put aside his sniper rifle and grabbed the mechanical dragonfly explosives from the box. He threw them forward as if they were free of charge. The mechanical dragonflies glided close to the ground, and they were detonated once they reached the jeeps.

Boom!

The armored jeeps were overturned by the explosions, and the momentum from the blast resulted in the jeeps tumbling in midair before landing. Once the flames reached the fuel tanks of the jeeps, it resulted in a second explosion that caused more deaths.

The never-ending death toll started flashing on the tablet's interface.

Every delayed explosion caused by the mechanical dragonfly could kill four to eight enemy troopers in the jeep. In addition to the kills, EXP was also awarded for the destruction of the vehicle. Therefore, every jeep destroyed generated 5,000 to 7,000 EXP for Han Xiao. The rewards motivated Han Xiao greatly, and he strove to cause greater damage with the explosives.

[Direct Conflict completed. You gained 35,000 EXP!]

"Ah!"

Hysterical screams were heard. Han Xiao turned back his head only to realize that the two enemy troopers who were held captive had been killed by the flying bullets. Instantly, Han Xiao's heart sank.

"The prisoners are dead!"

The firepower coming from the jeep started to lessen; the enemy troopers were afraid of the attacking abilities of the truck

A single truck had managed to destroy twenty armored jeeps. It was definitely a scary fact for the enemies.

"I can see the military forces of Hesla!" Li Ya Lin screamed in excitement.

Han Xiao looked ahead and saw the army of vehicles operated by the Hesla military.

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“Commander, there seem to be skirmishes ahead of us!”

Carl looked at the video feed on the operation vehicle and was thoroughly shocked.

More than twenty armored jeeps were chasing after the bullet-hole-riddled heavy-duty truck. He then saw the trail of overturned jeeps that had been set ablaze.

Carl was suspicious of the situation.

These agents from Division 13 really had a substantial and fierce firepower.

There were not many operation teams that had such strong fighting abilities that could rival with those of modern militaries. A smaller team enabled greater flexibility in operations. Usually, such operation teams were considered the best of their kind. He suppressed his initial shock. Following that, he squinted and started looking back and forth.

Winna and Ye Fan were also astonished by the sight before their eyes.

A single truck had managed to survive the attack of an army of armored jeeps. Also, it had managed to wipe out half of the total enemy count.

“It’s surprising that the truck can still move after withstanding a thousand shots!”

Even though the truck was almost wrecked, it could still travel freely like a wild dog on steroids. The truck had undergone some sort of modification. A grenade exploded on the armor of the truck, yet the explosion only caused minor change, barely denting the armor. In the same situation, a normal vehicle would have been blasted into multiple pieces.

What sort of metal was it made of?

Too strong!

Even the agents for Division 13 were confused.

Since when did Zhang Wei’s team possess such powerful fighting capabilities?

Could a mechanic really elevate the firepower of a team so much?

Chapter 82: The Unexpected Betrayal

The armored jeeps started to flee from the scene by turning in the opposite direction.

Carl’s eyes lit up, and he ordered, “Provide fire support and blast everything in the vicinity!”

Carl’s assistant understood the hidden agenda behind Carl’s order. He was shocked but still carried out the order. The area of attack was locked in.

The team of vehicles equipped with missile launchers moved forward, and in an instant, the rockets were launched.

The truck fell inside the radius of the missile strike!

The agents from Division 13 were sharp-eyed and figured out what Carl was trying to do. They were enraged and astonished.

The assistant officer explained, "Damn it, we miscalculated the radius of the attack."

Such words were only sufficient to fool little kids. The agents from Division 13 were not convinced, and the enraged Qi Bai Jia shouted, "Carl, what do you think you are doing?"

Carl did not reply. His face was expressionless, and his eyes were cold as ice.

Too bad! You guys do not belong to Hesla.

Li Ya Lin could clearly see the flaming exhaust of the rockets, which also signified the impending destruction their team was going to face. She screamed, "They want to send us up to heaven too!"

"Hesla's commanders did it on purpose!" Zhang Wei was furious.

Even though tension was bound to occur during joint operations involving different countries, nobody expected the commanding officer from Hesla to make such a brutal move. Also, he could shirk off the responsibility by conveniently claiming that it was an accident.

Only radicals would result to such despicable measures—the killing of their allies and the neglecting of consequences!

The Germinal Organization was a common enemy of the Six Nations. All the parties agreed on counter-terrorism efforts. However, the different parties involved were not allies, and some even had conflicts with one another. The higher-ups of the nations were pretentious and hypocritical. They were also willing to sacrifice those beneath them to attain their goals.

Han Xiao focused and shouted, "Nitro boost!"

Li Ya Lin immediately pressed the button. Blue flames emerged from the exhaust of the truck. The acceleration of the truck was exponentially increased, charging forward like a wild rhinoceros. Li Ya Lin was pressed hard onto her seat by the surging momentum.

The rockets began to descend quickly. Three hundred, two hundred, one hundred, fifty meters.

Boom!

Finally, the blast arrived and created a wave of heat that resulted in a mushroom cloud of dust. The flaming smoke rose on the plains. At that instant, everyone lost their senses. The sound of the blast exceeded the audible range of the human ear. It was as if the whole world had fallen silent. All that was left was a rising glow, which illuminated the night sky.

Everything within the radius of the strike, regardless of vehicles or humans, had been demolished.

After three seconds, an incessant ringing became audible.

Rage and fury were written on the faces of the agents from Division 13.

Grief could be observed from the killer eyes of Di Su Su; a green flame was burning silently in her heart.

Whoosh!

The wind started howling.

The heavy-duty truck emerged out of the thick dark smoke. Only a small section of the container had been blown apart. Some of the machinery and accessories had been reduced to scrap metal.

“They are still alive!”

The agents from Division 13 were surprised. Li Ya Lin was not yet out of her state of shock. It had really just been a matter of a few meters. They were really lucky to have escaped the radius of the strike in time. If not for the nitro boost, all of them would have vanished into thin air.

Han Xiao coughed out the blood from his throat. He’d suffered from injuries due to the shockwave of the blast. Almost 200 HP had been lost due to the blast. The second blast had sent him crashing into the hard wall of the container, costing him another 50 HP. Han Xiao was still feeling giddy from the aftershock of the blast.

After the nitro boost, the engine was overheating, but it still managed move forward till it reached the Hesla soldiers.

After seeing countless bullet holes on the container, the soldiers of Hesla could feel the chills up their spines.

What a tough battle they’d had.

“What a pity. They managed to survive.” Carl frowned in disappointment.

After Han Xiao alighted from the truck, the agents from Division 13 started to crowd before him. Qi Bai Jia, who broke out into cold sweat, heaved a sigh of relief upon seeing that Han Xiao was alive and well.

Carl walked toward the agents.

Instantly, the agents from Division 13 glowered furiously at him. Zhang Wei, clad in his armor, gritted his teeth and moved toward Carl. The soldiers at the side immediately raised their weapon and pointed at the agents. The assistant officer bellowed, “What do you want? Back off!”

“I want an explanation!” Zhang Wei yelled.

Explanation? How childish.

Carl ignored Zhang Wei and glanced at Han Xiao. He asked flippantly, “Where are the captured enemies?”

“...Dead.”

Carl’s order to strike ahead of the stipulated time had caused immense danger for them. The two captured enemies had also been killed. More importantly, Carl had tried to kill them. It was obvious that he had done these things on purpose.

Han Xiao shut his eyes to conceal the ice-cold chill in them.

“No more evidence, I suppose?” Carl frowned with a look of discontent. His poor attitude angered the agents from Division 13 even more. However, they were rational enough to keep their cool as they were, ultimately, in a foreign land surrounded by soldiers from Hesla.

Qi Bai Jia could not contain his anger and lashed out, “Prepare to be questioned by Division 13!”

Carl couldn’t care less. Division 13 had no jurisdiction over him. Moreover, what happened just was an ‘accident’; there was no evidence to justify that he had done it on purpose. At most, he would be reprimanded by the foreign diplomats. He would not have to face any real punishment.

If he managed to destroy the Dark Crow Valley base, it would truly be a great achievement. With the help of his backers, he was highly likely to be promoted to the leading figure for the radicals in the government. No matter how Division 13 complained about him, the higher-ups in Hesla would be there to fend off these complaints.

Carl thought to himself. After which he pointed at Han Xiao and said, “Take him to the medic. Let them check his injuries.”

Han Xiao had no expression on his face. He followed the medic to the logistics vehicle. All his injuries were due to the shock on his soft body. With his endurance, he would recover quickly with a sufficient amount of rest. Therefore, he dismissed the medic.

The logistics vehicle started its engine. Hesla’s troops continued their advance.

Han Xiao shook his head, closed his eyes, and then proceeded to lie on his bed.

He had not slept since yesterday. Now was the right time for him to catch up on his sleep.

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The sounds of gunshots could be heard. Han Xiao was a light sleeper, and he opened his eyes. He alighted from the vehicle and realized it was midnight, around 3 to 4 am.

At this point of time, Hesla’s troops had arrived at the border of the high-alert sectors of the Dark Crow Valley base. The six high-alert sectors comprised not only of sentry guards and patrolling troopers, there were also large defense mechanisms put in place like ramparts and guardhouses that were fortified with enemy troops. In the event of war, Hesla’s army would have to go past the six high-alert sectors before they closed in on the actual base itself.

Han Xiao, who was now with the logistics division, was far from the battlefield.

Han Xiao asked the two soldiers guarding by his side, “What’s the situation of the battlefield?”

One of the soldiers replied, “Everything is proceeding smoothly. Our troops have successfully reached the fourth sector.”

Han Xiao nodded, and just when he was about to proceed out, the two soldiers blocked his path.

“The Colonel wants you to rest and recover from your injuries here.”

Upon hearing that, Han Xiao realized that he had been intentionally imprisoned here by the Colonel. Han Xiao frowned and asked, "Where are my friends?"

"Your officer also tasked us to look after you and ensure that you have sufficient rest."

Han Xiao understood the intentions of Qi Bai Jia. He did not want Han Xiao to risk his life anymore. Ultimately, Han Xiao had almost been killed by the flaming missiles. Qi Bai Jia wanted to keep Han Xiao away from the battlefield.

Such a move is better for my plan, Han Xiao thought.

Han Xiao turned his head and saw the truck being towed away. The escape mission had almost destroyed the entire truck. Without a full repair, the truck would surely be not usable.

Han Xiao's eyes suddenly lit up before he proceeded toward the heavy-duty truck.

The two soldiers guarding him allowed him to do so. Han Xiao was free to go anywhere as long as he stayed away from the battlefield in the logistics zone.

He entered the container and discovered that all the important equipment was still around. Only the bodies of the two captured soldiers had been disposed of. Han Xiao took out the communication set from the box and adjusted it to Lin Yao's frequency.

"Lin Yao, are you still alive?"

"Of course, I am, but don't jinx it!" Lin Yao's unfriendly voice blared out from the earpiece.

"What's the situation now?"

"We are preparing for the retreat. Apparently, according to the higher-ups in the base, the troops stationed around the base were all deployed to fight Hesla's army. I have yet to discover their path of retreat. Seems like I'll have to follow the order to locate the exact route. Oh, I also managed to find out the false information that Ye Fan collected. The defense mechanism and deployment between the third and sixth sectors were true. However, the first and second sectors were different. If Hesla's troops attack according to the information Ye Fan provided, they are bound to suffer heavy losses."

"Have you told them yet?"

"Nope, you are the first guy that contacted me."

"That's good. Don't tell that to Hesla's people."

Lin Yao was confused and asked, "Why so?"

Han Xiao told him the series of events that had happened previously. Upon hearing the incident of the misfire of the missiles, Lin Yao's blood started boiling with rage. "That is just too much!"

Carl revealed his intention to wipe out his allies, so it was no longer logical for Division 13 to continue assisting him in the operation and minimize his losses.

The intelligence that Han Xiao provided was all aimed at eliminating Pan Kuang and Ji Jie, who were high-value members of the Germinal Organization. Only the successful elimination of them would

ensure the mission's success. Carl treated them like they were merely tools. Now it was time for Han Xiao to reciprocate. They wanted his intelligence reports, and he wanted their troops. Both parties were merely using each other to their advantage.

As long as Hesla's army accomplished the mission using his intelligence, he could not have cared less about the number of troops they lost.

What Han Xiao had not expected was Carl's intention to kill them.

"It is time for a change of plan."

Han Xiao's eyes sparkled brightly.

Chapter 83: The Superhumans of Aquamarine

Morning was always the best time of the day. Likewise, morning was also the best time to fight a battle.

The previous night, the Hesla troops had managed to clear the fourth high-alert sector. Carl had ordered his troops to rest for an hour before continuing their advancement at first light. They wanted to reach the base in one final attack.

As the sun rose, the Hesla troops were fighting the enemies at the third high-alert sector.

Boom, boom, boom!

The endless blasts were thunderous, and they enshrouded the battleground in smoke. The entire forest was wrecked by the hail of bullets and artillery strikes, the used shells of which were littered everywhere.

The soldiers from Hesla, coupled with the armored vehicles, managed to take down the defense mechanisms in place. One after another, fortresses, sentry-posts, and trenches were destroyed. The information Ye Fan had obtained was of great use. The enemy's defense mechanisms were practically useless against the attacks. The troops managed to secure their objectives with minimal losses. The soldiers were elated because their victories had never been so comfortable before.

"Continue to advance. Let's take down the two remaining high alert sectors in one shot!"

Carl was overwhelmed with excitement.

Once the confident troops entered the second high-alert sector, the favorable situation started to turn around.

Not long after stepping foot into the second high-alert sector, the Hesla troops faced their first enemy ambush. Two armored vehicles and dozens of soldiers were wiped out by well-hidden mines. And that was, in fact, just an appetizer. The Hesla soldiers were soon completely devastated. The death toll was rising steadily, and there were traps and ambushes everywhere.

Ye Fan's intelligence was practically useless at this stage. Following the false information provided led to even greater losses. The various platoons were at a complete loss.

The intelligence about the first four high-alert selectors had allowed Hesla's military to successfully penetrate deep and eventually enter the ambush zone that Ji Jie had marked out.

The casualties were increasing exponentially.

Carl experienced a mix of shock and fury.

The expression on Winna's face changed. Indeed, the information they had obtained was only bait; Han Xiao's predictions were right. They were indeed responsible for the huge losses.

Ye Fan shook his head and said, "The enemies are too cunning and ruthless. They were willing to sacrifice the lives of their own comrades to lure us in. It was almost impossible to see through their plot. Perhaps, that's the advantage of being on the defensive side. The Germinal Organization is not afraid to go all out. However, such a measure is not feasible for our side. Carl's moves were too radical; he should have listened to Han Xiao and been less brash with his deployments."

He looked at his remorseful teammates and sighed.

At this point, Carl saw his soldiers falling one after another. He had an uncomfortable expression. What was supposed to be a smooth-sailing situation had flipped around. The 'easy-win' had reversed, becoming a complete disaster. Even if they managed to prevail in the battle, it was going to be a costly victory.

The Hesla troops, who were facing head-on defeats, were suffering heavy losses, and their advancement proceeded at a snail's pace.

Suddenly, a grim-looking man who held a long machete in his hand emerged from the enemy side. He was surrounded by cold and transparent waves of energy that bore similarity to flames. The air beside him distorted as he dashed toward Hesla's army. The soldiers immediately started firing their rifles, but the man span as he ran and speedily slashed his machete. The approaching bullets were disintegrated by the slashes and fell to the ground.

"Pugilist!"

While the soldiers were still in shock, the man barged into the crowd. Within seconds, the combo of powerful slashes from the shiny machete diced numerous Hesla soldiers into many bits. Blood sprayed everywhere, and broken limbs, heads, and torsos could be seen all over the ground.

The man stood with conviction amid the sea of red.

"Pan Kuang!"

The agents were all astonished.

Pan Kuang was the man in charge of the Dark Crow Valley base and the executive officer of the Germinal Organization. In addition, he had managed to kill many powerful individuals and had a glorious battle record on the Dark Net.

Based on his battle record on the Dark Net, Pan Kuang was highly adept with his machete. His fighting style originated from that of Rui Lan, and he was becoming known as the 'Soul of the Blade'.

The light reflected by his shiny blade was usually the last thing his slain enemies saw.

The armored vehicle adjusted its position. Larger bullets were fired out from the re-adjusted barrel at Pan Kuang. Pan Kuang started leaping with unbelievably fast movements and dodged the incoming shots by ducking behind the trees. It was impossible for ordinary soldier to accurately trace the position of Pan Kuang. More often than not, in the blink of an eye, Pan Kuang would disappear without any trace, and the fired shots would all miss.

Pan Kuang was able to move around the battleground with ease and without any substantial obstruction.

Like a life-claiming reaper, Pan Kuang slew one soldier after another. He even managed to slash open a couple of heavily armored trucks and kill the soldiers inside the vehicles.

As long as there were shelters that offered protection against the bullets, a Superhuman could unleash his extensive power and cause immense damage. The energy he possessed protected his body, and ordinary gunpowder and bullets were unable to cause any significant harm.

A D-class Superhuman could battle a platoon on their own and escape with ease after the fight.

A C-class Superhuman had colossal strength and an iron body that could withstand the attacks of guns and canons. They could cause substantial damage on all terrains and could tear down a building with their bare hands easily. A C-class Superhuman was of the lowest-level in the galaxy. It also had the title of 'Basic Cosmic Warrior'. Different planets in the galaxy had different gravitational fields and atmospheric conditions. A C-class Superhuman would be able to set foot on most planets. It was normal for certain species that lived in harsher galactic conditions to possess C-class Superhuman bodies from birth.

However, there were very few C-class Superhumans on Aquamarine. The Superhumans on this planet were low-ranked ones.

Pan Kuang's Superhuman class was E+, one level away from becoming D-class. He was able to easily defeat groups of Hesla soldiers in the complicated forested terrain. A Superhuman possessed a powerful solo-fighting capability, and they would often swipe in to kill the highest-ranking commander of the troops or infiltrate the enemy to sabotage operations.

Soldiers in the way were being killed by the advancing Pan Kuang. It was obvious that Pan Kuang was travelling in the direction of Carl!

Carl had made it onto the radar of Pan Kuang's killer instincts, which made Carl feel very uneasy. He had no sense of security even when he was protected tightly by his troops, so he immediately commanded, "Launch the thermo-tracing rockets!"

An armored vehicle equipped with missile launchers arrived, and multiple rockets that were locked onto Pan Kuang were fired.

Pan Kuang was circling the forest speedily, and the rockets crashed into the trees. The last rocket managed to go through the gaps between the tree trunks and headed for Pan Kuang.

With a tight frown, Pan Kuang halted in his steps. He scooped up some soil and held the machete with both of his hands. There was an invisible wave of energy surrounding the blade. He slashed the machete at the rocket.

The quick slash managed to hit the side of the rocket at the right time. The force from the strike changed the course of the rocket, and its path was altered. The rocket crashed into a large tree that was twenty meters away and burst into flames. Pan Kuang was slightly disorientated by the shockwave of the explosion. If Han Xiao were there, he would have seen that the damage was more than twenty health points.

After realizing that even the rockets were useless against Pan Kuang, Carl looked at his agents. Carl's intention of deploying the agents to protect himself was clear.

"Let's go!" Winna yelled, and Hesla's agents moved forward together with her.

The agents from Division 13 were observing from one side. The joint operation no longer made sense after what Carl had done; therefore, they were not going to help.

After finding out that the agents from Hesla had entered the battle, Pan Kuang immediately sheathed his machete and retreated. He did not want to be held up by the agents.

Gunshots echoed through the forest as bullets were fired out of the agents' guns.

The shiny blade slashed past. Light was reflected off the surface of the blade. A bullet fired at Pan Kuang was cut in half. Although Pan Kuang operated at a lower speed than the flying bullet, he had managed to anticipate the path of the bullet and position his machete at the perfect spot. His reflexes were rapid.

Pan Kuang remained expressionless as he turned away and disappeared into the forest.

In this attack, Pan Kuang had managed to kill hundreds of enemy soldiers and destroy a couple of armored vehicles. The morale of Hesla's soldiers was at its lowest. They had suffered heavy casualties, and the initial fatigue accumulated from the attacks on the previous four sectors was beginning to take its toll. The situation forced Carl to slow down the attack even though he was unwilling to do so.

Ji Jie was observing the situation at the frontline from his monitor. The second high-alert sector was down, and Hesla's troops were moving toward the final sector. Even if Hesla's army suffered great losses, they still had an upper hand over the armed security guards of the base.

However, everything was under control.

After Pan Kuang returned, Ji Jie locked the doors leading to the base. Even if the enemy managed to take down the external base, they would be unable to locate the internal base. Furthermore, Ji Jie was also preparing to give a 'big gift' to the Hesla soldiers outside the internal base.

"Assistant Director, when are we going to retreat?"

"Now," Ji Jie said.

The staff of the inner base gathered at the doorstep of the third secret passageway. Lin Yao and Lambert were furthest away from the rest. When nobody was looking, they would inform each other of critical intelligence. Strangers would think that they were just making casual conversation.

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Boom!

The final fortress was blasted into pieces by the cannon of a mini-tank. The remaining armed guards only had one choice—retreat into the base.

All the defense lines crumbled, and Carl finally loosened up from the tension.

The final two sectors had cost seventy percent more losses than expected. Carl's superiors would definitely be less impressed when they saw the battle report.

"The enemies are left with the final base, and they have nowhere to retreat to. Are we going to let the troops rest for a while?" the assistant officer asked.

Carl was sat in deep thought, and he suddenly remembered Han Xiao's intelligence report. It mentioned that there was an inner base and also a secret escape passageway. Instantly, he felt that it was an opportunity for him to improve his battle record. He did not want to waste a single moment so as to reduce the enemies' chance of escape. Therefore, he issued an order with conviction.

"Start the attack immediately. Remember to search thoroughly in the facility, especially the storerooms. There must be some hidden door somewhere that can lead us to the enemy's inner base."

The order was confirmed, and the soldiers who had still not yet recovered from the shock of the previous battle regained their spirits and entered the base to wipe out the remaining enemies. The base was very small, and the fighting took place in the narrow alleys. Endless gunshots could be heard throughout the drawn-out battle.

"We found the storeroom, but no hidden doors can be seen. There are only solid concrete walls. We also tested our explosives on the walls."

"Maybe there is something wrong with the intelligence report?" Carl frowned hard. He summoned his assistant and said, "Bring the agents from Division 13 here. Also, get me Han Xiao. I want to ask them about the intelligence report they submitted."

Chapter 84: Self-Detonation

While the battle at the frontlines was still ongoing, Han Xiao, who was at the logistics zone away from the battlefield, was observing the situation attentively.

Han Xiao had seen many high-level battles that involved the destruction of entire planets in the game. Compared to those battles, the current one, a low-level battle fought on the ground, gave Han Xiao a greater adrenaline rush. The sound of gunshots and scent of gunpowder gave a better display of the brutality and the atmosphere of war compared to those battles Han Xiao had previously witnessed, which had only involved silent energy beams and plasma canons.

Han Xiao sat in the container of the truck, while the two sentry guards were still guarding the vehicle tightly. They were highly suspicious that Han Xiao was intending to escape.

Lin Yao's voice could be heard from Han Xiao's earpiece.

"Brother Xiao, we are going to retreat together with the core team of the enemy. I have planted the virus in their system, so we can now jam their communications any time."

"Good job."

"Oh, Uncle Lambert made a new discovery. The internal structure of the base is very strong, and it is probably explosion-proof."

Han Xiao frowned, and after piecing together the bits of information, he suddenly realized that the external base was disguised as the bait, or more accurately, a graveyard. There were probably heaps of explosives hidden, and once the invaders stepped into it, the explosives would be triggered to kill all of them. Also, the explosions would be strong enough to demolish the external base and bury everything in it, thereby making the internal base more discrete."

"What an ingenious plan." Han Xiao sighed. Even if he were to report the situation now, it would be too late. Also, Han Xiao did not have any intention of doing so.

He had finally reached the final stage of his plan.

Han Xiao rose up and began to pack his belongings. He transferred all the accessories and important mechanical components from the container into his bag. The bag was completely filled. Han Xiao then said to the two sentry guards, "Could you guys help me carry some of these items? They are pretty heavy."

The two troops went up the truck unknowingly to help Han Xiao carry his bag.

The moment they bent their bodies, Han Xiao took action. With two solid punches to the necks of the soldiers, both of them collapsed to the ground without making a sound.

Han Xiao closed the door of the container, and he secretly changed into the trooper's attire and removed the mask he was wearing. After which, he activated the mask and used it to change his appearance. He carried the bag and walked out confidently. He was able to blend into the logistics team without anyone noticing.

...

Carl's assistant soon rushed back.

"Everyone from Division 13, except for Han Xiao, was present," he said.

Carl was shocked. "He disappeared?"

"The two sentry guards that were supposed to look after him were found unconscious. I asked the logistics team, and nobody saw Han Xiao around."

Carl wanted to continue the conversation, but there a thunderous boom in the air, which made him jump up on reflex. He immediately started scouting for the source of the sound.

The mountain was moving, and it was as if an earthquake had struck. Everyone was terrified!

The Dark Crow Valley base had detonated!

The entire base crumbled, and the main entrance was completely sealed by the falling rocks. Hundreds of elite soldiers were buried!

The turn of events obviously infuriated Carl.

The troops had fallen into the enemy's trap just as victory was in sight. Countless lives were claimed, and the base was also destroyed. This greatly depreciated the value of the victory.

Carl knew that, as the commander of the forces, he would face a lot of backlash.

Carl had a gloomy look, and he thought of Han Xiao's advice. If he had heeded the advice, he could have prevented the heavy losses. But even if he had the opportunity to choose again, Carl felt that he would still make the same choice. He was completely frustrated and vented that frustration on the wall of the commander's vehicle.

The army had suffered heavy losses, and Carl could feel the pain in his heart. He then gave several orders to raise the morale of the dejected troops.

After the agents from Division 13 arrived, Carl said with a gloomy face, "Your teammate disappeared. What is going on exactly?"

"Han Xiao vanished again?" One could clearly see the change in expression on the agents' faces.

Why the word 'again'?

Qi Bai Jia felt a blank in his mind.

Goddammit, Han Xiao always did such things.

Zhang Wei and Li Ya Lin were very calm. It was as if they had gotten used to it.

It was really the norm for Han Xiao to carry out tasks at his own will without seeking any approval. One just had to get used to it. He was probably on his way to create some new trouble.

"If Han Xiao did not obtain the critical intelligence, you would have foolishly thought that you have successfully destroyed the base, when in actual fact, you have only managed to destroy the outer region. You would not even be aware that the enemies have escaped!"

Carl pondered, and indeed, he would have thought that his operation was a complete success, and if the Dark Crow Valley base managed to reinstate itself in the future, he would be the first to be held responsible.

"What other information can you guys offer?" Carl asked anxiously.

Zhang Wei, who was trying hard to suppress his detest for Carl, bellowed, "Two of our companions retreated together with the enemy. Once they confirm the enemy's path of retreat, they will send it to us."

Carl's eyes lit up and said immediately, "Inform me as soon as you receive any news."

He had not expected that Han Xiao would accomplish so much in his operation. His troops had suffered way too many losses in the previous battle, so he needed to atone for his mistakes by successfully eliminating the core of the enemy's retreating force.

...

There was a region away from everyone's attention at the outskirts ten kilometers away from the Dark Crow Valley base. Pan Kuang, Ji Jie, and over two hundred core members were exiting the secret passageway via their vehicles. The vehicles carried huge amounts of logistical items and also contained precious information about the base.

"I suppose Hessa think that they have won the battle?" Ji Jie let out uncontrollable laughter.

Pan Kuang looked at him and said, "Don't let your guard down."

Ji Jie nodded and ordered the teams to advance faster.

They needed to travel for another two hours to reach a secret hangar that housed several Black Harrier helicopters and a small cargo-plane.

Lin Yao and Lambert received Zhang Wei's orders from their earpieces. They looked at each other and knew it was time for them to strike.

Lin Yao took out a tablet and activated the dormant virus planted in the enemy communication network.

Sheela!

Everyone was shocked by the piercing shrieks in their earpieces. They immediately removed them from their ears.

Ji Jie was disgruntled. Just as he was about the order the vehicle-fleet to stop and inspect on the communication set, he heard a series of engine-hums approaching from all directions.

"Prone!" Pan Kuang expression immediately changed. He pushed Ji Jie, who had yet to react, to the ground. After Pan Kuang completed these actions, there was a wave of gunshots.

Bullets rained on the fleet from all directions. The exploding grenades overturned the vehicles of the fleet. Flames and glaring light could be seen.

Lambert dragged Lin Yao off the vehicle. They rolled toward the vegetation at the side to avoid the direct attack.

Ji Jie could not believe that his trap had been discovered by the invaders. Who had leaked the information?

"Run!"

There was no time for any disappointment. Ji Jie was dragged toward the forest swiftly by Pan Kuang.

...

Carl, who was commanding his troops from the forest, felt a great sense of excitement. His troops had encircled the core of the retreating enemy, and he knew it was a golden opportunity for him to turn things around.

A distance away, Han Xiao, who had changed his appearance, was driving the jeep alone. He held a thermo-sensor in his hand and was searching the battle zone. He quickly discovered his targets: Pan Kuang and Ji Jie, who had managed to escape the heavy encirclements. Troops who managed to catch up with Pan Kuang were mercilessly destroyed by his powerful fighting abilities.

Han Xiao was tailing both of them from a hundred meters away with the help of with his thermo-sensor.

“A jeep is approaching.” Pan Kuang looked behind. He could barely see the jeep that was following them in the dense forest, and the faint sound of the jeep’s engine could be heard.

Pan Kuang wanted to destroy the jeep. However, every time his distance from the jeep shortened, Han Xiao would change course and increase the distance between them again. The jeep was just like an irritant.

Pan Kuang thought Han Xiao was operating a reconnaissance jeep that reported their location back to the enemy. Also, they expected the entire army to be following them, and therefore, they were afraid to stop moving. Pan Kuang, who was dragging Ji Jie in his escape, could feel the quick depletion of his energy.

“We just need to reach the hangar. The helicopter will help us with the escape.” Pan Kuang knew that was his only way to escape. Although Pan Kuang was a Superhuman himself, his fear of being surrounded by a gargantuan enemy force prompted him to increase his speed. He failed to realize that Ji Jie was deeply fatigued.

After chasing for about twenty minutes, both parties were far from the frontline.

“The time is right.” Han Xiao could feel a sense of determination. He changed his course and went in front of his targets with the help of a map he had stolen from the logistics department. The jeep travelled at a very high speed, and Han Xiao drove up a ten-meter high cliff that was two kilometers away, which his targets were sure to pass by. The engine stopped, and Han Xiao took out all his gear.

He slotted his left arm into the modified light-weight mechanical arm and attached the box housing the magnetically-controlled retractable armor to his waist. He stuck his Berserk Eagle into its case and then buried ten delayed-explosion explosives in the shape of a circle with a radius of five meters. A thin thread was lined through the safety rings of the delayed-explosion explosives, so a slight pull would activate them all.

Han Xiao grabbed a sniper rifle he had sourced from the logistics team and lay prone on a rock. He had a clear view of the valley and aimed his rifle in the direction his targets were expected to arrive in. He held his breath and focused hard.

...

Ji Jie was panting heavily. His face was all pale from the running. He was not a Superhuman, so he had limited stamina. If it wasn’t for Pan Kuang, he would have collapsed long ago.

Pan Kuang shouted emotionlessly, "Don't stop, the enemy could approach at any moment. We need to reach the hangar as soon as possible."

The two of them came out of the forest quickly. The mountains lay ahead of them.

Ji Jie felt his legs wobble before he fell to the ground. Breathlessly, he said, "I can't run anymore."

Pan Kuang frowned. He was slightly irritated, but he knew he could not leave Ji Jie behind. Ji Jie's sister was the in-charge of the entire intelligence network of the Germinal Organization.

"Carry me on your back, it is..."

Ji Jie was halfway through his sentence when a gun shot rang in the air.

Pan Kuang reacted quickly and ducked backwards.

However, he was not the target of the shot.

Ji Jie's head was thrust backwards as if a punch had been thrown at him. There was a bloody hole on his left cheek. The hole was so big that it allowed the bullet to tumble in Ji Jie's skull, crushing his left cheek. Blood and flesh splattered everywhere. Ji Jie's expression froze as he collapsed to the ground. He showed no signs of life anymore.

[Assassination 2 completed. 100% of energy expended. You gained 4,000 EXP!]

Pan Kuang's pupils constricted. He drew out his machete and dashed toward the source of the shot.

Chapter 85: Interception !

Pan Kuang was closing in! Han Xiao spammed the trigger of the rifle. Chains of bullets skipped out of the barrel and pierced through the air, heading in the direction of the target. It was as if Pan Kuang had the danger-sensing ability of a beast. He always changed his position before Han Xiao fired the shots. Han Xiao fired a total of thirteen shots, and Pan Kuang dodged nine of them. The remaining four bullets lost their momentum after hitting the blade. The bullets were reflected by Pan Kuang's protective energy, and their total damage was merely 80 HP.

A high class Superhuman would have a stronger defensive capability. Ordinary weapons and ammunition were useless against Pan Kuang.

The firepower of an ordinary weapon from a place indicated the general level of civilization of that place. With the opening up of higher versions and more maps, the upgrading of the ordinary weapons would follow. However, it was evident that such a day had yet come.

The distance between Pan Kuang and Han Xiao was shrinking rapid, and Han Xiao could see the deathly chill in Pan Kuang's eyes.

"Damn it, he's quick."

Han Xiao cursed softly and threw his rifle to the side. He tugged the thread in his hands and activated the delayed-explosion explosives then pretended fleeing.

Pan Kuang was much faster and went up the cliff in a few steps. He stepped into the ambush circle and sensed something was off. His face changed, and he leapt into the air. His shiny blade was spinning beneath his torso. It was as if he was riding a hurricane, pushing him up the skies.

BOOM!

The ten explosives detonated together, and Pan Kuang was engulfed by the flames!

Your delayed-explosion explosives dealt a damage of 34 HP to Pan Kuang.

(Damage protection is taken into account.)

Your delayed-explosion explosives dealt a damage of 37 HP to Pan Kuang.

Pan Kuang is slightly torched!

...

Ten messages appeared on the interface, and after a quick glance, Han Xiao confirmed that the series of explosions had dealt more than 400 HP damage to Pan Kuang.

Due to your level, you gained some information about the enemy!

Name: Pan Kuang

Level: 38

Class: [Agent] LV10, [Amateur Pugilist] LV10, [Stormblader] LV10, ??

Attributes: 65 STR, ?? DEX, ?? END, ?? INT, ?? MYS, 8 CHA, 7 LUK

HP: ??

Energy: ??

Energy Rank: 687

Grade: E+

Specialties:

– Amateur Blade-Wielding Technique: +10 attack points when using blades or machetes.

– Soul of the Windy Blade: “The blade is the extension of our limbs; listen closely to the breath of the wind.” ??

– ?? ...

Skills: [Defensive Blade of the Wind] Lv.6, [Wind-Gliding Steps] Lv.4, ??, ?? ...

Equipment:

Wind-Slicing Blade

– Grade: Green

– Damage: 44-47

– Length: 0.87 meters

– Weight: 10.2 pounds

– Description: An alloy blade manufactured by a master blacksmith, very strong.

– Additional effects: Windy Breath: smooth texture, +3% attack speed. Strong Edges: sharp blade, +3% additional damage to metallic objects.

There was a huge difference in level. Also, much of the information was unknown. However, Han Xiao was not completely reliant on hard statistics. From the performance of Pan Kuang, it was evident that he had high attacking power and agility, and his weak side would be his limited health. It was certain that the explosion had taken away 20% of Pan Kuang's initial health. Furthermore, Pan Kuang had faced tough battles previously and spent an hour on the run from his enemies; therefore, he was not in his best condition for a fight.

I have a higher probability of winning!

Han Xiao looked at the experience that he had accumulated on the interface, and it was as high as 520,000 points. He channeled all the experience points into raising his levels! Like a rocket, Han Xiao rapidly gained four levels.

His HP was raised to 985, almost exceeding 1,000!

He had practiced the Energy Training Technique 48 times, and his energy had managed to hit 390 points. He just needed a little more to gain four continuous level-ups and raise his energy to 540 points, which exceeded the Lv.5 benchmark of 400 points. That would allow for new increases in all his other attributes. His strength, endurance, agility, and intelligence were increased by approximately 10% each.

The rest of the experience points were channeled into [Continuous Gliding Shots].

Level 2: a slight increase in the effect of the ability.

Woosh!

Pan Kuang emerged from the flames, and he was charred from head to toe. He looked battered, and his eyes were locked on to Han Xiao like an exasperated wolf. He growled and shifted his feet as if he was gliding. In the blink of an eye, he slashed his blade with fury in an attempt to disintegrate the scoundrel who had ambushed him!

The light from the blade flashed, and Han Xiao retreated three steps. Han Xiao's speed shocked Pan Kuang.

Han Xiao dodged the slashes from Pan Kuang and took out his Berserk Eagles. With his increased attack-speed, he fired the pistols. The bullets, which had ferrous cores, went straight toward Pan Kuang's chest.

Pan Kuang moved his machete back and forth, and the bullets were slashed apart. Only one bullet managed to hit his chest, but Pan Kuang's immense energy lowered the bullet's momentum. The bullet was stuck between his muscles.

Han Xiao realized that ordinary bullets were of little use. He immediately switched the magazine for high-explosive rounds.

Pan Kuang made use of this moment to approach closer.

"How dare you switch magazines right before my eyes! Are you tired of living?"

Changing magazine in front of a Pugilist was a sign of insufficient battle experience! Pan Kuang, with a sinister look on his face, slashed toward Han Xiao's throat. He tried to pierce through Han Xiao's neck as if it just was a piece of meat on the skewer.

Pan Kuang could tell that Han Xiao could not dodge his hack!

"Ding —"

The edge of the blade managed to touch Han Xiao's throat, but it was blocked by metallic scales!

Pan Kuang's pupils constricted. *When did this armor appear?*

Han Xiao felt a little suffocated. Although the magnetically-controlled retractable armor could withstand the shock, there was still some leftover force that landed on his body. He raised the pistol and started firing continuously. Pan Kuang blocked the bullets with his blade again. This time, the high explosive rounds detonated the moment the blade touched its tip, and the flames enshrouded Pan Kuang's body and burnt him.

What the hell is this bullet? Pan Kuang's heart skipped a beat. He channeled his energy to shake off the flames but to no avail. The orange flames could not be shaken off, and his skin burned harshly. He could only retract his energy to protect his body. That resulted in a huge amount of energy being expended.

The high-explosive rounds were highly adhesive. Therefore, they were able to cause substantial, continuous damage. Pan Kuang had a high defense, so his HP was falling at a very slow rate. However, using the high-explosive rounds was still more effective than normal rounds. At least, the former was causing a decrease in Pan Kuang's HP.

The Berserk Eagles were spitting out rounds from slanted positions. When there was a final bullet left, Han Xiao used it to initiate the continuous gliding shots. At that point in time, Pan Kuang's clothing was burnt completely, and his hair also started burning. The price Han Xiao had to pay was the endurance of the magnetic armor, which fell after the relentless, powerful slashes by Pan Kuang.

Han Xiao focused hard. At the cost of taking another powerful blow, he put away the Berserk Eagles and took out the retractable machete. He held the machete in his right hand and the mechanical arm in his left. It was as if a barbarian had taken over his body; he had the courage of a beast that was unafraid of death. He was ready to give Pan Kuang a hard fight, which was also likely to be a bloody one.

The three items that Han Xiao was equipped with could all be used as shields, and in comparison, Pan Kuang was heavily disadvantaged since he could only use his body to defend Han Xiao's strikes.

However, in reality, Pan Kuang was steadily gaining ground. For most of the time, Han Xiao could only make a strike at Pan Kuang after receiving seven slashes. The fighting abilities of the two individuals were too far apart. Pan Kuang was a legitimate pugilist, and his fighting technique was stronger than that of Han Xiao by leaps and bounds. Han Xiao's close-range combat technique was considered a joke by Pan Kuang. If not for the gear he was equipped with, Pan Kuang would be unscathed by Han Xiao's attacks.

"You want to fight me up close? Don't you think that you are courting death?" Pan Kuang could not understand how Han Xiao had the courage to challenge a pugilist in close-quarters. In his mind, he considered such an act to be extremely arrogant. Han Xiao was challenging Pan Kuang's greatest strength with his greatest weakness.

A slash toward Han Xiao's face resulted in a deep cut that bled profusely.

Han Xiao had taken off his mask before the battle as he had been afraid that it would be destroyed in the battle. He revealed his genuine appearance, and Pan Kuang recognized him. Han Xiao was the traitor that escaped from the organization not long ago—Zero.

Why did Number Zero attack him here? Pan Kuang did not know, and he did not care. He only knew that the man before him was an enemy, and all Pan Kuang wanted to do was to hack him to death!

The force from the slashes shocked Han Xiao's body a few times. His HP decreased, but he remained calm.

The reason he dared to fight Pan Kuang close up was because he had faith in himself. The previous shots, explosions, and strikes had managed to lower Pan Kuang's HP by 700 to 800 points.

Under the protection of the magnetically-controlled retractable armor, his HP only fell by 300 points. The armor managed to prevent a total damage of at least 150 points of HP.

The armor was not even meant to be worn by Han Xiao at his current level. The armor had a defense of 75 points. It was strong and useful even until higher levels of 40-50. Han Xiao depended greatly on the armor!

With the armor, he had the ability to fight opponents of much higher levels!

Han Xiao locked his hand and grabbed hard on Pan Kuang blade-wielding hand. Pan Kuang was not afraid. He twisted his arm flexibly and broke free; at the same time, he gave Han Xiao another slash, which landed on the lightweight mechanical arm. If not for the platinum alloy, the mechanical arm would have long disintegrated into pieces and shards.

Han Xiao attentively discovered that Pan Kuang had a brief moment after every strike when he slowed down. Pan Kuang was instinctively trying to conserve his energy.

He is starting to feel tired. He used up too much of his energy and lost his additional attributes. He is no longer sharp!

Han Xiao eyes started flashing, and his sharp acumen allowed him to discover Pan Kuang weakness; the moment that he was waiting for had arrived. He selected an option on his interface.

A new character—Norsa Connor!

The summon card for character has been used. 1/1 card used. The card has been exhausted and will disappear.

Pan Kuang saw a faint shadow at Han Xiao's back. An eerie-eyed individual appeared in rainbow-colored mist. Pan Kuang felt that the individual looked familiar.

Who is that?

He looks like... Norsa! Isn't Norsa long dead?

What's going on?

Pan Kuang was alarmed and wanted to move back, but it was all too late. He succumbed to the illusion and was paralyzed.

Scanning...

The scan is complete.

The target has an INT of less than 50. The illusion is successful.

Chapter 86: A Strike of Philosophy

Pan Kuang was a Lv.38 Pugilist with high agility and attack power. Therefore, it was almost impossible for his intelligence to exceed 50. If Han Xiao was really that unlucky and Pan Kuang did have higher than expected intelligence, Han Xiao would have had choice but to resign to his fate.

The illusion confused Pan Kuang, who was totally unprepared for it. All the attacks from the illusion could deal real damage to Pan Kuang, but ultimately, Pan Kuang had a relatively high level, so he would not be defeated if Han Xiao relied on the illusion alone.

Without hesitation, Han Xiao's lightweight mechanical arm headed for Pan Kuang crotch, which housed his most vulnerable body part!

"Mega-load!"

The power of the mechanical increased by 30% instantly, and the punch landed right on the target.

Pan Kuang's wiener exploded!

Han Xiao had learned this move after observing a series of tapes. He had derived this legendary move from "The Faraway Home of the Warrior – The Third Twilight". Once the move was activated, even the skies would tremble.

Han Xiao had no time to look at the messages on the interface. He needed to make use of the period when Pan Kuang was distracted by the illusion to deal as much damage as he could.

Han Xiao immediately activated the pressure compressor in the palm of the mechanical arm. His palm went through a sudden vibration, and a shockwave was sent out. Blood seeped out of Pan Kuang skin, and a blood red triangle could be seen on Pan Kuang's crouch.

Of course, Han Xiao's right hand was also put to use. Using the machete held in his right hand, Han Xiao stabbed hard into Pan Kuang's chest without any hesitation. Pan Kuang was still affected by the illusion, and thus, the protective energy shielding his body was non-existent. The stab successfully pierced through Pan Kuang.

Han Xiao then reached out for his Berserk Eagles and stuck the barrels of the pistols right where Pan Kuang's heart was. He used his wind-gliding steps to drag Pan Kuang backwards together with him. Han Xiao fired the shots continuously, and all the bullets went into Pan Kuang's body.

Blood spurted out. There was a burning sound of the scorching ember sizzling human flesh.

Ka, Ka, Ka—

All the bullets in the magazine were expended, and Pan Kuang was finally awake. The sharp pain sent Pan Kuang into thunderous fury, and his face twisted in agony. He slashed hard at Han Xiao's abdomen.

It seemed Pan Kuang wanted an eye for an eye.

Han Xiao used his energy to control the magnetic retractable armor to shield himself from the strike. Although he was protected, the shock from the strike still made Han Xiao pale. He could sense a chilly wave of energy going all the way up to his forehead via his spine.

Enduring the pain, Han Xiao expanded the reach of the mechanical arm to press hard onto Pan Kuang's head. Pan Kuang was hurled to the ground back and forth. The back of Pan Kuang's head, after coming into contact with the ground so many times, started bleeding profusely, forming a puddle of blood on the ground. Coupled with growls of agony, Pan Kuang was desperately trying to retaliate by slashing his machete hysterically. The slashes landed on Han Xiao's armor, and his HP was steadily decreasing.

"The crack of a hundred winds!" Pan Kuang yelled manically before his blade suddenly let out a blinding glare.

Han Xiao was alarmed and moved backward immediately. At this of time, explosions of light emerged from the Wind-slicing Blade. They surrounded Pan Kuang like a tornado. Countless slash marks could be seen on the surrounding ground. Han Xiao suffered a head-on attack, and his armor was losing endurance. This move had a damage-radius that was too large for the armor to offer complete

protection. Every part not protected by the armor turned bloody. There was a series of damage inflicted on Han Xiao, and each amounted to 40 points.

The light from blade continued to glare for about three seconds before disappearing. Han Xiao retreated about ten meters. He took a deep breath. Droplets containing blood and sweat were dripping down as he stared at Pan Kuang. The previous attack must have consumed much of Pan Kuang's energy. Also, the cool down period for the move was definitely long; therefore, Pan Kuang would not be able to use it anytime soon!

Pan Kuang supported his body using the blade and stood up. He looked ghastly, and his lower body was in a bloody mess. There were charred bullet marks in his chest, and the ember was still scorching his body, giving out a smell of burnt charcoal. The burning and bleeding were dealing him continuous damage, and one could not imagine how his damaged body looked from the inside. The retractable machete was still stuck in his chest. His face looked even more horrifying. His nose had broken and was dented inward, and his skull was exposed from the back of his head. He looked like a savage ghost.

A savage ghost!

The savage ghost stared hard at Han Xiao.

Han Xiao looked alarmed. He was prepared to use all his additional points to increase his endurance. That was another trump card he held.

The howling wind brought the sand along while, at the same time, seemingly bringing away the murderous atmosphere.

Pan Kuang's head drooped down, and he stopped breathing.

The final sign of life was decimated by the scorching burn. Pan Kuang was like a camel that was knocked to the ground by a piece of grass.

You killed Pan Kuang (Lv 38), 21,000 EXP gained.

The enemy killed was ten levels above you. You gained an additional 280% experience worth 58,800 points. Your individual contribution rate was 99%.

You gained an additional 58,212 (99%) points of EXP.

[Assassination III] completed. Contribution rate was 99%. You gained 79,200 EXP.

A total EXP of 158,500!

That was Han Xiao's total gain from the successful killing of Pan Kuang!

A victory against opponents of higher levels could generate additional rewards.

To activate such additional rewards, the opponent defeated needed to be at least five levels higher. The additional EXP was in accordance to the respective contribution rates of the member of a team since

most missions were team challenges. If any member of the team failed to meet the criteria mentioned, the entire team would be deprived of the additional rewards. Such a measure highlighted the importance of good cooperation, and cheating from the players was prevented. It also prevented the occurrence of free-loaders that leeches onto the efforts of others.

Han Xiao finally relaxed and sat on the ground. He then lay down, allowing the rays of sunlight to hit his face. He closed his eyes in peace and enjoyed the calm and silence after the battle, as if all the damage and destruction did not exist.

A thought suddenly flashed in his mind, and he immediately jumped up and checked his pants. The little Han Xiao in his pants was all good. He heaved a sigh of relief. Luckily, the sleeping dragon in his pants had not been damaged at all.

After a short rest, Han Xiao started to check on the damage. The endurance levels for all his equipment had dropped drastically. The delayed-explosion explosives had all been used. His HP had started to recover, and the overall damage was within his expectations.

Han Xiao walked to Pan Kuang's dead body, which was still in an upright position. He searched for any loot and found a hard object in Pan Kuang's pocket. He took it out and discovered that it was a communication device from the Germinal Organization.

Han Xiao thought for a moment and decided to activate the device. Ten seconds later, a virtual image of the chief of the Germinal Organization appeared.

"Ji Jie, have you guys retreated successfully..." The chief was halfway through his words when he realized that something was amiss with the image transmitted over from the other side.

It was Han Xiao. The chief changed his expression immediately and glared at Han Xiao.

"Why are you here?"

Zero was using Ji Jie's communication device, and it was apparent that the base had been completely destroyed. It was also highly likely that Pan Kuang was dead.

"You have the audacity to contact me?" the enraged chief exclaimed.

"Yo, haven't seen you for a long time." Han Xiao laughed

If felt weird that Han Xiao was talking to him like a long-lost friend. The chief could not think of a reply immediately, so he paused for a moment. The chief then questioned, "Where did you obtain the confidential information?"

That was the greatest puzzle in the chief's mind.

"Why do you think I will tell you the answer?" Han Xiao replied snobbishly.

"Do you think you can damage the power of the organization with such means? What a fool!" the chief yelled back.

"I sabotaged four of your bases.

"I can destroy you easily with my hands!

"I sabotaged four of your bases.

"There are many executive officers in the organization. You won't be out there for long!

"I sabotaged four of your bases."

Ahhh! Too angry!

From the tone of the chief's words, it sounded as if he was chewing on metal and every word was filled with the utmost determination to kill Han Xiao. "Don't you think that you will be able to escape from our clutches by pledging your allegiance to Stardragon. My guys will disintegrate every bone and tendon in you once they catch you!"

Han Xiao started laughing. Following that, he blew a kiss at the chief.

"Come and find me if you can? Hahaha..."

The chief was completely enraged upon hearing Han Xiao's words of contempt. He wanted to say something, but before he could, Han Xiao destroyed the communication device. The screen blacked out.

The chief's words of fury were stuck in his throat. He was shaking in anger.

"Increase the bounty on Zero to five million dollars!"

The bounty increased by five times!

...

Han Xiao wiped his smile away. Teasing the chief was not just a random act of entertainment.

The Germinal Organization was bound to send members to the West Capital to find him. They would not rest until he was dead.

The situation seemed disadvantageous to him, but in actual fact, it was not.

Because...Han Xiao never wanted to return to Stardragon!

This was his real plan!

Chapter 87: The Real Plan!

Initially, Han Xiao turned to Stardragon to seek temporary asylum from the Germinal Organization and had the motive of advancing skills. He had long planned to use his Facial Simulator as a way to escape.

Once he had the Facial Simulator, it was almost impossible for the Germinal Organization to locate him. He no longer had to worry about being discovered and captured, which meant that he could go anywhere he wanted. He did not want to be restricted to an area where there was always a risk of angering the head of state. Furthermore, he could mislead the Germinal Organization with regards to his whereabouts. For them to focus all their attention on Stardragon...that was definitely not fun for Han Xiao! Definitely not!

Even if he wanted to borrow Stardragon's strength and resources to crush the Germinal Organization, he no longer needed to put himself under the government's control. Naturally, Stardragon did not fully trust him despite its amicable treatment of him. They had planted an extremely discrete GPS locator in his encrypted phone, which he had discovered long ago. It was finally the time for him to disarm it.

It was last three months before the open beta. He needed to level up quickly and accumulate more resources. There were countless missions on the planet, and he treasured every one of them greatly.

He had accumulated sufficient resources while working with Division 13. It was now time to drop his pretense of sincerity toward Stardragon and go solo.

He could now go anywhere he wanted on the vast planet.

His plans were meticulous and closely-linked.

In Han Xiao's eyes, his pleasant relationship with Stardragon was not enough to convince him to stay in a place that lacked the potential to become more powerful. Furthermore, once they reached Version 2.0, even the Six nations and the Germinal Organization would become feeble.

These entities were now powerful and stable and could fight with one another through both open and secret means. However, the moment a planetary-grade disaster swept the planet, they would realize that their individual interests were hollow and meaningless compared to the survival of the whole civilization. Their statuses now were like colorful bubbles flying under the Sunlight—they could easily burst with a slight poke.

Version 1.0 hasn't started. It will last for seven months in real life, which translates to about three and a half years in game time. Additionally, the time, in game, between the version updates will last for a year. This means that I am still five years away from the Undead Crisis.

The Undead Crisis was a huge disaster. It will be better for me to avoid the beginning of it at the start of Version 2.0, which will be the most dangerous and chaotic period. This means that in these five years, I will have to dig out all the things are useful for me on this planet and then find a way to leave this planet for a while.

Han Xiao was in deep thought.

Suddenly, a new message was shown on the Interface.

[Camp mission: Destroy Dark Crow Valley Base] Completion Rate 100%. Contribution Rate 72%. You gained 36,000 EXP!

Mission Ended.

It seemed that the Heslean army just finished the battle.

Han Xiao was quite satisfied with the result. He would only have gotten a completion rate of forty to fifty percent if he did not kill Pan Kuang and gang. It had been worth the trouble to infiltrate alone and

plant two spies in the base, which allowed him to monitor the enemy's movements the whole time. This was the reason he had received such a high contribution rate and reward.

Camp-Destroyer Mission [Dark Crow Valley Base] has been completed. You completed:

- [Reconnaissance I]
- [Reconnaissance II]
- [Dark Crow Forest Assassin]
- [Direct Conflict]
- [Assassination II]
- [Assassination III]
- [Destroy Dark Crow Valley Base]

Calculating Mission Stats... Calculation Completed. Performance Rating: Excellent

Reputation with Stardragon Strategic Defense Department increased by 1,120. Current Relationship: Friendly (1370/3000)

Reputation with the Germinal Organization decreased by 500. Current Relationship: Hatred (-1500/3000)

You received an Excellent performance rating: Additional 50% EXP (18,000), Random Reward x1.

Random Reward type is being decided...

Can't believe there is a random reward. Seems like I'm quite lucky this time. Han Xiao was delighted. Large-scale missions and serial missions would release performance ratings upon completion. The probability of an excellent rating triggering a random award was only thirty percent, so it was rather uncommon. The system would decide first which type of random reward the player would receive—it could be anything, such as EXP, equipment, skills, stat points, or talent points. Then, the player could select the choices provided under the reward.

You received the Random Reward Type: [Innate Ability]

Randomizing... Randomization complete. Please choose one option from the following:

- Strengthened Body: HP+400, Abnormality Resistance+4%
- Quick Pace: Agility+6, Attack Speed+5%
- Strengthened Spirit: Mystery+5, Willpower Resistance+8%

Han Xiao held onto his chin and started deliberating.

All three abilities had mediocre effects. [Strengthened Body] increased health points, so it was more suited for tank players. Usually, he employed long-range attacks, and he still had a magnetic suit to protect his body, so he did not require the additional HP for now.

[Quick Paced] seemed decent. Agility affected many different aspects of a long-range attacks, including accuracy, critical rate, and movement speed etc. This ability could potentially increase his attack output by eight to ten percent.

[Strengthened Spirit] was only useful for Mages and Psychics.

Han Xiao thus opted for [Quick Paced].



You gained an innate ability [Quick Paced].

Han Xiao looked at his interface. He still had 12 Unassigned Stats that he had gained from levelling-up. He then added them all into Intelligence. His Intelligence was now his highest stat, standing at 88 points.

There was an increase of 1.8% on the A-class Quest [Fall of the Germinal]. Although it did not look like a significant increase for now, Xiao Han knew that the future potential gains would be much greater—at least ten to fifteen percent more. Because Dark Crow Valley Base was the nearest point of contact for future players to join the Germinal Organization. Without it, many ‘real’ players would join a camp that was nearer and more convenient for them. This would greatly contain the rate of expansion of the Germinal Organization in the near future.

The head of Germinal still did not realize the importance of this base; he was only dismayed by the loss of an ordinary large base.

Intel from Han Xiao allowed other powers an opportunity to attack the Germinal Organization. The mission progress he received from such events was less than a direct assault by himself based on the calculation of contribution rating. But if he were to insist on attacking the organization personally, the individual damage he could deal would not be sufficient to keep up with organization’s rate of expansion. Naturally, his best option was to mass distribute intel that could harm the organization.

The minimum progress needed for the Camp Destroyer mission was only twenty percent. It was not required for him to chase after perfection lest he risked losing out on other missions.

It is time to change the method of supplying intel. Han Xiao squinted.

After completing the mission, it was time for him to work on other important things.

Han Xiao went onto the radio and spoke to Lin Yao.

“How is the situation now?”

“Brother Xiao! The Heslean Army has seized all the supplies in Dark Crow Valley Base. They also captured a few hundred of their members, including Dormund. Unfortunately, the two directors, Pan Kuang and Ji Jie, got away.”

“Where is the army now?”

“They are still sweeping the battleground. They will probably retreat to the border tomorrow.”

“Okay. Message received.”

...

After the Heslean army finished sweeping the battleground, they set up camp on site and prepared for a withdrawal the next day.

Lin Yao and Lambert went on to meet up with the rest, and the Division 13 agents gathered to commend them for their excellent intel work.

“The younger generation of agents is very capable,” Ma Qing Yang commented.

“Xiao Lin Lin, your teammates have done a great job,” said Di Su Su.

The rest chimed in. “You guys did an excellent job. Really commendable.”

“We acted under the directions given by Brother Xiao.” Lin Yao was feeling slightly uneasy with all the praise.

The fellow Division 13 agents realized that it was Han Xiao who deserved all the recognition.

Qi Bai Jia decided to praise Han Xiao’s contribution strongly in his report. However, he realized that Han Xiao was still not back.

“Hey, where is he?”

“He is probably delayed by certain things.”

As the sky turned dark, Han Xiao was still nowhere to be seen.

“How is he still not back?” Li Ya Lin was puzzled, so she nudged Lin Yao to prompt him to contact Han Xiao.

“I tried to communicate with him more than forty times, but he still hasn’t answered.” Lin Yao was out of options.

It was dawn. The Heslean army was ready to move back to the border, but Han Xiao was still missing. Division 13 agents started imagining the possibilities for such an odd happening.

Zhang Wei had a sudden thought. “Is it possible that Han Xiao has already moved back to the border?”

“This is possible. Han Xiao has always moved around on his own. He may think that it is not necessary for him to meet up with them now.” Everyone pondered over this possibility.

All the agents followed the army back while this worry lingered in their minds.

...

The Hesla troops looked relaxed and were rather undisciplined on the way back.

In the middle of the troops, Colonel Carl was sitting in the command vehicle. He was deliberating over a very grave problem.

In this mission, he did not have an outstanding performance. Instead, he made a critical error in his decision, which resulted in unnecessary casualties. This would most definitely lead to a poor evaluation of his ability by the higher ups.

He had to artificially raise his significance in this mission to obtain more merits for this attack.

If I could take credit for Division 13's contribution...

Carl had an idea. He could perhaps write on the report that it was him who instructed Han Xiao to take his two teammates to spy in the base that gave them critical intel. In this scenario, his significance as a commanding officer would be greatly elevated.

This can work.

Division 13 will leave as soon as the mission is completed. They can't possibly come to Hesla and expose me. Furthermore, my report to the higher-ups will be kept secret from everyone else.

All of a sudden, there was a commotion coming from the outside of the vehicle, and Carl realized that the troops had stopped moving.

"Colonel, there are two corpses in front of us. They seem to be Pan Kuang and Ji Jie."

Carl was in shock. He left the vehicle quickly to check out the bodies. It was really the two directors of the base.

The troops were astonished, and they started chattering. They remembered how strong these two directors had been just few days ago, but they had been killed just like this.

"Who did this! Who left the bodies here?" Carl shouted.

Nobody had an answer as the troops looked at one another. They had just discovered the bodies.

Division 13 soon arrived at the scene upon hearing the commotion. They were too dumbfounded.

"It must be Han Xiao's doing."

"It's unbelievable that he actually succeeded!"

"But why did he place the bodies on the road? This is just giving free credit to the Hesleans."

Carl was beaming joyously; he could claim credit for killing the directors. He waved at his troops to wrap up the bodies and take them back to camp.

Just as the troops moved the bodies, the sound of landmines being activated was heard.

The troops were terrified, and they quickly jumped away in different directions.

Carl was caught off guard. He only had the time to drop on the floor.

However, there was no explosion after seconds had passed. A brave soldier stood up and went to dig out the landmines. He weighed it in his hand and realized that it was very light.

“This is not a real mine. They are all empty.”

The troops were infuriated by the prank.

“This is not funny at all.”

“What a wretched move!”

“I just peed in my pants!”

Division 13 agents had a weird look their faces—they did not know whether to laugh at what they saw.

“This seems like something Han Xiao would do,” Li Ya Lin mumbled.

Carl stood up with a flustered look on his face. His clean and well-pressed officer uniform was now covered in mud and grass.

He was now livid. He knew it was Xiao Han who did it. He wanted to ruffle him with a prank like this.

“What a childish play!” he said in anger.

Bang!

A faint gunshot was heard faraway.

The bullet pierced through Carl’s temple, and it brought a dash of blood out of his head.

Carl’s eyes were still wide open. He was unable to comprehend what had just transpired, totally caught unaware. His eyes were filled with the longing for life and a pinch of disbelief. His body wobbled before it landed flat on the floor.

Just a moment ago, he had been dreaming of his military success and his bright future. He could not believe that he had been killed on the way back to claim credit for his success in the mission!

At this moment, everyone, including the Division 13 agents and the troops, was shell-shocked.

They could not believe what had just happened before their eyes!

.....

On a faraway cliff top, Han Xiao raised his head from the scope of a sniper. He was looking relaxed.

What goes around comes around.

Chapter 88: Influence

Han Xiao had gone to the road the night before when the troops were camping at the battleground. He had planted a trap using the corpses of Pan Kuang and Ji Jie to lure Colonel Carl out of his vehicle. The moment Carl stepped out of his command vehicle, Han Xiao had the opportunity to snipe him down.

Additionally, he had placed a blank landmine beneath the bodies to scare the troops out of their formation so that he could get a better shot at Colonel Carl from the distant cliff.

Killing a high-ranking Hesla officer in front of everybody was bound to raise suspicion from the Hesleans. They could probably deduce that it was Han Xiao who did it based on the use of the two bodies, but Han Xiao was not at all worried. They had no concrete evidence to prove that he was guilty. As long as Division 13 denied it, all Hesla could do was protest diplomatically. They could never hold Han Xiao accountable.

Just like Carl did not care if the enemy killed them, Zhang Wei's team could also push the blame to the escaped personnel from the Dark Crow Valley Base.

I can be just as devious as you, Carl.

Han Xiao cocked the barrel, and the smoky bullet cartridge fell out. He conveniently tossed it into his pocket, leaving no trace behind.

Carl's order had almost taken his life. He was bound to take revenge after the mission was completed. Han Xiao had once been a 'real' player who had always taken revenge when someone, regardless of who they were, harmed him. And he would avenge himself in all sorts of ways without saying much.

Han Xiao saw that the Hesla troops were in a mess through his scope. Some of the troops were furious. They boarded their vehicles and moved rapidly toward the source of the fire.

He calmly stowed the disassembled sniper into his backpack. He had handpicked the position for an easy escape after the assassination.

After turning around, he jumped off the cliff, and a feeling of freefall hit him immediately. He smacked the button on his back, and two fine, foldable metal wings expanded. He was then gliding in the air toward the forest beneath the cliff.

Sky Swallow Gliders!

When the Hesla troops arrived at the cliff, all they could see was a nimble shadow rapidly disappearing before their eyes.

.....

Division 13 agents were still dumbfounded. They could not believe that Han Xiao had the guts to kill a commanding officer from Hesla.

It was a definitely a good way to vent one's anger, but there would be dire consequences. Nothing was worse than killing a Hesla high-ranking military officer right on their land! It seemed that Han Xiao had the balls of steel!

Qi Bai Jia was greatly anxious, but when he saw that the Hesla troops had not caught anyone, he was relieved.

Thank goodness he got away. In this case, they cannot prove that he is guilty. We can still argue our case.

Wait! If Han Xiao disappears, are we going to take his place in the trials?

Everyone's eyes were wide open. They felt it was something that Han Xiao would definitely do.

How can he just push all the troubles to us! He is such a master at shirking responsibility!

The surrounding Hesla troops raised their rifles in anger and pointed them at the Division 13 agents. They were arrested, locked up in the cars, and escorted back to the border camp. As soon as deputy officer reported the incident, Hesla's government was furious.

Hesla's agents had to interrogate Division 13 as they were the prime suspect.

However, they soon became frustrated. Division 13 insisted that they did not know anything about the incident. Winna felt a sense of defeat.

Everyone knew that Han Xiao had done it, but no one had any evidence to prove that it was him. They could not even find the cartridge, which meant the only thing they could do was interrogate Division 13 over and over again. Since they could not use torturous methods to extort information because they were up against the Stardragon agents, their efforts were in vain. Moreover, the condemnation from the higher-ups of Hesla was met with empty excuses from Division 13.

The head of Intelligence in Division 13 took a private jet to quickly arrive at the Hesla border in order to rescue his agents. Without any concrete evidence, Hesla had to release the Division 13 agents.

The head of Intelligence brought everyone out of the interrogation room and back to the jet. He ordered Qi Bai Jia to report on the details of the incident after he was certain that there was no Hesla personnel around.

"He is such a trouble-maker. Fortunately, he did not leave any trace. Otherwise, Hesla would not have rested until they found him," he said.

Qi Bai Jia was feeling embarrassed and dared not reply. Ultimately, he had to take the full responsibility as the Stardragon leader of this mission.

The head of Intelligence looked at him without saying a word. He reflected on the reaction of the higher ups in Division 13 upon hearing this news. They believed that Carl's orders were authorized by the high-ranking officials in Hesla. It was the only reasonable conclusion to explain why Hesla purposefully sent a radical officer to helm this mission. They were displeased with Hesla's insidious acts. It was actually quite a good ending. After all, Hesla failed in causing any harm to Stardragon agents, and yet, they lost a high-ranking officer. They even had to swallow the loss without catching the culprit.

"This fellow did an excellent job." The Head of Intelligence nodded quietly. This time, even the hawks in the department had nothing critical to say about this incident. In fact, they loved what Han Xiao did. If one had the audacity to plot against Stardragon, the retaliation would be swift and deadly.

Despite the appreciation, the heads of the Department unanimously agreed in the previous internal meeting that they had to impose greater control on Han Xiao and not let him escape their surveillance. As their source of valuable intel, Han Xiao was far too important to warrant any accidents or mishaps.

Because of Han Xiao's cooperative attitude, they had been too lenient with his actions, but since the incident from the joint mission, they became deeply alarmed. They came to the consensus to reject any of Han Xiao's future mission requests.

This motion was passed without any objection, even from the conservatives in the Division 13. The department was still willing to cooperate with Han Xiao, but before divulging all the intel he had, he would not leave the headquarters' surveillance.

The Head of Intelligence finished contemplating and looked at the team of agents. He then looked at his watch and said in a puzzled tone, "Why is Han Xiao still not back?"

"I have no idea." Qi Bai Jia shook his head.

"Han Xiao just contacted me." Lin Yao suddenly pressed his headphone as he became overly-excited. But the next second, his expression changed drastically.

"What did he say?" The Head of Intelligence had a bad hunch.

"Brother Xiao said... he is going to lie low until the dust settles," Lin Yao stammered.

"Lie low until the dust settles? This means..." The Head of Intelligence was slow to process the meaning of this message. Then, he quickly realized what it meant. "He is not coming back?"

His expression turned ghastly.

Zhang Wei looked shell-shocked. Li Ya Lin was wide-eyed. Lambert was in disbelief.

Everyone was utterly shocked.

It looked as if he was really going solo!

There was really nothing he was afraid to do!

...

Twenty minutes later in Division 13's headquarters, Gu Hui called for an emergency meeting. The directors who were not stationed at the headquarters joined the video conference. Everyone had a solemn look.

"Han Xiao ran away," Gu Hui said in a sobering tone.

Everyone gasped.

"Is he defecting?"

"Unclear. Before this, he sniped a Heslean military officer. It is possible that he is afraid of the consequences, so he escaped. But this possibility is not high," the Head of Intelligence replied.

The other heads were irritated. That reason was highly improbable, unless Han Xiao believed that Stardragon was incapable of protecting him, which also meant that Han Xiao looked down at their abilities.

"What about the GPS tracker that we planted in his phone?"

“The tracker has not moved in the last twenty-four hours. Han Xiao discovered and removed it.”

“He is going to defect. He must be still near us and heading toward the wilderness. We have to bring him back!” the Head of Internal Affairs thundered.

“We cannot be certain that he is defecting.” Gu Hui waved his hands disapprovingly.

All the heads simmered silently. They had been planning to restrict him in the West Capital the moment he was back, but his sudden escape had ruined all their plans.

Was it a pre-meditated move, or was it just a spur of the moment decision?

Was it defection, or was it something else?

Standard protocol indicated that when an agent broke contact, and when the exact cause behind the disappearance was inconclusive, the first thing they needed to do was send people to track the agent down. Then, they would contact the agent to make a judgement based on their reaction for the subsequent course of actions.

If the agent resisted the capture or continued to run, they would have no choice but to hunt the agent down globally.

If the agent had a good reason, the protocol ensured that a misunderstanding and manslaughter were avoided.

“This is just in. The Germinal Organization has increased the reward for capturing or killing Han Xiao by five times to five million on the dark net,” the Head of Intelligence said all of a sudden.

Everyone was utterly surprised. This mission had been announced as a joint exercise between the two countries. How did the Germinal Organization know that Han Xiao was the main catalyst? Was there a mole within them?

The increase in reward implied that the Germinal Organization was determined to kill Han Xiao more than ever. Furthermore, the organization had already located Han Xiao to be in the West Capital. Could that have been the reason for Han Xiao’s departure?

Was he not afraid of being located by the organization in the wilderness and slaughtered? The Germinal Organization was way more unhinged in the wilderness. They could very well fire missiles to bombard the whole area.

“He came to Stardragon to seek protection in the first place. How did he suddenly have the guts to leave?”

This question lingered in everyone’s mind.

Gu Hui knocked on table and concluded the meeting. “We will continue to keep his identity as our agent and file him under missing personnel. The Intelligence Department will collect the surveillance tapes, migration records, and transport records from everywhere to try and contact him. We will also send out search teams to find him. We must get hold of him first before any subsequent action!”

“Seconded.”

“Seconded.”

“Seconded.”

...

On the private jet back, the Division 13 agents constantly peeked at the corner, where Zhang Wei’s team was. It was like the center of a high-pressure vortex.

Zhang Wei pinched the bridge of his nose with a look of seriousness. The veins on his forehead were showing clearly.

Lambert was wiping his knife in silence.

Li Ya Lin was constantly shaking her legs with a look of indignation and anxiousness. Her tight black body suit outlined her beautiful and seductive long legs.

Lin Yao was sitting at the side, frightened.

He wanted to get away from his raging teammates but was afraid of doing so. He trembled in fear.

“This is too much! He just left without saying anything to us. He clearly does not treat us as his teammates!” Li Ya Lin slammed hard on the table. The thunderous sound spooked all the other agents that were eavesdropping in the surrounding.

Zhang Wei’s hands held onto half of his face, and he looked as if he had nothing to live for.

“He modified my armored suit... and no one else knows how to repair it,” he mumbled.

“...”

It was such a tragedy. The other agents did not know how to console Zhang Wei.

“He asked me to take business orders for him, and he already collected the deposit for a few dozen orders. What do I do now?” Li Ya Lin clenched her teeth in rage.

The other agents were startled. They realized that they had also made some orders...

Crap!

Our deposits!

“I used my reputation to guarantee to his business. He totally ruined my reputation!” Li Ya Lin now sounded like a grudging wife who was being cheated on. She pinched Lin Yao’s arm in an attempt to release her anger.

Lin Yao felt an immense pain. He immediately jumped far away and said hastily, “Calm down... Calm down...”

“Do you know his real identity?” Lambert suddenly commented.

The three of them were startled.

They were unaware of his real identity even after being on the same team for so long. Han Xiao had always been rather mysterious, and he had never divulged any information related to his real identity. Even the higher ups had refused to tell the team.

At this moment, everyone was dispirited.

“When I find him, I will definitely beat the crap out of him,” Li Ya Lin said in an infuriated voice as she cracked her knuckles loudly.

Chapter 89: Three Months to Open Beta

Two days later in Hesla’s Morning Wind City...

A coastal city near the border, Morning Wind City had a massive seaport that handled a massive volume of transcontinental ships. The city was a metropolis with many high-rise buildings.

Hesla had the strongest maritime force among the Six Nations—it focused on developing its navy to protect its numerous coastal cities. There were four continents on Aquamarine. They were separated from one another by the massive oceans.

There was an old saying—he who controls the sea controls everything.

There were tons of resources beneath the seafloor, including petroleum and natural gasses. Extraction of fossil fuels from the sea was the main pillar of Hesla’s economy.

Han Xiao remembered that Hesla had a secret military strategy called ‘The Forth Contingency Plan Against Great Crisis’. The plan was to produce many thousand-meter-long motherships in preparation for the scenario that the country suffered from massive calamities, such as nuclear world war. They could transition into a drifting nation on the sea and preserve their population.

Although this strategy eventually paved way for others, their spirit of preparing for the worst in times of peace was worth emulating. As the saying went, one who prospers in worries and hardships perishes in ease and comfort. It meant that if one did not create some sort of trouble, one might as well not live.

Wait. That does not sound right... Well, it’s not important.

Now, Han Xiao, with a new face, was waiting at the branch of Fabian Company in the city. He had used the black gold card from Matthews to receive VIP treatment at the place. It was his temporary rest stop.

There were three months to open beta, and moving around on his own would yield him the greatest amount of benefits. He could use Fabian Company’s channels to purchase mechanical parts with the huge amount of cash that he had accumulated to make more machinery. He could then earn a lot of EXP from this and even sell his products for more cash.

Old Man Lu’s secret quest would only be triggered after the open beta. He had established a good relationship with him, so he was in no rush to continue this mission.

Han Xiao wrote down the key points for personal development for this last period of time before the open beta.

- Trigger all the high-reward quests, and subsequently obtain rare skills and abilities to improve my power.
- Obtain stable supply channels for mechanical parts so as to allow myself to make machinery during the course of my quests and earn more EXP.
- Continue to cause destruction for the Germinal Organization.
- Increase my personal mission issuance’s reward limit in preparation for the open beta

These are roughly the points of focus.

Han Xiao put down his pen and began thinking carefully. The first point was easy since he remembered many large-scale quests. Also, supply channels could simply be obtained from the Fabian Company with the help of the black gold VIP card.

Destroying the Germinal Organization was his A-class quest. He had some initial thoughts on how he could maximize his large reservoir of intel—he could utilize the help from all the powers that were hostile toward the organization.

As for his personal mission reward limit, Han Xiao’s goal was to increase his Universal Reputation. Because there were two types of reward limits—daily limit and individual quest limit—he could increase both by improving his Universal Reputation. This was the most cost-effective method.

His Universal Reputation was now zero, but that was okay. Han Xiao would definitely increase it in due time.

There were three ways to obtain Universal Reputation. The first method was by achieving high contribution ratings in advanced and rare quests. Normally, only a planet’s main quest line would reward Universal Reputation—his A-class quest [Fall of the Germinal] was one of them.

Every planet, not only limited to novice planets, had at least one or more major storylines that linked to the respective main quests. For example, in Planet Aquamarine Version 1.0, there were two main storylines and one hidden storyline. The conflict between the Six Nations and the Germinal Organization was one of the main storylines; the others would only appear in the open beta. On the other hand, the hidden storyline could only be discovered by luck.

That method of obtaining Universal Reputation was highly difficult and time-consuming—he could not achieve it in a short timeframe.

The second method was rather random. It involved doing things related to one’s reputation with a camp that could potentially become well-known; the things could be very varied and circumstantial. Nobody had a clear idea of how to do it, and it was quite unreliable.

Han Xiao was keen on applying the third method—getting on top of some ranking lists—the easiest way to obtain Universal Reputation.

Some factions had created publicly-recognized rankings. By climbing to the top of rankings, he could easily obtain Universal Reputation. However, if some new guys were to push him down the ranking, his Universal Reputation would decrease, making this method unreliable. That was the method employed

by most 'real' players. Universal Reputation quickly helped one accumulated camp reputation, which in turn, gave players discounts on NPC items and provided opportunities to trigger rare quests.

Han Xiao's fingers on one hand tapped the table surface as he continued to contemplate on this, and with his other hand, he picked his nose.

Well, before I make a move, let me get rid all the burdens (EXP) I have now.

He looked at his Character Interface, which showed a grand total of 720,000 EXP. He directly channeled all the EXP into levelling his character to thirty. His stats consequently increased.

Mechanic (Novice) reached the maximum level. The last level-up always gave players the greatest stats increase. This time he received a ninety-point increase in his energy between levels nine and ten.

He then threw all six unassigned stats into his Intelligence, making it one hundred.

His mind instantly became much clearer, and he felt more at ease controlling all the machinery. Intelligence affected many different areas of a Mechanic, including production speed, production quality, and the damage bonuses when using Mechanic weapons. For example, when a Mechanic used a pistol that normally dealt twenty damage points, the pistol would deal more damage due to the Mechanic's damage bonus. As such, even though other classes of players could still use Mechanic weapons, the damage would be lower.

[Mechanic (Novice)] has reached the maximum level. To advance, learn 20 blueprints.

This randomized requirement for advancing class is quite simple.

Han Xiao was delighted, and he counted the blueprints that he had learned so far. He was only short of eight.

He did not want to produce useless blueprints through random fusions. *I should make full use of the EXP I have. Anyway, all the EXP is stored in the Interface, so there is no rush to advance my class.*

...

At Fabian Company's Morning Wind City branch, the man in charge, Antonio, was smoking a cigar. He was built like a mountain, filling the entire space on the sofa. He exhaled a puff out and looked Han Xiao, who was sitting at the sofa across, up and down to size him up.

Han Xiao was wearing a black jacket, and his Facial Simulator simulated an ordinary unemployed, middle-age male who looked rather unassuming. This was the face that he had prepared for his new identity.

Han Xiao took out a shopping list for supplies and said slowly, "I want all the items on this list."

Antonio took the list and looked over it. "The total cost will be \$100,000. After the twenty percent discount from your Black Gold Card, it will cost \$80,000."

“Also, I want to buy an entry pass for The Dark Net’s Blood Pact Society”

“\$20,000.” Antonio’s eyes narrowed.

The Dark Net was the hub of all intelligence related to the underworld. It was fully controlled by the Dark Net Organization, a neutral faction that strictly followed the principles of not getting involved in conflicts and developing peacefully. Many factions were business partners with the Dark Net Organization. They provided people from the underworld many kinds of services, including, but not limited to, smuggled firearms, package transfers, safehouses, hired assassins, mercenaries, and intelligence.

The Blood Pact Society was the organization for hired assassins under the Dark Net Organization. Using the entry pass, Han Xiao could become a contracted assassin under the organization and enjoy all the services provided by the Dark Net. This meant that Han Xiao could unlock his relationship with the Dark Net just from using the pass.

Although Blood Pact Society was a lousy name, it had another world-famous name.

The Assassin Union!

Of course, one could also call it the assassin social club, which instantly degraded its class.

A player had to go through a series of complicated quests to join the Dark Net Organization. However, time was of the essence for Han Xiao, so he would rather use extra money to buy the pass instead of spending a few dozen days fulfilling the entry requirement. Although \$20,000 was a big sum of money to ‘real’ players, it was considered peanuts to him.

“Who says money can’t buy happiness?” Han Xiao muttered. When he was still a ‘real’ player, he had needed to be stingy and calculative about every single purchase. He had never felt the pleasure of having so much money to spend before this.

The mechanical supplies were soon transported to the private workshop that Antonio arranged for him. Han Xiao went on to repair all the equipment that was damaged during the fight against Pan Kuang.

The mechanical parts left were meant for the new machinery.

I will be moving alone without any team support. Thus, my fighting style should focus more on minimizing danger. Sniping better suits me temporarily. I need to develop more powerful snipers and new types of bullets. Also, I will need some explosives, booby-traps, and anti-vehicle weapons. Lastly, I will probably need machinery that enables me to engage in close-quarter fights, such as tiny and covert weapons that can deal maximum damage...

Han Xiao contemplated for a while before he drew out his Interface to start his talent fusion. He decided to start with new bullets.

Do you wish to proceed with talent fusion?

(Lv. 3 Basic Weaponry + Lv. 3 Basic Material Science + Lv.2 Basic Dynamics Principle)

This fusion will cost you 15,000 EXP!

Fusion Success!

Congratulations, you have discovered [Spindle-Shaped Penetration Bullet]!

Do you wish to proceed with talent fusion?

(Lv. 3 Basic Weaponry + Lv. 3 Basic Material Science + Lv.1 Basic Biology)

This fusion will cost you 15,000 EXP!

Fusion Success!

Congratulations, you have discovered [Hayme Bullet]!

Do you wish to proceed with talent fusion?

(Lv. 3 Basic Weaponry + Lv. 3 Basic Material Science + Lv. 2 Basic Optics)

This fusion will cost you 15,000 EXP!

Fusion Success!

Congratulations, you have discovered [Flash Bullet]!

I still have over 20,000 EXP left, and my sniping capability is not yet up to standard. Let's continue.

Han Xiao pondered for a moment before he decided to raise the core skill [Snipe] to Lv.5, which increased his accuracy and sniping range.

He had stolen the sniper rifle named Red-Falcon from the Hesla army logistics team. The rifle was black and only a gray-grade weapon. It had mediocre quality. He soon started upgrading the weapon.

Han Xiao focused on increasing the power of the sniper rifle during this series of upgrades. The damage was increased to 92 ~ 103; the rate of fire was two rounds per second; the range was 600 meters. But with [Machinery Affinity] and [Sniping], his range could reach up to 750 meters, which was sufficient for his use.

Han Xiao was still left with tens of thousands of EXP, but he decided to hold onto it first. He started the production of the three bullets that he had previously discovered

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Soon, batches of new bullets were produced.

Fabian Company's private workshop was primarily adapted for making firearms and ammunition, which saved Han Xiao a fair bit of time for the whole production. This also reminded Han Xiao of something.

Should I make some robot assistants to help me with the production of mechanical parts?

He already had the blueprint for smart chips and other necessary parts for the robot. All he needed to do was upgrade his [Basic Programming] before he could produce a simple robot rover that could act as his assistant. However, since he did not have a fixed base for now, it was not appropriate for him to produce the robots yet.

Antonio's footsteps were heard. Soon, he entered the workshop. He placed an intricately designed dark gold coin onto the table and said, "This is your membership pass."

Han Xiao was delighted.

You have unlocked a new Camp Reputation!

Blood Pact Society: Cold (0/300) – [Reserve-level Assassin]

Chapter 90: First Assignment

Hotel Victoria was a 43-floor-tall luxurious hotel, and it had branches in every major city of the Six Nations. It was owned by the Dark Net Organization, and it only permitted members of the organization to stay. The hotel would use the excuse of 'no available rooms' to deny normal people from staying in the place. While it acted as a safehouse for the members, it was also the transaction hall for people from different camps. No fighting was allowed in this place, and anyone who broke the rule would receive endless assassinations.

After obtaining the pass, Han Xiao went to Hotel Victoria. It had a classic interior, with various types of aged dark-brown wooden furniture, which had a beautiful luster. A sense of serenity was overflowing in every corner of the hotel.

Han Xiao came forward to the front desk before revealing his Blood Pact Society coin. Then he was brought to the 23rd floor by a servant.

23rd to 25th floors belonged to the Blood Pact Society. The 23rd floor was the resting and transaction areas for all the assassins—they would get employed or paid here. The floor also had numerous entertainment facilities such as a bar, café, and restaurants.

After he handed his dark golden coin to the receptionist on the 23rd floor, another server wearing a white glove came to receive Han Xiao. They sat down at a semi-private table in the corner. The server took out a notebook with black leather covers and started recording the personal information of this new member.

“What will your code name be?”

Han Xiao thought for a moment, and he decided to use an enchanting name, which might help his Universal Reputation in some ways.

“Apostle-level Observer No. 9527 from the Crimson Dynasty stationed in Couton Group.”

The server was stupefied.

Assassins usually had minimalist names like ‘Silver Fox’, ‘Devil Snake’, or ‘Ghost’, the kind that was more appreciated in the age when reduced attention spans were the norm. Such a ‘unique’ name would really intrigue employers, but it way too long.

The server coughed. “Can you shorten the name?”

What? I’ve only ever heard of others complaining about short names. I didn’t know people would dislike name for being too long.

Han Xiao pondered for a while before he came up with another name. “Black.”

The server was briefly rendered speechless.

“Your name is too short now. A single-world code name is permissible, but code names that are just colors have long been taken by other assassins. All the names like ‘Red’, ‘Blue’, ‘Orange’, and so on were mostly names of the honored assassins of the previous generation who have passed away. The organization will not allow someone else to reuse their code names.”

Han Xiao smacked his lips in irritation. It seemed him to him that naming was a troublesome affair anywhere he went. He then came up with the final name. “Mr. Black.”

“Mr. Black... Alright.”

This name was much more ordinary. The server quickly recorded it.

“You are now a Reserve-level assassin with a blank resume. You can only rise to Scorpion-level upon the completion of your first assignment. Employers will usually pick from our whole list of assassins. If someone chooses you, we will contact you. Until then, you can take up assignments that are open to everybody on the market or assassinate wanted personnel.

“Of course, you can also accept private jobs. We do not have any hard requirements for our assassins, but we will take five percent of the reward as our commission. If you have any questions in the future, you can always call up our reception at Hotel Victoria.

“Sounds reasonable.” Han Xiao nodded his head.

There were two reasons for him joining the Blood Pact Society. First, he wanted to take on all the wanted personnel that warranted high bounties, and these missions would trigger high-reward quests. Secondly, he could earn some Universal Reputation by becoming one of the top ten ranked assassins on the Dark Net.

There were only three months till the open beta. He needed to accumulate a large base of resources using the remaining time he had.

“All of these are ‘wanted’ assignments.”

The servant took out a tablet and opened a page on the Dark Net before passing it to Han Xiao.

Han Xiao instantly saw the most popular personnel on the list—himself.

“Zero. Five Million Dollars Reward. Dead or Alive. Location: West Capital, Stardragon. All the best.”

If he had returned to the West Capital, his movements would have been heavily restrained. Fortunately, he had escaped early. Han Xiao sniggered. It would take a long time for the Germinal Organization to realize their efforts were all in vain.

He was the most popular target on the wanted list as the Germinal Organization had spent a lot of effort in chasing him down and hunting him recently, but he was not the most wanted. Some of the accumulated prices had even reached tens of millions—they were mostly impossible assignments such as stealing top-secret intelligence from a certain country. Based on the security and defense around Division 13’s underground database, this mission’s success rate could go as low as 0.001%, with the probability of death being 99.999%. This assignment only looked good on the list; no one would really attempt to do it.

Han Xiao scanned further down the list. He soon settled on a wanted assignment.

“Take down the Rose Militant, a group of mercenaries active in the Somar Desert, in the Southern Land.”

The Southern Land was where Hesla was located, and it was also called the South Continent. It had a vast land area and tropical climate. The other continents were the North Continent, West Continent, and the Andrea Continent, which located in the middle of the other three.

Han Xiao picked this mission due its close proximity. Just as he was about to accept the assignment, the server suddenly jolted and said, “Mr. Black, you have a new personal assignment.”

Han Xiao was pleasantly surprised. He received an assignment within five minutes of uploading his particulars onto the net.

“This organization’s business is really thriving,” Han Xiao remarked sincerely.

The server was puzzled himself. “Such happenings are actually quite rare.”

“The employer hopes to speak with you personally.” The server looked at the screen and continued.

“Take a seat first. He will arrive in about ten minutes.”

Han Xiao complied.

Ten minutes later, a middle-aged man walked in hastily. He had a head full of white hair, which made him look much older than his real age, and his expression was one of exasperation. He walked into the hall and looked left and right before he came forward to Han Xiao. “I am Cheng Shan Shui.”

Before an assignment was officially accepted, the employer would not divulge the target's real name. Assassins could only ask for other basic information. "What will the bounty for this assignment be? And tell me more about the target's protection and location."

"12 to 20 body guards. The location is right in this city. The remuneration will be \$10,000."

"Only \$10,000?" Han Xiao frowned slightly.

That price was insufficient to employ an assassin.

Cheng Shan Shui nodded anxiously. He had immediately been turned down by other assassins when they heard the price. He lacked enough money to pay for the usual price, so he had decided to try his luck on new assassins like Han Xiao.

"I will take it," Han Xiao agreed.

Cheng Shan Shui cheered inwardly. He took out a stack of documents and passed them to Han Xiao. "Yue You Zu, located right in Morning Wing City."

Yue You Zu was a mafioso in Hesla who was always accompanied by 12 to 16 bodyguards that were made up of retired army reconnaissance soldiers. Recently, he had expanded his influence into the territory of Morning Wind City, which belonged to the local mafia head, Cheng Shan Shui. He could not guard against Yue You Zu's invasion, and so his mafia gang had disbanded. He was now left all alone and wanted to hire assassin to avenge him.

Han Xiao signed the contract after he finished reading the information.

You have triggered an E-level Quest [Assassination Assignment (Cheng Shan Shui)].

Han Xiao already knew the quest requirement. He went on to look at the reward of the quest, and it was not much, only 5,000 EXP.

"I'm leaving." Han Xiao stood up and prepared to leave.

Cheng Shan Shui quickly stopped Han Xiao from going and asked, "How long will you need to finish this job?"

Han Xiao paused. He looked out the window and saw that it just reached noon. "I'm guessing you haven't had lunch, right?"

Cheng Shan Shui was startled, not understanding what Han Xiao was trying to say.

Han Xiao turned his head and gave him an aloof look. "He will be gone by the time you finish your lunch."

Cheng Shan Shui's heart skipped a beat.

Based on his impression, assassins would normally do some pre-assignment preparations, such as reconnaissance and escape route planning.

Was this Mr. Black really that powerful, or was he just being arrogant?