

THE LEGENDARY MECHANIC

Chapter 1 - Rebirth

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“Test subject number 24. The subject lasted for two minutes and forty-five seconds after the administration of Valkyrie. Time of death: 4.22 AM.”

I should be the only one at home. Who's talking?

Han Xiao opened his eyes, only to be blinded by light. The familiar hatch of his VR-capsule was no longer there—instead, he was facing a white ceiling. The walls that surrounded him were also white and reminiscent of cold, hard metal. They felt like something straight out of science fiction. The room resembled an intensive care unit, and Han Xiao lay atop a cold metal table, bare-chested and wired to all sorts of machines. His back was freezing.

Han Xiao noticed that there was a group of people in white coats surrounding him, and they were looking at him as though they had just seen a ghost.

I thought I just accepted a leveling request? Where am I?

Suddenly, Han Xiao felt as though a large amount of data was being transmitted into his mind, causing his head to throb painfully. The last thing he could remember was accepting a leveling assignment. He was in the midst of creating a new character in ‘Galaxy’ when he seemingly started to smell burnt eggs...

“Quickly, let Ms. Hila know! The test subject has come back to life!”

“Call the guards!”

As the researchers started a commotion, Han Xiao realized that he could understand them, even though they were speaking in a language he had never heard before. ‘Test subject’, ‘back to life’, and ‘guards’—these terms

unnerved him. Soon, he could hear the sound of rushing footsteps coming from outside.

Should I make a run for it or just lie still? Han Xiao decided on the former in a split second; he was not the kind of person to just lie around waiting. He abruptly sprang up, ripping the wires off him, and made a clumsy beeline for the door. The researchers did not attempt to stop him, instead, they backed off hastily to avoid being knocked into.

Crash!

He pushed his way out into a white corridor, only to be greeted by a dozen or so guards suited in black and armed with electric batons advancing upon him from both sides.

Han Xiao gasped at the sight of the crest on their uniforms. It depicted half a plant.

The Germinal Organization from Planet Aquamarine back in version one? Weren't they eliminated?

Suddenly, a guard swung his electric baton at Han Xiao and Han Xiao unconsciously raised a hand to block it. The ensuing current caused his whole body to spasm in pain. It felt like his bones were about to split and his entire body turned numb.

Is the pain calibration at 100%?

Galaxy's pain calibration was restricted to a maximum of 40% because any higher setting could potentially cause nerve damage to players. The VR-capsule was also supposed to monitor the player's vitals to prevent this, but it was currently malfunctioning.

It's only been seven years and the capsule is having problems? Damn it! The repairman I paid \$300 to a few days ago told me that it would still be good for another six months! I want a refund!

The guards yanked him up and took him to a small room where they locked him up alone in pitch black darkness.

Han Xiao grimaced in pain as he massaged his wrist. His head continued to throb as more information poured in.

It took Han Xiao a moment to reconcile the facts and make sense of what had happened to him.

I've... transmigrated into Galaxy?

His eyes widened with amazement.

Galaxy was a fully immersive virtual reality game that ran servers worldwide and boasted a peak concurrent player count of almost 60 million.

The game was set in a vast universe with a world map and landscapes that were procedurally generated using the latest generation of quantum computers. The scale of its world was massive, and it was said to be able to run smoothly even with a billion concurrent players. There existed many organizations and companies that specialized in farming gold and running dungeons, and the best pieces of gear could even go for ridiculous prices of up to a million US dollars.

Being an extremely popular game, good balance was of the utmost important. While big spenders did have certain advantages, it was not so unfair to the extent that it displeased the casual players. Maintaining competitiveness and improving skills were key factors towards game balance, and Galaxy did a good job in these areas, facilitating its strong allure as an e-sport.

Although Han Xiao did indeed make a living out of playing the game, the term 'professional gamer' didn't fit him well. He was, instead, one of the despised power levelers and preferred to work solo.

Han Xiao had been playing the game since its very inception, and through the numerous patches, he had made a name for himself. In the last annual top

100 rankings, he placed 47th. He definitely had what it took to try his hand at going pro, but what he enjoyed most about the game was the leveling experience.

“The Germinal Organization originates from one of the beginner planets new characters were sent to back in Version 1 of Galaxy: Planet Aquamarine,” mumbled Han Xiao.

Before transmigrating, Galaxy had already been operating for over a decade. Version 1.0 was ancient history.

“Have I time traveled too?” Han Xiao’s expression darkened.

“Does that mean I won’t be getting my three hundred dollars back?”

“Am I stupid? That’s the least of my concerns!” Han Xiao slapped himself.

His memories were still jumbled up, and he could not recall anything about his original life—not even his name. All that he could recall were details regarding this world, such as its present era. He was currently in the year 687 of the Galaxy calendar, a year behind the updated timeline.

In Version 1, there were three universal powers that were upholding a peace that had lasted for ten thousand years, since the era of exploration. They were the Commonwealth of Light, the Crimson Dynasty, and the Arcane Church. The Silver Revolutionary Army had yet to be formed, the one responsible for the Supernatural Disaster was still fighting for dear life on some desolate planet, the World of Light had not come into existence, the civilization of the World Tree had not yet invaded from the beyond, and the Shattered Belt that contained Planet Aquamarine was still budding inconspicuously along the fringes of the explored universe.

In order to ensure that the game remained attractive, Galaxy borrowed and implemented ideas from its predecessors, such as ‘WoW’, where each version

update revolved around a disaster or some major event. While Han Xiao enjoyed the game, now that he had transmigrated over...

“Get me out!”

While the Germinal Organization was small fry compared to the interstellar powers introduced in later updates, to the currently powerless Han Xiao, it was an entirely different story.

“Planet Aquamarine was modeled after Earth, and the Germinal Organization’s aim is to overthrow this planet’s government. If I’m not wrong, Valkyrie test subjects are brainwashed to serve as cannon fodder.”

The body he currently possessed had experienced a memory wipe. Apart from some general knowledge, all that remained were fragmented memories of captivity and experimentation.

It seemed to be roughly twenty years old and bore a slight semblance to his original self. However, its state of health was as yet uncertain. He had heard the researchers mention that he had been injected with Valkyrie, one of the Germinal’s gene altering drugs that was used to strengthen the brain. Valkyrie had a survival rate of only 30%, but this body had reacted positively to it.

Suddenly, a glowing line of blue text blue appeared before his eyes.

You have been injected with Valkyrie!

+1 Endurance

You have learnt a new ability: Concentration

You have learnt a new ability: Low Level Willpower

“Virtual interface!” Han Xiao jumped for joy.

Name: Han Xiao

Race: Human/Carbon-based (Yellow)

Model: NPC (Countdown to Version 1.0 launch: 358 days 11 hours 03 minutes)

Level: 1

Experience: 0

Main Class: N.A.

Sub-class: Civilian Lv. 1 (0/50)

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Endurance 3, Intelligence 3, Mystery 1, Charm 2, Luck 1

Unassigned Stats: 0

Energy: 0 (Lv. 0)

Energy Rank: 1~2

Grade: F (Mortal)

[Piece of trash with a combat strength of 5; pick any NPC out from the streets and he will wipe the floor with you a hundred times! A hundred times!]

Health points: 23/30 (injured)

Stamina: 36/36

Abilities:

- Concentration: +10% to learning and crafting speeds
- Low Level Willpower: +3 Resistance

Skills: None

Talent points: 0

Class Talents: None

Influence: 0

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Reputation: 0

Equipment: None

“Thank god I still have the interface!”

Han Xiao was ecstatic but quickly discovered that there were several irregularities.

NPC, not a player? Countdown timer?

Han Xiao furrowed his brows as he organized his thoughts.

First of all, although he had no idea how the interface had transmigrated together with him, he had to treat this world as his new reality, meaning that if he died, he could not bank on being able to respawn like in a game.

Secondly, he could still access the system’s interface despite being classified as an NPC. This suggested that he could still level up like a player, which was good news.

Thirdly, if the countdown timer confirmed his suspicions that he had indeed traveled back in time to before the game’s launch, did it mean that ‘real’ players would soon appear?

Lastly, and most important of all, he was currently in grave danger!

Han Xiao felt indignant. Didn’t people who transmigrated normally receive perks such as resources, companions, or... at least an ex-girlfriend? At the very least, he should have started out in a safe location! The war hadn’t even

begun, and he was already a lone hero deep behind enemy lines. A single slip could prove fatal; he could very well end up in the Hall of Heroes... if such a place existed.

Han Xiao only had one life here. If he died then that would be the end of it. It would be a pity.

Yes, Han Xiao only felt that it would be 'a pity'. 'I want to survive!' would be a more normal line of thought. As for variations such as 'My fate is not for the heavens to decide; if the heavens want to erase me, then I will erase the heavens!' or 'Swallow an aurous core to transcend life and death', such ramblings were exclusive to people with second-grade syndrome.

"What the hell, why am I the only one SAO-ed?" Han Xiao lamented.

And while his senses confirmed that this was indeed reality, he started to wonder...

What exactly am I now? Am I an actual life-form, or am I just a bunch of data? Did my soul transmigrate, or is it something else entirely?

He sighed. *I guess I'll just have to make the best out of the situation and take it one step at a time.*

The essential thing was to survive.

With a year to go before launch, he had enough time to get prepared; this was the sole glimmer of promise that he could cling on to.

Clank!

Suddenly, the door opened, and several people walked in. As he could only make out their silhouettes due to the light streaming in from outside, Han Xiao could not see their faces clearly. However, he could make out from their outlines that one of them was a woman with a fiery figure.

"The subject's condition?"

Said woman spoke to her subordinate in a voice that was smooth, yet intertwined with an ever-so-faint rasp, reminiscent of a cup of rich coffee.

“It appears that the test subject has calmed down.”

The experiment leader, Lin Wei Xian, answered the woman as he stared at Han Xiao passionately, as though he were looking at a prized possession.

“Who are you people?” Han Xiao asked hoarsely.

“Hmm? Amnesia...?” The woman’s eye twitched.

“Valkyrie stimulates the brain, so memory loss is not unexpected,” replied Lin Wei Xian, squinting.

When Han Xiao’s eyes had finally adjusted to the light, he was stunned by the sight of the woman.

Boasting a headful of luscious, burgundy hair that concealed part of her face, the woman wore a tight-fitting, jet black bodysuit from which her curvaceous figure threatened to burst out at any time.

Her features were telling of her Western descent, but they were also composed of a certain softness that was characteristic of Eastern women; perhaps it was her mixed heritage that blessed her with such beauty and charm. In a different world, she could have been easily mistaken for a beautiful snake demoness.

If Da Ji had possessed such beauty, then King Zhou did not die in vain! ¹ thought Han Xiao.

“I am Hila, the commander here,” said the red haired woman as she looked at Han Xiao. She waved a hand and ordered, “Conduct a blood test. I want to see the report ASAP.”

Two stone-faced guards walked forward to yank him away. Their massive bodies and the fact that they were carrying guns dispelled any notion that Han Xiao had of resisting.

He recognized the 'Crimson Snake', Hila, and that this was one of the playable scenarios on Planet Aquamarine, Valkyrie Experiment Lab, located in a key base of Germinal.

During Version 1, Hila was a boss who had caused beginners on Aquamarine much grief. She had many nicknames, one of which was the 'Goddess of Death'. She would eventually attain 'Celestial' class strength and rise to prominence in the Cotton Cluster.

Han Xiao laughed bitterly on the inside. The situation was bleak!