

## Crossing 331

### Chapter 331: The Existence of a BUG

Seeing how well the members, both old and new, were getting along, Ling Lan's lips quirked up slightly. Then, her expression turned stony as she ordered, "Get ready to move."

Everyone immediately stood up, their initially relaxed and smiling faces turning serious and focused in an instant. The initially relaxed atmosphere was swept away immediately.

Li Lanfeng once again looked admiringly at Ling Lan. He had joined many battle clans before temporarily, but Ling Lan's battle clan was the most efficient. When it was time to relax, they relaxed, but the members would never drag the rest of the team down at critical moments — the transition between moods was perfect. Like now, the moment Ling Lan gave a command, no matter how relaxed they had been before, the members could instantly enter battle mode. This was completely the type of mentality and experience only veteran soldiers could have, yet this bunch of youths three years younger than him had actually managed to attain them. This made Li Lanfeng once again feel the threat — if he did not work hard to become stronger, he would be left behind by these people if he wasn't careful.

Even as Li Lanfeng felt the pressure, he was grateful. Luckily he had found the rabbit early and was able to join his battle clan. He believed that as long as they strive to become strong and continue to grow, the Lingtian Battle Clan would definitely become one of the strongest battle clans in the Federation. He had faith in Ling Lan, he had faith in himself, and he had faith in these youths.

Even if he really did meet that so-called king in the future ... he just did not believe that with the help of the rabbit and these youths, he would still be subject to such humiliation ... Li Lanfeng clenched his fists tight. He would definitely go against the heavens and change his fate!

Once everything was ready, Ling Lan led her team members to split up and hide themselves on both sides of the large door, and then she instructed Little Four to open the door.

The door swung open abruptly, stunning the people inside. Ling Lan's team hiding in the wings charged out like ferocious tigers under Ling Lan's battle cry, each leaping towards their respective targets.

Ling Lan took the lead, three miniature syringes in each hand, leaping out in two large steps. With a stomp of her right foot, her entire body flew into the air. In mid-air, she swung both her hands vigorously, and the six miniature tranquilizer syringes flew out like rays of light, shooting right at those six shooting ports.

Ling Lan was very confident that she would not miss, because she had already used the guidance ability of her spiritual power to align the six miniature tranquilizer syringes to follow the route she wanted so that the syringes would unerringly strike the shooters hiding within the iron wall.

Six cries of pain rang out and then the sounds abruptly cut off. Why had there been a reactionary sound this time when using the syringes? It was because the openings of the ports were truly too small — in order to ensure she hit the opponents, Ling Lan had chosen their most fragile parts to target: their eyes. Who asked the shooters to have their eyes wide open, staring through their gun scopes? According to the flight path, the eyes were the easiest spot to target and hit.

Six miniature syringes struck and shattered the gun scopes, and then ruthlessly pierced the eyes of those shooters. Eyes were the most sensitive among the human organs, with the most rapid reflex nerves. That was why the shooters had time to cry out before the anaesthetic could take effect. Still, it was only for that brief moment — Li Shiyu's intensified anaesthetic was truly too overbearing. Additionally, the eyes were the closest to the brain — the opponents were almost instantly put down, which was why the screams had been abruptly throttled.

At the same time, Qi Long and the other five following behind Ling Lan overtook her when she leapt up into the air to throw the syringes, instantly sprinting forwards about 30 metres, where they then fiercely leapt at those six soldiers armed with heavy firearms.

"Enemy attack!" Seeing six people charging at them, even the dullest soldier knew that these people must be enemies and not friends. One of the men quickly raised his voice to shout, simultaneously raising the heavy firearm in his hands to aim it at the six incoming people, preparing to shoot. Although heavy firearms were powerful and fiercely overbearing, it was not so convenient to use them. Using them were by far not as agile as using beam guns, which was why Qi Long and the others had dared to charge in so directly. They were banking on striking with haste before the enemies could rally and shoot.

At the moment Qi Long and the others attacked, deafening sirens tore through the vast and empty space. The entire centre of the base was dominated by this screeching sound. Ling Lan's group knew well that this was definitely the work of those three soldiers hiding in those blind corners. Only they would have had the time to go do such a thing. However, they did not mind. Once they had entered this location, it was impossible for their presence to remain hidden.

Qi Long and the other five's attack speed was extremely quick. Before those soldiers could pull on the trigger of their heavy firearms, Qi Long and company's attacks had already arrived. Qi Long's company knew that the situation was critical, so they used their strongest killing moves from the get-go.

Savage fists flew through the air, leaving explosive sounds in their wake which indicated that should those fists land, severe injury was certain even if death was avoided. Seeing their own heads about to be struck by these heavy blows, instinct made the six soldiers choose to dodge instead of counterattacking. However, even though they managed to dodge the punches, they still did not manage to avoid the needles held between the fingers of Qi Long's company.

Just a simple graze as the points of the needles broke the skin on their cheeks, and their face was instantly bleeding. However, this sort of minor injury was nothing in the eyes of professional soldiers. They were just about to lift their weapons and retaliate with fire when they found that their own arms were beginning to feel weak. Moreover, they actually felt no pain from their wounds ...

Was it poison? No, it was an anaesthetic. They felt their entire body beginning to grow numb until they could no longer move ... at this time, the men saw those six opponents lift up their hands to jab firmly downwards.

Yes, jab. Because they could see clearly then that the opponents were holding miniature syringes in their hands. When the syringe jabbed into them once again, in the very next second, they had descended into darkness ...

Li Shiyu looked at the people who had initially been standing in their way finally falling down unconscious after being hit by his anaesthetic. He found that it was even easier and more convenient to deal with one's enemies using medication rather than actual combat ... he subconsciously looked down at the emptied syringe down in his hands, contemplative. Perhaps he should change his combat style. The results were the same — the enemy would be downed either way — so why shouldn't he make his life easier? Perhaps he should try and apply more of what he had learned into his fighting?

Li Shiyu did not have more time to think beyond that; a dangerous aura suddenly surrounded them. Perhaps having experienced it before, or perhaps because their spiritual power had become familiar with Li Lanfeng's spectre power — this time, when Li Lanfeng activated his spectre power, Qi Long and the others did not feel particularly frightened.

The next second, Li Lanfeng's body suddenly jerked. Even though Qi Long and the others could not see nor feel anything, they knew that the enemy spectres had most likely tried to attack them while Li Lanfeng had protected them.

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In the central district of the base, within a beautifully decorated and comfortable hidden room, two black-robed men were sitting with their eyes closed. The body of one of the men swayed violently as a muffled groan emerged from his mouth. Face pale, he opened his eyes and growled, "That bastard D2. Didn't he say that the people sent by the Federation to investigate, including their spectres, had all been drawn over to the trap? Why is there an attack here with such a powerful spectre?"

At these words, the other man opened his eyes in shock. "Carter, you failed?" He had not participated in that attack just now because there were only nine people involved. He thought that his comrade would be able to finish off the group of attackers easily, but his comrade had unexpectedly failed. Moreover, his comrade seemed to have been at a disadvantage against the opponent spectre.

"Yes, the opponent spectre is stronger than me. My attacks were intercepted by him. Pete, let's work together this time. We must make sure they do not return from this attack."

"Okay!" Pete's and Carter's strength levels did not differ by much. Since the opponent was stronger than Carter, he would not be able to handle the opponent alone either. Still, he believed that as long as the two of them worked together to attack, they would definitely be able to bring down this strong spectre of the Federation.

Just thinking that they would be able to kill a powerful spectre filled Pete with excitement. This would mean unparalleled merit! Perhaps his military rank would be pushed higher by this exploit ... Pete's eyes gleamed with greed.

Pete was this confident because the two of them had been partners for over 10 years already, so their rapport was excellent. There had been quite a few singled out and isolated spectres who had already died at their hands. Pete did not think that this spectre would be able to withstand their joint attack.

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Seeing Li Lanfeng standing still, his expression grim, Qi Long and the others could tell the brutal battle between spectres had already begun. Even within Li Lanfeng's protective range, Qi Long and the others

could still feel a sort of invisible pressure as their spiritual power was suppressed by a strange energy. It was extremely uncomfortable. As time went by, the faces of Qi Long and the others began to pale. Even though Li Lanfeng was doing his best to hold the other spectre back, a little of the other spectre's power had still seeped out from under his interception.

And this little bit of spectre power was enough to make them feel the danger. It was as if something was about to devour their souls. Chang Xinyuan, whose spiritual power was relatively weaker, began to cradle his head with a pained expression, slumping to sit on the ground.

Only a little spectre power had leaked — this was not a direct attack — and it was already so painful and unbearable. Only now did Qi Long and the others genuinely comprehend the true horror of spectres. Sure enough, within the virtual world, spectres were death gods. This type of attack on their very soul was something they had no strength to resist.

Seeing that everyone had experienced the horror of spectres, only then did Ling Lan activate her spiritual power to protect the spiritual power of Qi Long and the others. With the additional protection of Ling Lan's spiritual power, colour returned to Qi Long's and the others' faces.

The reason why Ling Lan had not used her spiritual power to protect them to begin with was so that Qi Long and the others could truly comprehend the horror of spectres. This was so that they would not think that spectres were beings they could fight against in future. Before they achieved imperial operator status, anyone would be defenceless babes in front of spectres, freely available for slaughter.

Ling Lan remembered very well that her dad had said that the existence of spectres was like a type of BUG in the virtual world. Only imperial operators who knew how to manifest their spiritual power outside their body had the ability to resist. However, not all imperial operators knew how to project their spiritual power because the projection of spiritual power was one of the necessary conditions for advancement to god-class operator status. Therefore, god-class operators had no fear of spectres, because they too were god-like existences.

Chapter 332: The Aberrant Modification Innate Talent!

"Boss, your leopard seems to be in bad condition." Following Li Lanfeng's great battle with the two spectres, Little Four very quickly found their hiding place by tracking the other side's spectre power. However, in the meantime, after successive confrontations, Li Lanfeng who had been fighting on his own was gradually put at a disadvantage — the situation looked somewhat precarious.

"How much longer can he hold out for?" Ling Lan's brow creased. The opponent spectres were unexpectedly strong. She had not thought the purely defending Li Lanfeng would be worn down so quickly.

Little Four rolled his eyes dramatically at Ling Lan. How could a confrontation between spectres be as simple as his boss assumed? Although Li Lanfeng's spectre powers were strong, he did not have any true battle experience after all. His methods of resisting were extremely rudimentary, which was why he was being worn down so quickly. Otherwise, with Li Lanfeng's power, which was stronger than the opponents by a bracket, he could have easily held an undefeatable situation with his full focus on defence.

“The main reason is that he does not have enough experience, never having fought other spectres before. Plus, those two people are working together very well, which is why your leopard is being foiled at every turn. Still, your leopard is very smart, actually correcting his mistakes in battle and developing his own defensive manoeuvres. Although the situation is rather worrying, to defeat him, those two people will still have to put in quite a bit of effort,” reported Little Four to Ling Lan.

Ling Lan frowned at those words. She was somewhat unsure whether to let Little Four help the leopard to handle those two spectres or to just continue waiting here patiently and let the leopard gain as much combat experience as he could against other spectres.

“Little Four, what is the situation in the base? Is the other side redirecting a large number of ground troops over?” Ling Lan asked Little Four. If a large number of ground forces was mobilised, she would need Little Four to help out then. After all, their numbers were too few — they had no way to compete with the entire Swift Dragon fleet. Time was of the essence, they could not afford to waste any bit of it.

“Ah, I was just about to tell Boss the news!” replied Little Four suddenly, “The Swift Dragon base has not been alarmed. Other than alerting those within the base command, there has been no other disturbance here. Moreover, the people alerted are not the highest commanding officers of the Swift Dragon base.”

“Looks like there is indeed some problem with the Swift Dragon base. Who knows which faction these people are from ...” Ling Lan silently mused to herself. Trying to kill them right as soon as they arrived, the spectres here are very likely not actually from the Federation military. Perhaps they had been sent by a hostile nation, or perhaps they were from some of those terrorist organisations rebelling against the Federation.

They must definitely be afraid of exposing themselves, and so did not dare to cause too great of a ruckus. This was also why the Swift Dragon base had not been alerted — they were afraid that the mainframe would discover a problem (they must not yet know that the mainframe is already aware that there is a problem here).

And the purpose of this trip by Ling Lan’s team was to find out what exactly had happened at the Swift Dragon base. To make sense of this, it was necessary to uncover the backgrounds of these mysterious hackers and spectres. Thinking about it, the true intention behind the mainframe’s assignment of this mission was probably to figure this out ...

“Also, those military investigators sent secretly by the mainframe have already been lured to a trap and have already begun fighting. That’s why there won’t be any other spectres appearing here temporarily,” Little Four suddenly interrupted Ling Lan’s thoughts to say, “However, there’s some bad news. Although there hasn’t been much commotion outside, two of the three large mecha troops protecting this base is on their way here now. I estimate that they will be here in one minute.”

With a ‘thwack’, Ling Lan, who was utterly infuriated at this news, instantly flicked a forceful finger onto Little Four’s forehead. “You rotten Little Four, why didn’t you tell me earlier?”

Little Four cradled his aching head and whined, “Isn’t it still in time, telling you now?”

Although what Little Four said was still rather reasonable, Ling Lan completely ignored the pouting Little Four in her mindspace. This Little Four ... treat him a little better and his skin would begin to itch with

the urge to do off-key things. She must treat him a little harshly for him to be a bit more reliable — Ling Lan truly suspected that Little Four had some masochistic tendencies in his bones.

Ling Lan decisively cast thoughts about Little Four to the back of her mind as she commanded everyone in her team, “All members, enter your mecha and prepare for battle!”

Ling Lan’s command was very abrupt, but Qi Long and the others of the old team were already used to this sort of behaviour from Ling Lan. They instantly unleashed their mecha. Li Shiyu and Chang Xinyuan had only joined the team recently after all, so they were stunned for a moment, slower than Qi Long and the others by a beat. However, their reaction was still pretty quick, releasing their mecha right after Qi Long’s group of five.

Meanwhile, Li Lanfeng, who was tenaciously fighting against the two spectres, was the last one to let out his mecha. Defending with all his strength, only when he could ensure no disruption to his duty did he allow himself to let out his mecha.

They had just gotten into their mecha when the ground began to quake violently. Only then did they realise why their boss had asked them to get into their mecha. These intense vibrations proved that quite a number of mecha was rapidly approaching them from not too far away. Following the gradually intensifying quaking of the ground, everyone prepared themselves for battle. They each pulled out their cold weapons with their right hands, while their left hands raised their beam guns. The moment Ling Lan gave the command, they would fire.

After about 30 seconds, around 20 mecha appeared ahead of them in an arc formation. Ling Lan calmly observed the distance between the incoming enemy and her team, silently calculating the best time to attack.

Just when they were about 10 metres short of entering each other’s shooting range, Ling Lan shouted loudly, “Fire!”

Following this command, everyone raised their beam guns, aimed at their respective targets, and pulled the trigger. Eight beams shot out from the guns at almost the same time in an attack towards the distant enemy.

“Activate beam shields!” Seeing the opposing mecha firing, the invading mecha from the base all activated their beam shields to block. Their numbers were obviously two or three times greater than their opponents. Even if the opponents were attacking them, there were not enough beams to hit all of them. And even if they were hit, the shot mecha might only be hit by just one beam. If any of them were hit twice in a row, then they could consider themselves terribly unlucky today.

Furthermore, their beam shields could withstand three beam attacks without sustaining any damage. Thus, none of these mecha chose to dodge, charging ahead fearlessly instead. They were prepared to overwhelm the opponent with their numbers and utterly destroy these terrorists who had invaded the heart of their base.

Then there was a loud ‘boom!’ and one of the mecha from the mecha horde from the base suddenly exploded. The tremendous explosion even caused collateral damage to the mecha of his comrades around him. Right after that, not too far off, yet another mecha exploded in a similar manner, just not as frightening as the explosion of the first mecha had been.

“What’s going on?” This question emerged suddenly in the minds of all the other mecha operators of the base. However, time did not allow them to think any further on it. On the battlefield, death was extremely commonplace. Thus, they merely carried their doubts in silence and continued to charge forwards.

Ling Lan stared, somewhat dumbfounded, at Chang Xinyuan. The mecha Chang Xinyuan was operating now was not a standard Federation advanced mecha; he had chosen to operate his own intermediate mecha. Having been modified by Chang Xinyuan, although this mecha did not seem very different on the outside, its internal weapons system had already been changed significantly. Ling Lan had already witnessed this back when they had been trying to destroy the door of the transport ship’s hold.

Ling Lan knew that Chang Xinyuan’s innate talent in modifying mecha was very strong, which was why he had garnered the Thunder King’s attention so much that the other had not hesitated to use threatening methods to try and force Chang Xinyuan to join him. Ling Lan had been under the impression that she already had a good grasp of Chang Xinyuan’s abilities, but now, from the looks of it, she had still been underestimating his modification innate talent.

Ling Lan had never expected that Chang Xinyuan was not only good at modifying mecha, he was equally aberrant at modifying weapons. It was previously shown that he had modified the interference missiles in the mecha’s head portion, transforming them from weak ‘chicken ribs 1’ into extremely powerful heavy-artillery laser cannon shots. Although Chang Xinyuan had categorised those projectiles as immature modifications due to the limited firing range, in Ling Lan’s mind, those shots were absolutely a horrific trump card to pull out when circumstances called for it.

Just imagine, when a mecha draws into close-range to fight, no one would ever think to defend against those interference missiles from the head of that mecha. This was because even if they were struck by interference missiles, at most their mecha would be left with several faint and negligible scratches. The mecha would not be significantly damaged, let alone the mecha operator sitting inside it.

Therefore, no one would be on guard against interference missiles. Then, imagine if, at that time, a laser cannon shot were to be unleashed suddenly from the head of that mecha ... The power of a laser cannon is several tens or even hundreds of times stronger than that of an interference missile. Undoubtedly, even if the mecha on the receiving end of a laser shot head-on would not be completely destroyed in the blast, the concussive force from the resulting blast would be enough to give them a whole lot of trouble 2 — even if they did not die, they would still be half-dead. Thus, the range problem Chang Xinyuan was regretful about was not a problem at all in Ling Lan’s eyes.

However, back then, the situation had been pressing, so Ling Lan had not had a chance to discuss this with Chang Xinyuan. Ling Lan had believed that that was already Chang Xinyuan’s most outstanding design, but unexpectedly, Chang Xinyuan had given her a great surprise. The one behind the first explosion of the enemy mecha was precisely this Chang Xinyuan who looked like he had the poorest combat capacity.

They were all using beam guns, but Chang Xinyuan’s beam gun was not shooting the standard white beams. Instead, the beam from his gun had a thread of strange purple light running through it. This beam instantly eliminated the energy powering the beam shield and caused the mecha it hit to explode

violently. Even at the time of explosion, Ling Lan could see slight traces of purple light within the flames ...

Meanwhile, the explosion of the other mecha was the result of Ling Lan and her original team members working together. Qi Long and the other four had not chosen to shoot randomly, choosing instead to attack the one target Ling Lan had selected. Struck by six beams at the same time, that mecha's beam shield had no way of holding out. The natural outcome of this was the explosive destruction of that mecha.

Battlefields were constantly changing — it did not allow for any distraction among the participating fighters. No one else noticed the strange power of Chang Xinyuan's beam gun other than Ling Lan. Qi Long and the others were merely secretly glad that their first attack had been so lucky as to eliminate two mecha. This was extremely advantageous to them.

The fight had just begun and the other side was already down two mecha. Both the team leaders and the team members on the other side returned fire indignantly. Beams shot out simultaneously from both sides, but compared to the other sides' brute force approach, Qi Long's group nimbly evaded the beams heading for them with agile and intricate steps.

Chapter 333: A Weakness Appears!

The steps Qi Long and the others used to evade were not movements that Li Shiyu and the other newer members were familiar with. Only the eyes of Li Lanfeng, who was still fighting the enemy spectres, lit up when he saw those moves. He had seen the rabbit use moves similar to these 7 years ago while they were practising for the assessment. It looked like these techniques must be unique arts from the rabbit's sect. Since Qi Long and the others could learn them, did this mean that he would also be able to learn these moves later on?

The reason why Li Lanfeng would be so taken by this set of steps was that each of the stepping points in the set was exceedingly strange, completely going against conventional logic and laws of inertia. Oftentimes, places which you did not think was possible to get to, you would be able to get there accurately using this set of footwork. This type of utterly unpredictable evasion method would cause all the enemies' attacks to strike air.

Just like Li Lanfeng predicted, this set of footwork which Qi Long and the others were currently displaying was indeed taught to them by Ling Lan. However, it was not like Li Lanfeng believed — these steps were not an exclusive art of Ling Lan's sect but were something Ling Lan had learned in the learning space. It was also the most basic evasion footwork for mecha available in the learning space.

This set of basic evasion footwork from the learning space had been derived over the accumulated tempering of time. Each step in the set was the fruit of concentrated effort from countless mecha operators within the Mandora star system over tens of thousands of years. Ling Lan had tested it — as long as one mastered this set of evasion footwork, learning any of the other so-called advanced evasion techniques of the Federation after that was extremely easy.

Having discovered the benefits, Ling Lan naturally did not forget about her companions. After obtaining permission from Instructor Number Three, she taught this set of footwork to Qi Long and the others. In



order for them to integrate this footwork into their instincts, Ling Lan used extremely brutal and punishing training, just like Instructor Number Three had within the learning space, to force Qi Long and the others to rapidly become used to the steps.

Similarly, Qi Long and the others also thought that these steps were part of General Ling Xiao's legacy. After all, only a god-class operator could have such a strange and inexplicable set of footwork.

Li Lanfeng had already been obsessed with this wondrous set of footwork of the rabbit's ever since he first saw it seven years ago. Now, seeing that there was the possibility of learning it, he was instantly thrilled. This surge in emotion spurred his initially suppressed spectre power to expand rapidly in reaction, instantly flinging off one of the spectre powers attacking him fiercely.

"Pfft!" In the hidden room, one of the black-robed men suddenly threw up a mouthful of blood.

"Pete, what happened?" Seeing this, Carter's expression changed drastically.

"The opponent spectre's power suddenly became stronger. My attack was reflected back at me, so I suffered some injury." Pete rubbed at his brow with his fingers, beginning to soothe his somewhat chaotic spectre power after suffering from the counterattack.

"Could the opponent be playing around with us?" Carter's expression fluctuated uncertainly. The power of a typical spectre was stable and would not suddenly increase by so much at once. The only explanation he could think of was that the opponent had not been going all-out from the start.

Carter's words made Pete's expression change as well. "Then what do we do?" If the other was truly playing a pig to eat a tiger, then they were truly in a very bad position. No one wants to die, even if these people were spectres who had always been reaping the lives of others.

"D\*mn, how much longer will they need to handle things over at the trap?" said Carter angrily. In order to ensure their safety, he had immediately contacted D2 who had been holding the fort at the heart of the base, telling him to inform D1 to send another spectre over to help as soon as possible.

D2 had responded quickly, telling Carter that there was a great fight around the trap at the moment. The enemy spectre there was extremely powerful, so they needed two spectres working together to kill the other. It would be difficult to pull either spectre out for the time being, so he could only ask that they continue to hold on.

D2's words implied that both sides were similarly fighting just one enemy spectre, so why did they need an extra hand when killing the enemy spectre at the trap was only a matter of time? In particular, the part where he told them to continue holding on was obviously tinged with contempt. This made Carter so angry he could feel the rage swell in his chest. In the end, he could only grit his teeth and say that they would take down the enemy spectre on their own, as long as the mecha warriors could handle all the other small fry; the connotation being that these mecha warriors sent by D2 were truly too weak.

These two were so at odds because spectres and hackers belonged to two separate systems in competition with one another, neither willing to back down. Spectres have always considered themselves the gods of the virtual world, able to dictate the life or death of everyone in the virtual world. Meanwhile, hackers were just an inferior bunch of rebels, unstable elements in the virtual world.

In contrast, hackers believed that they themselves were the true masters of the virtual world. They could alter the virtual world with their abilities, even turn the entire virtual world on its head. In their eyes, spectres were just a bunch of demons lurking within the virtual world, a bunch of revolting, dark stinkbugs that made them feel afraid even as they were filled with disgust ...

Carter angrily cut off his call with D2. If their superiors had not ordered their group of spectres to listen to the orders of the hackers from group D, he would have long have given the other a taste of what's what.

Knowing that they would not be getting any reinforcements, Carter and Pete held an emergency discussion and then decided to play it a little safer. This time, they would not attack one after the other, but instead attack together. Their original strategy of attacking one after the other was to not give the opponent any time to rest — it was a plan to exhaust the stamina of the other spectre. However, now, in view of the unfathomable power of the opponent, they decided it would be better to attack together for the sake of safety.

Thus, the two of them attacked Li Lanfeng at the same time. This combined spectre attack almost broke Li Lanfeng's layered spectre power defensive shield. He had initially been able to operate his mecha to dodge the enemy mecha's beam attacks, but now he could no longer spare the effort to do so. Against the simultaneous forceful attack of two spectres, Li Lanfeng needed to use all his strength to withstand it ...

During this time, as Qi Long and the others were dodging, they had managed to take down another three mecha by working together. Compared to how easy things seemed to be for Qi Long and the original team members, Li Shiyu was obviously struggling a lot more. He was hit several times by the enemy's beams, but luckily it was only one or two beams each time. With the protection of a beam shield, he had not taken any damage.

However, the situation soon took a turn for the worse. Li Lanfeng's strange behaviour had been noticed by quite a few of the enemy mecha. In contrast to the other unhittable mecha who were evading their attacks so mysteriously, Li Lanfeng's almost immobile mecha was an obvious sitting target. They all knew to go after the weakest link 1 , and so all the attacks of these mecha began to congregate onto Li Lanfeng's mecha.

As he was the closest to Li Lanfeng, Li Shiyu was the first to see the threat to Li Lanfeng. He rushed forwards without hesitation to use his own mecha as a shield.

"Hells!" Qi Long and the others too became aware of the problem now. They all began to gather around Li Lanfeng, and this odd shift brought the attention of all the remaining enemy mecha who had initially been oblivious to the weakness of their team. The number of beams attacking Li Lanfeng's mecha increased even more — with this, even Qi Long and the others had no choice but to control their mecha to block some attacks and try to divert attention. The team was put into a passive position.

Ling Lan was just about to order Little Four to help Li Lanfeng finish off those two spectres when Chang Xinyuan operated his mecha to rush and stand before Li Lanfeng's mecha, shouting, "You all go and finish off the other mecha, I'll protect Li Lanfeng."

Following this cry, Chang Xinyuan's mecha suddenly transformed from a humanoid mecha into a large pot lid 2 . The large pot lid abruptly stretched and covered Li Lanfeng's mecha entirely ...

"Holy crap, Chang Xinyuan, what is this thing?!" Qi Long saw the other's mecha transform into this extremely black, large pot lid and could not help but exclaim in shock.

"One of my immature designs. I'm not very good at mecha piloting, so I was afraid of pulling down my battle clan in future. That's why I designed this most defensive solution. I call it Divine Turtle Shield. It's used to attract the enemy's fire, allowing my other teammates to attack freely ..." explained Chang Xinyuan, "But for now, I can only make this pot lid shape. It's rather far still from my original idea of a turtle's shell, and even its defensive strength is not at the standard I would like."

"How long can it hold out for?" Ling Lan asked as she continued to fire her beam gun. She pulled her trigger consecutively, attacking a particular mecha ten times in succession at the exact same spot, finally destroying that mecha completely.

"It's able to block the simultaneous attacks of 10 beam guns for 10 minutes. The other side has approximately 20 mecha left. I should still be able to hold out for 5 minutes." Hearing Boss Lan ask about his shield, Chang Xinyuan quickly answered without daring to include any irrelevant chatter. Facing Ling Lan, Chang Xinyuan was still rather timid.

"Good! Chang Xinyuan, mark this down as a merit for yourself. Lingtian Battle Clan, follow me!" With no more worries holding her back, Ling Lan gave this direct order and then charged on her own out into the fray.

Ling Lan was not a person who liked to attack passively; she liked taking the initiative. Since Li Lanfeng was being protected by Chang Xinyuan and would not be in any danger for the next five minutes, she decided to go head to head with the enemy. Only in this way would they be able to hinder the other side's unbridled attack on Li Lanfeng so Chang Xinyuan would be able to hold out for even longer.

As for those two spectres, Ling Lan was prepared to let Li Lanfeng continue playing with them, with Little Four acting as an alert guardian. Ling Lan felt that it was worth taking the risk if Li Lanfeng could gain a little more experience. After all, a battle between spectres was not so easy to come across.

Howling exuberantly, Qi Long and the others charged out after Ling Lan. Finally, the blades of the two sides clashed, and the enemy mecha's thoughts of steamrolling their opponent by relying on their numbers were thoroughly crushed by Ling Lan.

In order to bring her full combat power into play, Ling Lan was using the standard Federation advanced mecha which was at the same level as the enemy mecha. Meanwhile, Ling Lan's true level had long been at mecha master level though Ling Lan was unsure whether she was in special-class level or already in ace level. This was because she had promised her father before that before she managed to gather enough points in Mecha World to redeem an equivalent mecha, she would not cross-levels to operate a more advanced mecha.

Of course, when Ling Xiao had found out that the mission she had received this time was an SSS-rank mission, in order to ensure Ling Lan's safety, Ling Xiao had handed his own imperial mecha <wind's shadow="">to her and permitted her to use it at critical moments. Thus, finally operating a more

suitably advanced mecha, Ling Lan's sealed powers were beginning to manifest. Like a wolf let loose into a flock of sheep, she began her wild massacre.

A sharp roundhouse kick sent the 4 or 5 mecha around her flying. And as they were flailing around defenceless, she raised the beam gun in her right hand and sent a barrage of shots firing at those mecha's cockpits.

Her super strong close-range combat skills combined with perfect and accurate marksmanship caused three mecha to explode in an instant. Ling Lan's super strong attack power flabbergasted the surrounding enemy mecha. In unplanned unison, they actually stopped their attacks to stare dumbly at that fearsome mecha standing tall within the raging flames and thick smoke.

#### Chapter 334: An Intense Battle!

In another hidden room, D2 was directing the hackers as they put their full effort on carrying out project T. Witnessing this scene unfold, D2 could not help but cry out, "He cannot be just an advanced mecha warrior! He must be an ace mecha master ..."

Sitting beside D2, cold sweat poured from D3's forehead as he urged D2 anxiously, "Quick, inform D1 to send our ace operator over. Otherwise, relying on these mecha warriors alone, we won't be able to stop him."

D3's reminder abruptly jolted D2 to awareness. Project T was just a little short of success now — if the opponent managed to break into this area, all their previous efforts would be for naught. Thus, they quickly contacted D1, but the news they received in return was that the fight at the trap area had fallen into a stalemate. An ace operator who was infinitely close to breaking through into imperial status had appeared there as well, and their ace operator was currently already engaged in battle there.

"We need to stall." Seeing Ling Lan's team finish off another 4 or 5 mecha, D2 knew he could not afford to hesitate any longer. He decisively sent the remaining two mecha teams over.

"How much longer will it take to succeed?" D2 asked one of his subordinate hackers who was carefully channelling his hacker power into a black box inside the hidden room after the mecha teams had left at a sprint towards the battlefield on his orders.

"It has already entered the propagation stage. Based on this speed, we need at least one more hour for proper formation." The subordinate hacker wiped away the cold sweat on his forehead and answered softly.

"Can't you speed it up at all?" When D2 heard they would still need an hour, he frowned.

"No more than we have. Any faster and it'll be dangerous. They will devour our power, all of it ..." When the subordinate hacker heard the request to speed up, his face instantly changed. He had been there during the research process of the T-virus. Previously, someone had once tried to speed up the cultivation process by sending great amounts of hacker power at it, but in the end, he had been consumed mercilessly by the T-virus. That person's final outcome had been death.

His subordinate's reminder calmed D2 down. He too knew of that incident that year and knew the cultivation of the T-virus could not be rushed. He could only hope that everything would turn out well — as long as the cultivation succeeded, they could then leave the virtual world and quietly wait for the victory the T-virus would deliver to them. The Chinese Federation would be their prize.

“Boss, they've sent another two mecha teams over.” The mecha teams' movements naturally could not be concealed from Little Four who was closely monitoring the secret base. This time, Little Four had learned from his previous mistakes — he immediately reported this to his boss so that his boss would not flick him in the head and bully him again.

“D\*mmmit, forcing me to go all out.” Ling Lan placed all of the energy blocks she had in her bag into the standard Federation advanced mecha she was currently piloting. If not for the fact that crossing levels to operate a higher level mecha was a great burden on the body, Ling Lan would have liked to use the imperial mecha more. Its standard-equipped six-tube maglev 1 cannon would need only 3 to 4 shots to finish off all these mecha operators.

Ling Lan sighed internally. For now, imperial mecha could only be a last resort, not to be used unless absolutely necessary. She knew well that based on her current level of strength, she could only operate an imperial mecha for 5 minutes. Beyond 5 minutes, her body would not be able to endure the tremendous feedback force generated by cross-level mecha operation and would collapse completely.

Doing such an idiotic thing in the enemy's main camp was utter suicide — Ling Lan would definitely not let herself fall into such a desperate situation just to show off momentarily.

Ling Lan had just filled her power up to the brim when she felt a faint vibration coming from the ground. It went without saying that the final two mecha teams of the heart of the secret base were rushing over. Ling Lan's team needed to finish off these enemy mecha before them now before those mecha arrived. Otherwise, with the addition of 20 or more mecha, they would not be able to hold out no matter how strong their control skills were.

“The enemy is sending reinforcements. Hurry up and kill off these mecha.” Ling Lan connected to the team's dedicated channel and issued a decisive order. (Little Four had created this dedicated channel for the nine of them at the moment they had boarded their mecha.)

Everyone knew the situation was critical and that they needed to go all out. Like Ling Lan, they plugged in the spare energy blocks they had in their bags, making sure their mecha were fully charged. In the upcoming battle, they would no longer try to save power by sealing away some of the advanced techniques that consumed a lot of energy.

Qi Long and the original four plus Li Shiyu each controlled their own mecha and began sprinting. They weaved left and right as they ran so that the enemy could not predict their route, and so could not hit them with beam guns. Furthermore, this kind of airy and mobile running method made the enemy unable to determine which target they were aiming for ...

All the enemy mecha became nervous, because any of their remaining group of 18 mecha could become the attack target of the six incoming opponents. Suddenly, the figures of the six fluttering mecha vanished ... Oh, no, not vanished, rather, the six were drawing indistinct ephemeral streaks of light

through the air. This was the advanced technique only advanced mecha warriors could learn — Light-and-Shadow Slidestep.

There were two types of footwork techniques for advanced mecha warriors. One was the Z-flicker, which was in fact what Qi Long and the others had been using at first, while the other was the Light-and-Shadow Slidestep they were displaying now. The reason why they had chosen to use the Light-and-Shadow Slidestep in this final attack with unplanned synchronicity was because the technique not only functioned to increase speed but also had the effect of confusing the enemy. It would cause a display lag on the external cameras of enemy mecha, making it difficult for the enemy to determine their true position and attack timing.

Of course, experienced advanced mecha warriors could make judgements based on pure experience and would not be fooled by the Light-and-Shadow Slidestep ... however, these mecha operators before them now were not truly controlled by humans but were true NPCs. Right after engaging them in combat, Qi Long and the others had already figured this out.

In the settings of the mainframe, these NPCs only had 20% probability of not being confounded. In other words, the likelihood of them being confounded was rather high. Meanwhile, Qi Long and the others ignored these NPC mecha's wild beam attacks. The next second, they were already before their respective target mecha, ruthlessly lifting up their cold weapons to swing it down savagely at the opponent.

The beam shields of mecha could be said to be specially designed to deal with a variety of energy weapons such as beam guns — against cold weapons which were pure physical violence, beam shields were rather weak.

Five mecha were subject to fierce chops by Qi Long's group. The strikes instantly broke through the energy of the beam shields and the powerful force behind the blows slammed into the enemy mecha. The intense collision between weapon and mecha instantly created a string of sparks.

Qi Long and the others had not been attacking mindlessly — the areas they had chosen to attack were the various joints of the mecha. In order to maintain the flexibility of mecha, the defensive strength of certain areas needed to be sacrificed during the manufacture of mecha. For instance, at the shoulders, the neck, the hips, the arms, the ankles, the knees and so on. Their chosen target areas made their attacks effective immediately, directly destroying a part of the mecha.

Only one mecha managed to dodge the crisis this time. It had fallen into the 20% chance of not being confounded — it could be said that mecha had been extremely lucky. The one who failed was Luo Lang and this made Luo Lang rather displeased, unable to figure out why he was the only one so unlucky.

Luo Lang gritted his teeth and followed up with another attack. Since he had failed, he would just have to make up for it. He did not believe that the enemy would still be so lucky to fall into that 20% the next time he attacked.

Luo Lang was full of confidence for his attack this time, but when he found that he had once again struck air, his entire pert face became flushed red with anger. D\*mmmit! Even if his appearance was a little feminine, that didn't mean others could look down on him like he was a girl!

Fuming, Luo Lang followed up with another Light-and-Shadow Slidestep. It looked like Luo Lang had decided to challenge the mainframe till the end. He just did not believe this NPC mecha warrior would truly be so lucky and avoid being confounded three times in a row ...

Dreams are beautiful but reality is cruel — Luo Lang's confidence-filled third attack was once again evaded by the NPC. Right then, Luo Lang could not stop himself from cursing, "Bastard ..."

Meanwhile, Ling Lan, who was attacking with both hands, had also been using the Light-and-Shadow Slidestep. Against real people, this technique more or less had its weaknesses, but against NPCs, it was extremely effective and was one of the primary techniques for all players. The cold weapon she was using right now was the wondrous weapon Regretless that Chang Xinyuan had forged. The special sharpness Regretless possessed was displayed to maximum effect by Ling Lan at this moment.

With a swing to the left and a slash to the right, Ling Lan instantly split open the outer shell of two mecha before her. She felt that the tough outer shell of mecha was not as sturdy as she had imagined ... her swings had sliced through easily, chopping right into the cockpit of the mecha.

The cockpit of a mecha was its most deadly weakness because the operator was housed within it. Whether it was an NPC or a real human pilot, once the mecha's cockpit was struck, the mainframe would judge that a devastating blow had been struck to the mecha. Sure enough, the mecha exploded and on Ling Lan's screen, the notification window indicated that the enemy mecha had been utterly destroyed.

Seeing this, Ling Lan could not help but blink, stunned, glancing over at Regretless in her hand in disbelief. She had always known Regretless was sharp, but she had not imagined that it was this sharp. A standard advanced mecha in Mecha World actually could not even hold up against even one of its attacks.

Right then, an enemy mecha behind Ling Lan saw that Ling Lan had stopped moving after destroying two of his comrades. Thinking that he had a chance for revenge, he swiftly raised the cold weapon in his hands and swung it fiercely at the back of Ling Lan's head.

Ling Lan, who had the entire situation in hand, thrust Regretless backwards without hesitation. This move was so concealed and sudden that the other mecha had no time to react, instantly pierced through the cockpit by Regretless.

The highly raised cold weapon in that mecha's hands was now powerless to chop downwards. Executing a scorpion kick 2, she kicked out powerfully, sending that mecha flying to crash into the back of another mecha who was desperately attacking Chang Xinyuan's pot lid with its cold weapon. The sudden attack from behind him did not give that mecha any time to react. He stumbled forwards uncontrollably, falling onto Chang Xinyuan's pot lid mecha, his attack interrupted.

He was just about to struggle his way up from Chang Xinyuan's pot lid mecha, when two huge sets of teeth appeared on both sides of the pot lid to bite down mercilessly on that mecha. As the pot lid was completely swarmed by enemy mecha, no one saw when the centre of the pot lid suddenly split open slightly to form a round hole. Then, a beam twined with purple shot out at the mecha caught in the grasp of the teeth, blasting a hole of about 50 centimetres in radius through the mecha. The spot it

blasted though was precisely the cockpit of the mecha. And thus, the enemy mecha fell to Chang Xinyuan's pot lid mecha ...

### Chapter 335: Destroy Them All!

As for that mecha which had been sent flying by Ling Lan's kick, after its collision with its allied mecha, it had bounced back to crash into the ground and had not gotten up again after that.

If anyone was paying attention, they would see a long and flat opening at the heart of the mecha's cockpit. Blood was dripping slowly from it, gradually staining the ground below it red ...

Having eliminated both mecha on her end, Ling Lan saw Luo Lang's third failure and decisively raised her right arm and shot a torrent of beams from her beam gun at his opponent, striking that mecha at its knee.

The knee was the weakest point of defence in a mecha. Hit so suddenly by Ling Lan's attack, it instantly burst into a small shower of sparks, and the mecha's evasive movements slowed.

At this moment, Luo Lang, who had still not given up, used the Light-and-Shadow Slidestep for the fourth time, swinging the cold weapon in his hands angrily at his opponent's neck. Perhaps because its knee was already broken, causing the mecha to be unable to retain its balance, and also because Luo Lang's angry swing had an unusual amount of power behind it, the mecha was instantly sent crashing to the ground by the blow.

Luo Lang was unforgiving once he gained the upper hand. Once again he raised his cold weapon and began slashing it down again and again like a wild thunderstorm down at that mecha on the ground, so mad and violent that it seemed like he wanted to dice the mecha up into a heap of scrap metal. Perhaps even the NPC mecha did not want to suffer such abuse, finally deciding to self-destruct. Fortunately, Luo Lang had good reflexes and managed to avoid the resulting explosion and did not receive much damage.

However, this scene just made Luo Lang even angrier. He truly felt that the mainframe was absolutely picking on him. None of the others' opponents had self-destructed, while his had just happened to choose to try for mutual destruction? Once more he charged forwards, kicking out fiercely at the burning scrap heap. That bundle of scraps was sent flying, and by sheer unfortunate coincidence, it was flying in Ling Lan's direction ...

At this time, Ling Lan was fighting with two other mecha. Her Regretless was clashing violently with the cold weapon of one mecha, while on her right, another mecha's cold weapon was slashing down ferociously at Ling Lan's head. It wasn't that Ling Lan did not have any room to dodge to, but it just so happened that the flaming bundle of scraps Luo Lang had kicked had appeared at the spot she would have dodged to.

Luo Lang's initially towering rage was instantly doused by this scene. He felt a chill shoot into his bones and there was only one thought in his mind ... he was dead meat. He jerked and shouted, "Boss, dodge!"

Facing this dilemma where either choice would result in a hit, Ling Lan just calmly kicked out against the mecha on her left who had been crossing blades with her, sending the other stumbling back a step. Then, with a spin of Regretless, she smacked that flaming ball of scraps and sent it flying towards that



mecha which had stumbled back from her kick. That enemy mecha had not expected the fireball flying towards his opponent to suddenly fly at him instead; he was hit directly. The great force behind the crash made him stumble back uncontrollably for another 4 or 5 steps before he managed to catch himself.

Although Ling Lan had dodged this flying accident, she now had no time to avoid the other mecha's overhead strike. But then, something miraculous happened. Borrowing the force of the smack she gave to the fireball, Ling Lan's mecha slid in the opposite direction for about one metre, and this one metre allowed her to narrowly escape that fierce slash by the enemy mecha.

After evading the attack, taking advantage of the other mecha being caught in the tail-end of its attack, Ling Lan executed a flick and swish — with a cold flash of light, Regretless lopped off the enemy mecha's right arm. Ling Lan's attack did not stop there. Right afterwards, she pushed off her right foot and her entire mecha leapt into the air till she was about 7 to 8 metres off the ground. There, she lifted her right leg high before kicking out in a downwards side kick.

A loud 'bang' rang out as her right kick struck the mecha which had lost its right arm. The great force applied from above it sent the mecha crashing to the ground ...

As Ling Lan's mecha descended, Regretless drew a lovely arc through the air. In the end, with its tip pointed downwards, it stabbed right through the mecha's cockpit. This series of actions were completed in the blink of an eye ...

When Luo Lang saw that Ling Lan had avoided the flying accident he had kicked over, he instantly let out a sigh of relief. But before he could rejoice for long, he heard Ling Lan say glacially, "Luo Lang, when we return, private room training for a week!" As she said this, Ling Lan was coldly pulling Regretless out from the enemy mecha's cockpit.

"Ah ..." Luo Lang groaned. He had only been venting a little — who knew things would end this way? One week of training in a private room, under Boss Lan's savage treatment ... would he survive?

"Not continuing to fight yet? Do you want private room training for two weeks?" Before Luo Lang's groan had fully faded, Ling Lan's icy voice had risen eerily in the team's comms once more. Thus, Luo Lang's initial mournful groan instantly became a savage howl as he leapt like a rabid wolf at one of the final remaining mecha.

Qi Long and the other three had just finished off their own opponents when they heard Ling Lan's warning words to Luo Lang. Cold air seeped into their hearts and without even thinking about it, they too quickly leapt savagely towards those few remaining mecha ...

Boo hoo hoo, Boss, we're performing so well. Don't take out your anger on us please. If you want to hold private room training, please just take the main culprit Luo Lang. Please don't involve us.

The brutality of private room training was to the extent that the faces of Qi Long and the others would drain of colour at the mere mention of it. In order to avoid letting themselves experience such deep and enduring pain again, Qi Long and the others pushed themselves to their maximum combat power, beating their opponents so completely that they could not resist at all ...

Right then, Li Shiyu had also confronted the last enemy. Baffled, he glanced at Qi Long and the others, unsure why they were acting like they had ingested some high-effect stimulants. Their battle power now was at a completely different level from before ... could it be that there was some hidden secret behind private room training? Perhaps it would be helpful for his research into developing the potential of the human body so he should find team leader Ling to discuss it properly? This was what Li Shiyu thought.

Qi Long and the other few fighting to the best of their ability suddenly felt a chill rise from within their very bones ... was their boss truly thinking about throwing them all into private room training? At the thought of this possibility, they began fighting even harder, wishing they could kill off all the mecha before them immediately so they could tell Boss that they definitely did not need to go back for some private room training.

Their ramped up performance let Qi Long and the others finish off their respective opponents within one minute. Seeing their initial numbers, which had been several times more than the invaders, instantly decimated by these enemies who had invaded the secret base, that mecha which had been sent stumbling away from Ling Lan due to its collision with the fireball could only stare in frozen fear as Ling Lan stalked towards him with a bloody Regretless in her hands ...

Gripping his weapon tightly, he stared with red eyes at the demon that had killed almost half of their mecha in an instant. Seeing the other getting closer and closer, he finally roared angrily and turned to run ...

“Hah? Actually choosing to run?” Ling Lan was stunned. She had initially thought NPC soldiers were all set by the mainframe to fight to the death. Unexpectedly, there were some who would react like real people and choose to run. At this time, the reinforcements the enemy had sent had already appeared within their visual range, the vibrations of the ground becoming very intense ... an extremely subtle sneer appeared on Ling Lan’s lips. With a swing of her right arm, Regretless flew like a bolt of cold light to pierce through that escaping mecha.

“Ahh ...” The NPC operating this mecha let out a terrible scream. His body had been cut into half by that fearsome demon-sword. In the throes of the soul-consuming pain, he could see his internal organs spilling out from the large gash at his waist, accompanied by a fountain of blood ...

Blairily, he looked at the allied troops only 500 to 600 metres away from him. He really wanted to tell them to run quickly — this group of people were demons and not something they could fight ... but he could no longer make any sound. He could almost see what the final outcome of these comrades would be. Like them, these new troops would drink their fill of regret and become lost souls ...

A squelch rang out suddenly by his ears. He stared helplessly as that demon-sword which had cut him in half left his cockpit. He knew that the demon must have come to retrieve his demon-sword. He really wanted to grab the sword, hoping to stop the demon from continuing to harm his allies with it. He used the last bit of his strength to stretch out his right hand ...

Could he not catch the sword? He watched as the demon-sword disappeared from sight and left his cockpit completely. Dejected, he raised his right hand and found that his five fingers were gone ... it turned out that he had actually managed to touch the demon-sword just now!

As expected of a demon-sword! In the end, he swallowed his last breath gripped by this final shock. Even in death his eyes remained open!

After retrieving Regretless, Ling Lan looked at the last two mecha teams approaching them rapidly and coldly gave her orders to the team, "Destroy them all!"

In the distant Caesar Empire, in an experimental hall of a military secret base, everyone was closely observing the thirty or so virtual login pods in the hall. Although they were trying their best to maintain their calm, they could hardly conceal their nerves and excitement.

According to the estimated time, after just a few more minutes, their plan was going to succeed. And the result of this success was something that would drive the entirety of Caesar wild — it would allow the Caesar Empire to become the hegemon 1 of the solar system at once. Ever since the Chinese Federation had caught up to them 5000 years ago, they had lost the sole position of hegemon and could only share that honour with the Chinese Federation. It should be known that in the history of the Caesar Empire, they had ruled this star system for a whole 7000 years.

How could they allow outsiders to sleep at their bedside 2 ? They had already tolerated the Chinese Federation for 5000 years — now they could finally get rid of their rival and taste their heart's desire.

"Beep beep beep ..." Two of the login pods suddenly emitted emergency sounds. This likely meant that either something had happened to or there was some danger to the people inside those pods.

This situation made the faces of everyone in the hall change as they rushed towards those two virtual pods. The pods were quickly opened and the nutrient fluid inside was quickly drained away. However, the people inside who should have woken up remained unresponsive, lying inside with their eyes closed as if they were deeply asleep.

Chapter 336: Tricked!

Seeing this, a lieutenant general with two stars on his shoulder, the person in charge here, immediately instructed medical specialists to step forward and check on the men. Two medical professionals in white coats, each holding a small portable instrument, went over respectively to one of the virtual pods.

The instruments were soon connected to the men lying inside the pods. Looking at the data reflected by the instrument, the expressions of the two experts became darker and darker. In the end, they could only stand up, shaking their heads, and tell everyone that the brains of the two people in the pods were completely destroyed. In medical terms, brain death. Even though their hearts were still beating, they were actually already dead.

"How can this be? They are elites from our bureau. They cannot be dead. You must have made a mistake." Hearing the professionals' declaration, a major general of around 40 years of age could not help but point fingers.

"Wilson, calm down!" The lieutenant general barked, shocking Major General Wilson out of his rage. He squatted down with his hands around his head, muttering uncontrollably under his breath, "What in the

world could have happened? Why are Pete and Carter dead? Could it be that the Chinese Federation has discovered our plot?"

"Didn't D1 say that everything was going well?" As if thinking of something, Wilson suddenly jerked his head up to stare sharply at someone in the crowd. It was a middle-aged man who was also at the rank of major general.

"Although D1's group has successfully infiltrated the virtual world of the Chinese Federation, there are many limitations. We cannot transmit any messages, and so can only wait for them to send someone back to find out anything about what's going on. The latest news we have is from two days ago, when they suspected that the Chinese Federation had sent someone over to investigate. In order to ensure the success of the plan, they requested the help of some spectres ..." That major general was frowning as he gave a brief explanation to Wilson.

Major General Wilson wanted to retort, but at this moment, the lieutenant general walked over and patted him on the shoulder in comfort and said, "Even though Pete and Carter are dead, this does not mean the project will not succeed. For the Empire, some sacrifices are necessary. Let us wait another 5 minutes and we will know what the results are."

The lieutenant general's words of consolation made Wilson stop talking, merely waiting patiently for these final 5 minutes to pass. He too wished that the project would succeed so that Pete's and Carter's sacrifice would become worthwhile.

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Meanwhile, in the virtual world, D2, who was holding the fort in the secret research centre of the Swift Dragon base, saw the two mecha teams he sent finally manage to stall the invading enemy at the central square of the base. He temporarily relaxed but kept a close eye on the surveillance monitors of the central square to observe the situation between the two fighting parties, and he did not forget to ask his subordinate hacker about the progress of the evolution of the T-virus.

As the time ticked closer and closer to the completion stage, while that invading mecha team still continued to tussle with the two mecha teams of the secret base, only then did D2's heart finally settle ...

After this period of fighting, six of the nine mecha which had snuck in had already been taken down, while there were only five more mecha left from the two mecha teams sent. Both sides were scarred from the battle. D2 did not care. After all, the mecha teams protecting the secret base were all the original mecha teams from the Swift Dragon base and had nothing at all to do with them.

D2 only cared about whether the mecha teams could complete their task of holding back the invading mecha until the T-virus was successfully cultivated. And now, it looked like the mecha teams were performing pretty well, successfully completing the task they had been assigned.

At this time, even if the other party managed to finish off these final five mecha, they would no longer have time to rush over and stop their operation. The scene of him becoming the primary hero of the Empire rose in his mind's eye. He was receiving the Supreme Medal of Honour from the Great Emperor and enjoying the frenzied adoration of his fellow countrymen in front of the House of Parliament ...

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In another hidden room, the two spectres who had been fighting all this while with Li Lanfeng were already panting heavily with exhaustion. They had almost used up all of their spectre power but still had not been able to break the other's defences.

"What's going on? Why is the opponent getting stronger as we fight? At first, there would still be some fluctuations in his defensive power, even some openings. Why has it become so strong and impenetrable from half an hour before? We've been attacking for so long and there's no effect at all?" Carter asked Pete who was beside him as he panted. This truly did not adhere to the common sense of spectre battles.

Pete initially had not thought much about it, but when he heard Carter's question, a jolt ran through his heart. He was just about to say something when his heart began to pound in a warning from their spectre abilities. Their faces changed drastically and they hurried to pull back the spectre power they were using to fight the opponent, but it was too late.

A powerful, overwhelming surge of energy wrapped their spectre powers completely and then pulverised it. They could only hear their own spiritual power being squeezed like a water balloon and then there was a pop ... and then there was no more.

No one saw as their bodies became tiny particles slowly dissipating into the air. This meant that their consciousness had been successfully erased.

"Boss, mission complete!" Little Four reported smugly to Ling Lan after returning to Ling Lan's mindspace.

In fact, from half an hour ago, Little Four had silently begun intercepting the attacks of the two men. Li Lanfeng had been rather baffled by this, wondering why those two spectres attacking him had suddenly disappeared. Because Little Four's energy was too powerful yet very hard to detect, Li Lanfeng did not discover the truth.

Ling Lan rubbed Little Four's head in satisfaction and looked towards the doors, asking, "Little Four, is this the place?"

"Yup, they're right inside. I sensed a familiar energy from inside. If Boss had not stopped me from going in, I would have long gone to find out what that energy is," grumbled Little Four.

"I'll bring you in immediately and you'll finally find out what the final answer for this mission is." Ling Lan instructed Little Four to prepare to open the door. Right then, Ling Lan had already kept away her mecha, while the other eight members of her team, who had similarly kept away their mecha, were hiding behind both sides of the door. They were already holding onto their own laser weapons, prepared to rush in at first notice to take control of the situation inside instantly.

"4 minutes and 30 seconds to go for the T-virus to mature," said that hacker subordinate who had been in charge of cultivating the T-virus all this while, sounding pleasantly surprised as he looked at the data reflected on the screen. Previously, they could only make rough estimates, but now, they could really determine the exact time the T-virus would be born.

When D2 and D3 heard this news, they instantly ran excitedly to the screen monitoring the cultivation of the T-virus to wait together for the last four minutes or so till the T-virus came into the world. Right then, the doors which had been shut tightly all this time were suddenly flung open. Before they could even react, a team of warriors dressed in night combat clothes suddenly charged into the room with short laser handguns aimed at them, shouting, “Don’t move!”

There were a few people in the room who had quick reflexes — they were just about to pull their own guns when the well-prepared opponents shot them in the arm, preventing their resistance. D2 saw that they had no chance at all, and so indicated for everyone to calm down.

The situation was very quickly controlled. At this moment, crisp footsteps could be heard coming from the doorway and then a person with a cool demeanour surrounded by cold air walked through it. His cold gaze swept dispassionately over them and actually made their hearts quiver unexpectedly.

“Boss, task complete!” Qi Long waved his laser handgun excitedly at Ling Lan. Whether it was in the real world or here in the virtual world, they would never lack for this kind of thrilling battle following Boss. Qi Long felt that he had truly fallen in love with this type of exciting lifestyle.

D2 saw the final person who walked in and knew that he had been tricked, because this person was that strongest mecha warrior still fighting with the mecha teams of the base on the monitor screens right now.

D2 and D3 reflexively glanced at each other, knowing that they needed to delay. Even if they all died here, they needed to complete their mission.

“Who are you people? What are you doing here?” Turning back to face the invaders, D2 pretended he knew nothing and acted just like an NPC would, asking in a shocked manner.

He only received silence in response, however, as Qi Long and the others naturally would not say much with their boss around. As for Ling Lan, right then, her attention had been pulled away by Little Four in the mindscape.

The moment she had entered this hidden room, Little Four had suddenly become extremely excited and had actually ignored her original warnings to run out. In the virtual world, Little Four could roam freely, unlike in the real world where he could only follow Ling Lan.

One second later, Little Four returned, his expression pleased and surprised, and he could not conceal his excitement as he said, “Boss, I’ve discovered something great!”

“Oh? What is it?” asked Ling Lan calmly.

“Boss, it’s incredible. I never expected this world to actually have such a thing.” Little Four’s expression was dreamy. Till now, he could not comprehend why this thing would appear here. Logically, with this world’s technology, this thing should never be here.

“What in the world is this thing?” Ling Lan sweatdropped. This Little Four seemed to be so astounded by this thing that he was ungrounded, completely out of sorts.

“It’s a type of virus, right over there. They seem to be in the process of cultivating it. This type of virus is really too famous in our Mandora star system. Back then it almost destroyed our great virtual world and

killed off all of us intelligence entities. Luckily, we had a powerful mainframe computer so in the end we managed to resolve the situation.” Little Four’s proud tone had a trace of cold fear running through it, as if extremely afraid of that virus.

Ling Lan looked in the direction Little Four had pointed out. D2 and D3 saw Ling Lan’s line of sight turn towards the T-virus and were startled. Their bodies jerked involuntarily but they forcefully suppressed the reflex. They were well aware that they could not be too impetuous, or else the other side would become suspicious. They just needed another three minutes or so for the tides to turn and for success to fall to them.

Ling Lan walked over and one of the hackers tried to stop her from approaching. But before he could do anything, he had been pushed aside by Luo Lang who had been following right behind Ling Lan.

Chapter 337: T-Virus?

Only then did Ling Lan move forwards to find a large display screen before her. On it, countless codes were flashing by swiftly, and right at the top, there was an image of a cocoon. It was pulsing violently like a heart as a string of numbers counted down beside it.

Ling Lan tapped on that image and asked Little Four, “Is this it?”

“Yup, it’ll be born in another three minutes or so. I did not expect your technology here to actually be able to cultivate the larvae of this virus. It’s truly amazing!” exclaimed Little Four.

“How harmful is this virus?” Ling Lan thought of the computer viruses back in her previous world — those viruses would always cause various kinds of problems for those networks that got infected — and she could not help but ask worriedly.

“It would cause the virtual world here to collapse, but it will still be a baby when it’s born and can only do so much. Once it matures, it’ll be able to consume some of those people with low spiritual power ...” Little Four told Ling Lan about the harm the virus could cause. “In fact, once matured, it can be called an artificial virtual version of a spectre. As long as someone has less spiritual power than the virus, it will consume them.”

“This thing is truly vicious!” Ling Lan’s brow furrowed and she slammed a heavy fist onto that image. “It looks like there’s an organisation that wants to destroy our virtual world and even kill the people of the Federation ... what is this virus called, and do you have a way to resolve it?”

“We call it the Doomsday Flower on Mandora, because its matured form really resembles a flower,” said Little Four proudly, “We successfully cleared it out on Mandora. In my databases, I naturally have the solution for it, not to mention that it still hasn’t even been born yet.”

“Then help me destroy it completely. This type of malicious virus should not exist in this world,” said Ling Lan, tone tinged with revulsion.

“Got it, Boss. I’ll handle it immediately.” Ling Lan had given her orders, so of course Little Four would carry them out perfectly. In the next second, Little Four had once again disappeared from Ling Lan’s mindspace. Ling Lan knew that Little Four must have gone to wipe out that Doomsday Flower virus.

Ling Lan believed in Little Four. Since Little Four said there would be no problems, then there would certainly be nothing to worry about, so she set this matter aside. She walked over to a chair by the side and sat down. Seeing this, Luo Lang automatically moved to stand behind Ling Lan. Li Lanfeng's gaze flickered, and he also walked over ...

He would not hand over the position beside the rabbit to anyone! Li Lanfeng wanted to proclaim this point to everyone from this point onwards.

Ling Lan was not at all concerned over Li Lanfeng's and Luo Lang's actions. Settled in her seat, she tapped on the armrest and suddenly raised her head to look at D2 and asked, "Which faction are you all from?"

When Ling Lan had pounded the image of the cocoon earlier, D2 had been extremely nervous, afraid that the other would notice something and think of a way to destroy it. Although there were still 3 minutes before the virus would be done and D2 did not believe the other side would be able to do anything to destroy the T-virus in this short duration of time, for safety's sake, he still did not wish for the opponent to notice anything.

Now, seeing Ling Lan leave the virus alone to turn around and ask him this insignificant question, his heart relaxed. His mind spun quickly and he decided to chatter aimlessly with the other for a while and distract them in these final three minutes.

Having made up his mind, D2 calmly replied, "I'm of course someone from the Swift Dragon base. Who the hell are you people? Why did you sneak into our base?"

Ling Lan raised an eyebrow and she clapped her hands slowly, saying, "Stop acting. You and I are both real people. Just looking at your outfits I can tell you all are a bunch of hackers. The mainframe already knows something is up here, which is why it sent us over to investigate. I don't want to hear you all say any more nonsense. If you don't want to talk, that's fine, I'm sure I can find someone who's willing to tell me."

At this point, Ling Lan turned her head slightly to the side and said to Li Lanfeng who was standing beside her, "Leopard, if he doesn't want to speak, you can ..." Ling Lan made a swiping motion across her neck.

Li Lanfeng knew what Ling Lan truly meant with this gesture. He definitely wanted him to use his spectre abilities to kill the other party for a cautionary effect.

Beside Qi Long, controlling the scene along with him, Li Shiyu could not help but frown slightly when he saw Ling Lan's gesture towards Li Lanfeng, a sense of aversion rising in his heart. However, he resolutely turned away and hardened his heart. Li Shiyu knew that they could not be merciful with their enemies at this time. And wasn't it the opponent who had sent two spectres to attack them from the start to kill them all? If Li Lanfeng had not been a spectre and protected them, they would probably all be dead by now.

Although Li Shiyu was rather compassionate, he understood well when he could be merciful and when he could not.



Qi Long and the others had no objection to the proceedings — back when they had only been ten, they had already witnessed Ling Lan piloting a mecha to kill enemy mecha operators before their eyes. They had long become accustomed to Ling Lan's ruthlessness, and besides, they had been taught from young that they needed to show no mercy to their enemies.

D2 did not understand the deeper meaning behind Ling Lan's warning. Stubbornly, he shouted, "You thugs, don't expect to make me submit! I will definitely report this to the senior officer and have him send soldiers over to kill you all ..."

At this point of his speech, Ling Lan said nothing, only coolly making the kill gesture to Li Lanfeng.

This was Li Lanfeng's first time killing anyone — whether it was in the real world or in the virtual world, he had never killed anyone before this. Li Lanfeng was under extreme mental pressure, but he did not want the rabbit to be disappointed in him. And so, with a clench of his teeth and a hardening of his heart, he circulated his spectre power and leapt ferociously towards the enemy. As someone who wanted to change his fate, if he could not do something small like this, how could he talk about going against the heavens? Perhaps because he was clenching his teeth so hard, his entire mouth was filled with the stench of blood ...

D2 abruptly felt a powerful surge of energy rolling over him, and his initially vigorous spiritual power was instantly sent scattering under this force.

He saw his own body start to disappear slowly — not in the white light which marked a departure from the virtual world, but in a gradual dissipation into countless tiny particles of light.

He stared in horror at Li Lanfeng, and with his final bit of consciousness, he croaked out, "Spec ..."

After this final utterance, D2's entire being dispersed into the air, instantly vanishing into nothing. At this scene, D3 stumbled a great step backwards in shock and horror. If they had not been invaders and thus were not able to go offline from this Swift Dragon base, they would have definitely chosen to leave this place as soon as they could. This was because, before spectres in the virtual world, they were like a bunch of defenceless children without any ability to fight back.

Ling Lan watched dispassionately as D2 disappeared and then turned to look at D3, asking calmly, "Are you willing to talk? Or perhaps you want to be like him?"

At these words, D3 nodded his head emphatically, showing that he was willing to cooperate. He instinctively looked towards the cultivation area of the T-virus. Due to D2's stalling, he only needed to delay the opponents for another one minute or so and everything would work out. At that time, he would definitely avenge D2.

"Where are you all from?" Ling Lan continued to ask.

D3's gaze flickered and then he answered, "We're from the anti-government freedom army."

"A terrorist organisation?" The corners of Ling Lan's lips curled up in a subtle sneer and she once again gave the kill signal to Li Lanfeng.

D3 shouted out in terror, "I've already answered. Why do you still want to kill me?"

D3's terrified question did not garner Ling Lan's reply. Ling Lan merely flicked her fingers and Li Lanfeng resolutely ran the other over with his spectre power. Swiftly afterwards, D3 followed in D2's footsteps and disappeared from this virtual world. If he were still conscious, he would probably be regretting his decision ...

"Is it possible for a small terrorist organisation to have so much financial and material resources and manpower to cultivate such a terrifying virus?" said Ling Lan coldly. Her gaze turned to that hacker who had been cultivating the T-virus. "Tell me, isn't that so?"

That hacker's face paled at these words. He found that this cold youth before him seemed to know everything — it was a suicidal act trying to deceive the other.

"If you know, why aren't you trying to stop it? In another minute, it'll be born. At that time, the virtual world of the Federation will collapse completely. When you all no longer have a centralised command system, you all will not be able to resist our forces ..." The hacker finally could not help but blurt out in his shock.

"Hn, you're very honest. I like that very much." Ling Lan nodded and continued, "But how would you know that I didn't stop it?"

Ling Lan's words made the hacker's expression change once more, but he quickly calmed down. He just did not believe that the other would have a way to resolve the virus that even they had no way of controlling 1 .

"From what you've said, it proves that you all are from some other country. I just need to look at which countries' troops are moving unusually in real life and I'll have a list of candidates." Ling Lan could almost guess the truth from what the other had inadvertently revealed. "I know you do not believe what I'm saying, so let's do as you wish and just wait for the rest of the time needed for the virus to form. How much time is needed? One minute, or ten more seconds or so?"

"It's 57 seconds," The hacker blurted out.

"Fine, then I'll give you all those 57 seconds. Let us see whether things will turn out as you all have predicted, that our Federation's virtual world will truly be ruined by that virus," replied Ling Lan evenly.

Seeing Ling Lan's composed attitude, the emotion named panic inevitably rose within the hacker's heart. Did the opponent truly have a solution to this virus? No, they had researched so hard for 16 years before succeeding by chance just once. Even they themselves had not been able to develop a solution — how could the oblivious Huaxia Federation 2 have the ability to stop the evolution of the T-virus?

Fifty-seven seconds went by quickly. The T-virus the hackers had been eagerly anticipating did not bring any effect — the virtual world they were in did not change in any way and was still functioning normally.

That hacker could not help but lunge to stand before the screen of the cultivation area. There, he found that the original flashing codes and the cocoon image which represented the T-virus had already disappeared. The screen was a white blank, as if the T-virus they had cultivated had never existed in the first place.

"What happened? How could the T-virus fail? This is impossible, impossible ..." The hacker could not stop himself from shouting. Sixteen years of painstaking research, sixteen years of long days and

sleepless nights, and in the end, all of it was but a dream ... when they woke up, there was nothing there. He just could not accept it; his emotions were thrust into instant turmoil.

Chapter 338: Confession!

“So worked up? He really won’t be a very good source of information then. Since he’s useless now, then let’s send him off on his final journey,” said Ling Lan lightly to Li Lanfeng, turning back to look at him.

Li Lanfeng, who had already killed two people, was rather numb by now. Receiving Ling Lan’s order, he did not even stop to think — once more he unleashed his spectre power and obliterated this hacker.

The other hackers saw how cold and ruthless the other side was, clearly showing themselves as the type of people who would kill without batting an eye. In addition, the T-virus they had pinned so much hope on had mysteriously vanished, so their hearts had abruptly lost a major supporting pillar. Consequently, quite a few men actually could not help but slump to the ground.

“Now we can have a proper inquiry. Qi Long, bring the others to me one by one for me to ask them some questions, and then we can compare their answers. Anyone who dares to lie, we’ll kill ...” Ling Lan’s sharp gaze swept over the dozen or so hackers present and gave Qi Long her orders.

Qi Long acknowledged the order and asked the other members of their team to separate the hackers to begin the one-on-one questioning, preventing them from having any chance of colluding. At this time, one of the hackers suddenly turned his head to look at Ling Lan and asked, “If we tell the truth, can you guarantee that we will live?”

These words made the eyes of the remaining hackers light up, and they turned nervously to stare at Ling Lan, anticipating her reply.

Ling Lan glanced coolly at the other and the corners of her lips tilted up slightly. This noncommittal half-smile made these hackers feel a chill permeate their hearts ...

Ling Lan tapped her fingers against the armrest. Each tap prompted the hearts of these hackers to jump violently in response, till Ling Lan finally said, “If you all want to live ... that all depends on how you all perform.” That said, she did not give the hackers any other chances to speak. With a wave of her right hand, she motioned for Qi Long and the others to continue their questioning.

Seeing Qi Long and the others begin to busy themselves with their assigned task, Li Lanfeng, who was standing beside Ling Lan, did not go over to help. He leaned over and asked Ling Lan quietly, “If they all really speak the truth, are we really going to let them go?”

Ling Lan raised her eyebrows and asked, “What do you think?”

Li Lanfeng frowned and replied, “Letting them go just feels wrong somehow. But we also have no way to keep them here forever ...”

Ling Lan pinched her left index finger reflexively with her right hand, her gaze shadowed with deep darkness. In the end, a gleam of ruthlessness flashed through her eyes and she said decisively, “They’ll need to remain here forever ... I cannot let them take any information about us back with them!” Ling Lan knew well that this decision of hers was extremely harsh and brutal, meaning the end of the lives of

these dozen or so people right here. These people might not have done any great harm to the world and were perhaps just common soldiers who were loyal to their home country. However, in order to protect these members who followed her, she could not avoid but be an executioner now.

Ling Lan was well aware that their appearances had been modified by Little Four to look different from their original forms. However, even so, she was not confident that this could withstand the intensive investigation of a nation, or perhaps even that of many nations — there was always the possibility she might miss something. She could not let crisis befall her companions.

Ling Lan's words shook Li Lanfeng badly. He understood what Ling Lan was trying to say — whether or not the other party cooperated, Ling Lan was going to kill them.

Li Lanfeng was a smart person — he instantly understood why Ling Lan had made this decision. They were still a group of cadets. Right now, they were now still extremely weak and vulnerable. Without the protection of the military, if they were discovered by the enemy, their final outcome would inevitably be death. Regardless of which country these people were from, they could not let these people go. Moreover, they also could not take the initiative to request Federation military protection. If the Federation learned of their existence, especially about him, Li Lanfeng, the government would certainly never allow him to continue living freely on the outside. Spectres were not allowed to be free of the military's control.

Li Lanfeng knew very well that if not for him, Ling Lan could have just reported this matter to the Federation military. The outstanding performance of Ling Lan's team this time would definitely amaze the military; this group of prodigies were sure to shine in the future. Entering the military system early to be given focused cultivation by the military, the futures of Ling Lan's team would only become better and not worse. It could be deduced that Ling Lan had given up on the honours and resources within easy reach, choosing to conceal this matter instead, all because of him, Li Lanfeng.

Li Lanfeng's heart felt a little hot. Looking at the cold as ice and seemingly emotionless Ling Lan who was actually very kind, his heart, which had initially been wavering at the thought of having to kill so many people, became instantly steady. The rabbit was willing to bear this sin for him ... then how could he be so weak?

"Leave it to me." The hesitation in Li Lanfeng's gaze was swept away and a savage light silently surfaced within his eyes. He could not let the rabbit's consideration go to waste. In terms of ruthlessness and decisiveness, he was still too far from the rabbit. If he wanted to become a companion who could fight beside the rabbit, he would need to make his heart become much fiercer and harder.

Li Lanfeng's reply made Ling Lan raise her eyebrows, a trace of surprise flashing through her eyes. Ling Lan knew very well that this was Li Lanfeng's first time killing people, because when he had killed the first man, she had clearly seen Li Lanfeng clench his fists tightly, and she had even heard the other bite down so hard that his teeth sounded like they would break.

Ling Lan had thought that Li Lanfeng would need a period of psychological adjustment. Even she herself, when she had killed someone for the first time in the learning space, had almost broken down mentally and had thrown up almost all of her guts ...

However, the treatment provided by the learning space was not psychological counselling but endless slaughter. It made you kill until you were numb to it. Every time Ling Lan thought back on this, she could not help but feel some lingering fear and silently rejoice that she had been mentally strong enough, that she had not been driven insane by the torment.

Ling Lan's initial plan was to let Little Four wrap things up and kill all of these people after she had led the team away from this place. However, when Li Lanfeng had taken the initiative to ask about Ling Lan's plans, an impulse had made Ling Lan admit her real thoughts to the other. She had indeed wanted to see how far the leopard could go. Would he be unable to understand her decision? Or would he refuse to take action out of compassion ...

Ling Lan had considered many possibilities, but she had never expected Li Lanfeng to be able to adapt to the psychological pressure of killing so quickly and actually volunteer to execute this task himself. Ling Lan was well aware that Li Lanfeng was speaking honestly. He had instantly abandoned his weakness to become decisive and ruthless. Ling Lan was silently awed by Li Lanfeng's performance; there were indeed those who were born for the darkness — this leopard was truly not a good person ...

Even as Ling Lan was silently exclaiming in her heart, she was extremely happy to hand over the task of cleaning up to Li Lanfeng. After all, it was always nice to have someone who was willing to share some of the pressure. Just imagine, taking the lives of so many people at once ... even Ling Lan who had been trained by the learning space to be extremely ruthless could not be completely calm.

Very soon, Qi Long and the others brought the confessions of those ten people over. Ling Lan rapidly scanned through the confessions and then pointed out seven of the ten people and said with a cold smile, "Seeking death on your own? That's fine. Leopard, satisfy their wishes."

Having come to a realisation, Li Lanfeng would no longer hesitate. Ling Lan's voice had barely faded when his spectre power poured out and easily erased those seven people. Just like with D2 and D3, they became energy particles of the virtual world.

Seeing how ruthless Ling Lan was — giving a kill order without even asking anything — the remaining few people despaired, no longer holding any wishful hopes of survival.

Ling Lan stared with interest at the faces of the remaining few and then said with a quirk of her lips, "You all still at least said some things that were true, unlike those seven who were spouting complete nonsense. Now, I'll give you all one more chance. I hope that this time, you all won't let me down."

Ling Lan's words caused the despairing eyes of those few people to once again blaze with the desire to live. Being led away for questioning once more, they were extremely cooperative this time, to the extent that they even volunteered some information which Qi Long and the others had not thought to ask for.

By Ling Lan's side, Li Lanfeng asked curiously, "Were all those seven people truly lying?"

Ling Lan replied evenly, "How could that be? It's not like I verified anything ... but there is always the need to sacrifice some people to make sure the remaining people no longer dare to conceal anything."

Only then did Li Lanfeng understand that Ling Lan had simply chosen those seven people randomly, using their lives to terrify the remaining survivors into compliance. It could be imagined that the confessions this time would be even more valuable. Li Lanfeng could not help but feel a pang of

dejection course through his heart. He had initially been extremely confident in his strategic mind, but it seemed like he was no match for the rabbit in this as well ...

The new confessions were out very quickly. Ling Lan browsed through them rapidly and was satisfied. She could already confirm that these people were from the Caesar Empire. Back when she had first heard of the Caesar Empire, she had already felt that this empire was definitely not as friendly as it would seem on the surface. No one would be so magnanimous as to share their spot as hegemon, which was especially true for a nation as strong as the Caesar Empire ...

Now, from the looks of it, her first impression had been right. In order to deal with the Huaxia Federation, the Caesar Empire had put in quite a bit of effort. Spending 16 years to successfully cultivate the embryo of a T-virus, they were truly tenacious.

“Who’d have expected it to be Caesar? Many soldiers in our Federation think well of the Caesar Empire. Fighting against the Twilight Empire all these years, Caesar has always supported us on the surface.” Han Jijyun was the one who had brought the information over. Having looked through this info a step before Ling Lan, he could not help but sigh.

“For a small empire with only 1% of our planetary domain to fight us for so many years is impossible without the backing of these great nations.” Ling Lan flicked the papers in her hand and said with a cold smile, “Plus, the profits of war are what these large nations like to earn most.”

Just like those great nations in her precious world, in order to restrain the development of other nations, there were all kind of measures executed both in the open and behind the scenes, such as helping other smaller nations go up against those countries which were rising in power. The methods of the Caesar Empire were truly cut from the same cloth as those great nations back then — as expected of the descendants of one of those great nations.

Han Jijyun dipped his head in deep contemplation at those words. He felt that what Boss Lan said made a lot of sense. Even though the Federation was so powerful and possessed such vast territory, it was still taxing to fight a war on three sides, and this was still with the concerted efforts of the Federation. As far as he knew, the Twilight Empire was not stable internally. It was constantly plagued with civil unrest, so from where did it get the financial and material resources to fight such a long protracted war with the Federation? It stood to reason that there must be other nations involved.

Chapter 339: Flaws!

Han Jijyun thought back on his youth 1 — every time he heard his father speak of the Twilight Empire, there would always be a sort of banked rage on his father’s face. Back then, he had not understood why the Federation was willing to fight such a long protracted war instead of just finishing off those smaller empires ... looking back on it now, he had truly been rather naive. This enduring war between the Federation and the Twilight Empire was not purely between the Federation and Twilight — it also involved those great nations hidden behind Twilight ...

“How godd\*mn despicable!” Having figured things out, Han Jijyun finally could not stop himself from swearing. This caused Qi Long who had come over with him to stare in surprise. He had never expected the typically calm and astute Han Jijyun to ever behave so agitatedly.

In order to salvage the image of his sworn brother in Boss Lan's eyes, Qi Long quickly changed the topic and asked, "Boss, we've already received the answer for the mission. When do we leave?"

They had managed to obtain unexpected information from these people's confessions about why the distress signal sent by the Swift Dragon base at the start had so quickly disappeared.

When the hackers from the Caesar Empire had successfully taken over the Swift Dragon base, they had not accounted for the presence of an NPC senior officer in the base who had actually evolved to have some sense of autonomy. When the hackers managed to replace the mainframe and gained administrative control of the Swift Dragon base, this evolved NPC immediately discovered the discrepancy due to this sense of autonomy. However, as it was only in the early stages of its evolution, it did not know how to act covertly. It had sent a direct distress signal to the mainframe and was instantly discovered by the hackers controlling the base. The hackers had killed the signal as well as the NPC involved.

Still, the mainframe was the mainframe after all. Even though the hackers had successfully infiltrated the Swift Dragon base and perfectly blinded the mainframe's search, the mainframe had still sensed something off about the situation. That's why it had repeatedly issued the command for the military and even players to go investigate. Due to multiple previous failures with nothing to show for it, the mainframe had upgraded the mission to investigate the Swift Dragon base into an SSS-rank, while dispatching an elite investigative team from the military at the same time ...

Coincidentally, Ling Lan had tried to accept a mission to establish her battle clan at this time and just so happened to offend the city lord of Grandsweep City at the same time. The city lord had seen this new SSS-rank mission issued by the mainframe and this had given him the idea of using a large spin wheel. He had hoped to teach Ling Lan a lesson by saddling Ling Lan with this impossible mission. Therefore, there were many reasons which had come together to make it possible for Ling Lan to accept this mission. There was a share of luck and serendipity involved. It's hard to say whether Ling Lan's luck had been amazing or horrible.

Ling Lan had also flipped to the part of the confessions regarding the distress signal by now. She searched through her bag for the mission token and saw that the vivid bright red words displaying the SSS-rank mission had turned orange. Taking it out to take a closer look, a notification entered her mind's eye:

Clan-formation mission, mission ranking: SSS rank. Mission content: A month ago, Fleet Swift Dragon, which is stationed at the Nebula Boundary, sent over an extremely subtle S.O.S.. As the message was too brief, the Federation military was unable to determine whether it was a mistake or true request for assistance ...

Mission progress: The relevant proof has been obtained. As long as this proof is brought back to Grandsweep City and submitted to the city lord, the mission will be complete. Warning: The person holding the proof must return alive and submit the proof personally to the city lord of Grandsweep City. If the person dies along the way, you will fail the mission!

Receiving direct confirmation from the mission token itself, Ling Lan was very pleased. Hadn't they weathered all the difficulties to come to the Swift Dragon base just for this? They had finally found the answer and could return now.

Ling Lan flicked the confessional papers in her hand in satisfaction and began to consider how they could return to the central district of Mecha World without any fuss. After some thought, she could not help but look in the direction of the investigation team sent by the Federation military which had been ambushed ...

She abruptly stood up and commanded, "Let us go!" Since they had already obtained what they wanted, there was no point in staying here any further.

Qi Long and the others acknowledged the order in unison, and Ling Lan walked right out the door without sparing another glance at those bound hackers. It was as if she had forgotten all about them.

Seeing Boss Lan leave without saying what to do with these people, Han Jijyun could not help but frown slightly. However, out of his deep respect towards Ling Lan, he did not say anything and merely followed Ling Lan out the door. Han Jijyun felt that just leaving these hackers like this was not very appropriate, but he could not think of a good solution himself ...

Qi Long and the others did not think as much, dutifully following Ling Lan out. Meanwhile, Li Shiyu was the second last to leave. He looked at the last one in the room, Li Lanfeng, and his mouth twitched. He had a vague idea of what the final outcome of these people would be, but he also really did not know what he could say. In the end, he could only let out an almost inaudible sigh before turning on his feet to leave the room.

The remaining seven or eight hackers in the hidden room could not help but feel a surge of happiness when they saw the cold and ruthless lead youth leave the room without giving any orders on dealing with them. But after that, they saw that the final person left in the room with them was that spectre who had already killed so many of their comrades, and their hearts froze up in fear.

One of the hackers seemed to realise something — his expression changed drastically and he screamed shrilly towards the door, "You said that if we told the truth you'd let us go! You're going against your word! Bastard! Demon ...!"

His wailing made the others realise what was coming as well. They began to struggle — if their hands and legs had not been tied securely by Qi Long and the others with a special method which could not be unravelled, all of them were likely to have leapt over to attempt a suicidal attack and bring Li Lanfeng down with them. This was because they already knew what the other was planning to do to them; the other had never ever intended to let them live ...

Just like that hacker had said, that cold-faced youth was a demon who had crawled out from hell. Not a single person would dare to kill off so many of Caesar's top hackers just like that — even those great marshals of the Huaxia Federation would have chosen to tolerate this affront, too afraid of war officially breaking out with Caesar to actually give such a ruthless command.

"If you all want someone to blame, then blame your country. Why did it have to turn its greed towards the Huaxia Federation ..." Li Lanfeng too understood Caesar's plan. If Ling Lan had not been able to successfully stop the T-virus, their Federation would have descended into a chaotic mess. The flames of war would have spread across the entire planetary sector of the Huaxia Federation, and all its citizens might have become slaves from a dead nation. Li Lanfeng did not really believe that these hackers were truly completely innocent, completely blameless, in all of this. This made his heart incredibly resolute.



And so, amidst their howling cries, Li Lanfeng unleashed the full extent of his spectre powers, obliterating the consciousness of all the remaining hackers. Seeing all of these people's figures become countless white dots slowly dissipating into the virtual world, a petrified expression appeared on Li Lanfeng's face. Despite building himself up in his mind to be cold-blooded and heartless, telling himself he needed to be ruthless and firm, his heart still felt heavy and unanchored after truly killing all these people. It was because this was the first time Li Lanfeng had killed anyone, and he had ended up killing nearly 20 people at that. No matter how determined he was, he still felt a little overwhelmed by such a massive number.

Spectre powers could really kill people invisibly ... Li Lanfeng felt as if his two hands were already stained red with a thick coat of blood, unable to be washed clean ever again.

When they heard the screams and wails crying out 'demon' from within the room, the rest of the team who had already walked out the door realised what the outcome of those hackers was. Han Jijyun's expression shifted slightly before settling into calm. Once more, he looked towards Ling Lan at the head of the team, and the heat in his gaze ran even hotter. He found that their Boss Lan had unconsciously become even more formidable — this was not only reflected in terms of capabilities and skills, but was also reflected in terms of mentality.

Han Jijyun knew very well that Ling Lan's decision was absolutely correct. By doing this, he had put a proper end to things, ensuring the team's safety for the future ... no one knew they had come here, so the Caesar Empire would never suspect that the ones who had ruined their plans were actually just a bunch of cadets. In contrast, even though he knew deep down that these people could not be allowed to live, he just could not make the decision to kill all of them.

When Qi Long and Luo Lang heard the shouts of the hackers, they merely pursed their lips heartlessly and thought that those men deserved it. They trusted their boss and also felt that it was not a shame for these people who wanted to invade their Federation to die. Alright, so coming from a military family, they had an innate hatred toward invaders.

Only Xie Yi's and Lin Zhong-qing's pupils contracted sharply when they heard the screams. The two of them shared a look and when they looked back at Ling Lan once more, their admiration carried a kind of fear. It looked like this decision of Ling Lan's had shocked them considerably.

When Li Shiyu heard these cries, his body trembled. Looking at the firm footsteps of Ling Lan walking at the front, he finally could not take it anymore and was about to speak when Chang Xinyuan, who had been observing him closely, stopped him by tugging sharply on his arm. Li Shiyu turned back to look at Chang Xinyuan in confusion, and Chang Xinyuan shook his head firmly.

Li Shiyu clenched his fists and pushed down the compassion in his heart. He reminded himself repeatedly that he could not afford to be soft-hearted — he absolutely could not be soft-hearted ... the intelligent Li Shiyu knew rationally that Ling Lan's decision was not wrong, but his heart had still been shaken by those terrible cries.

At this time, he once again recalled his mentor's words, saying that he lacked the heart of a soldier. Back then, he had still been unable to fully understand those words, but now he knew. Compared to these companions, he indeed lacked a soldier's heart. He did not possess the decisiveness and ruthlessness a soldier should have ...

“Shiyu, the Li family needs your efforts in the future. I have faith in you but also worry about you. Your heart is too kind. This is both your strength and your weakness ...” These words that his eldest cousin brother Li Mulan had said to him from his sickbed rang out once more by his ear, “One day in future, when you feel that this is your weakness, you must stay by the side of the person who makes you feel that way and learn from the other, until you master what you need to learn.”

So, eldest cousin brother, you had long known what my weakness was. You just could not bear to speak up and hurt my pride, right? And so you had tried to counsel me subtly, telling me to learn well to get rid of this weakness, right?

Li Shiyu abruptly bowed his head, the sweetness in his heart overlaid with a strong tang of sourness. His eldest cousin brother was wise and astute beyond imagining ... was this proof of the saying that ‘those who are too insightful are sure to be hurt 2’? So God would not allow this kind of person to exist in the world?

At this thought, Li Shiyu’s eyes were suffused with a wave of tenacity and self-confidence. He would definitely get rid of his weakness and then fulfil his heart’s desire — he would snatch his eldest cousin brother back from the hands of God! For this objective, he would not falter even if he had to descend into the demonic pits of hell.

Chapter 340: Mutual Destruction!

At the main gates to the warehouse of the secret base, the two Federation hackers who had been impersonating guards by the gates were now slumped on the ground, unmoving, lying in a dark corner not too far from the gates. Meanwhile, Hollow Ground 1, who had been protecting the gates while merged with the darkness, could no longer conceal his figure at this time. He fell over to sit within a dark corner. Under his blurred features, only he knew how tortured his expression was — he had already been holding on for almost two whole hours ...

Right then, about 20 to 30 metres away from Hollow Ground, two black-robed figures suddenly emerged from the darkness. Their appearance resembled Hollow Ground’s, features blurred out while their entire bodies were swathed in their black robes.

The moment Hollow Ground saw these two appear, he knew that they must be the two spectres he had been battling for close to two hours. Who knew which faction they were from, and why they had infiltrated the Swift Dragon base.

“So this is a top-class spectre from Huaxia ...” One of the black-robed figures stared down at Hollow Ground before them and finally said. The other’s voice sounded mechanical, harsh and unpleasant. This odd sound was of course due to modification by the other side and was not the other’s real voice. For self-protection, spectres would apply comprehensive flawless disguises to themselves.

Hollow Ground did not answer. Right then, his teeth were gritted as he fought back valiantly against the spectre power attacks of the two figures. If this had been a solo operation, upon finding out that he was up against two spectres of equal power as himself, he would definitely have chosen to escape. However, he could not do so now. Not only were there two hackers here, there was still a team of his comrades

investigating the secrets of the warehouse behind him. He could not abandon his comrades just for his own survival ...

“You still refuse to give up even now. Struggling so hard ... you’re probably doing this for the men behind you, right?” said one of the black-robed men with a soft sigh, “I can tell you in advance that, just like you, they won’t be able to live ... there is no so-called secret inside at all. This is just a trap specially set up for you all.”

Hollow Ground jerked his head up at these words, glaring angrily at the two smug spectres with clenched teeth. Frankly, when he had been attacked by the two spectres at the start, he had already had the faint inkling that this was likely a trap meant for them. However, he had still held hope that there might truly be a secret here which necessitated the presence of two guardian spectres.

“You’ve also reached the end of your rope. Your tenacious spirit is worthy of our respect, which is why we’ve come out to meet with you now.” The tone of the spectre who first spoke was tinged with admiration. “It was our honour to be able to fight against a spectre of your calibre.”

The battles between spectres were very brutal. It meant the death of one side or the other, or perhaps even the death of both sides involved. Still, this did not affect their respect and admiration for their opponent. Logically, with Hollow Ground’s level of spectre power, he could have at most withstood one hour of their continuous attacks. However, Hollow Ground had obstinately held out for almost double that time. This sort of tenacity and indomitable spirit had earned the admiration of these two spectres.

Frankly, their Caesar Empire had never been able to figure out how some Huaxia Federation soldiers who were obviously not that strong would suddenly break out with combat power multiple times their personal baseline during critical moments. Such as this spectre before them who had managed to hold out for twice the amount of time.

When Hollow Ground heard this, realisation flashed across his eyes. No wonder his opponents had chosen to appear so suddenly before him. His emotions were complicated; in the end, he could only sigh and say, “In the end, I’ve still lost.”

He was well aware that he was at the end of his rope and would not be able to hold out for much longer. In contrast, the other side were still pretty spry as the two men had worked together to attack, each taking some time to rest and recuperate. Hence, their spectre powers were still abundant — the final outcome was clear.

The other black-robed spectre commented with some pity, “From the moment you stepped into the Swift Dragon base, we were destined to fight to the death. If possible, could you tell us your code name?”

“I can’t have my name end up as your trophy. I cannot let my country lose face this way.” Hollow Ground grinned wryly as he responded. Without showing any outward signs, he compressed all of his remaining spectre power and then unleashed it in one blast towards one of the men. Even if he died, he would pull one of them down with him ...

Hollow Ground’s spectre power and one of the opponent spectres’ power suddenly clashed violently. Although there was nothing visible in the virtual world, one of the black-robed spectres heard a loud

explosion right by his ear. The forceful collision of power caused his entire consciousness to shudder, feeling as if it would be sent scattering.

Seeing this, the other black-robed spectre's face paled drastically. He reacted quickly and acted decisively to send his spectre power over to help his companion intercept part of the attack. The two of them had always been partners, so they understood and were well familiar with each other's spectre power. At this most critical moment, he swiftly merged his own spectre power with his companion's, and parried that most intense blow.

The black-robed person who had been caught unprepared by Hollow Ground's spiritual power attack was sent stumbling back three paces to fall over. Seated on the ground, he could not help but throw up a mouthful of blood. Meanwhile, the other black-robed figure was left trembling, his face flushing red and white. However, he soon recovered and seemed to have not taken any damage.

Hollow Ground had made his final attack. Seeing it successfully intercepted by the opponents, he could only glance longingly with regret at this virtual world. His entire body was slowly turning into countless white spots, beginning to drift and scatter apart ... perhaps when he had first accepted the mission, he had never expected that he would lose his wings <sup>2</sup> here. The only pity was that he actually did not know who was responsible for his death and so could not notify his companions to help take revenge on his behalf.

The two black-robed spectres saw Hollow Ground's figure vanishing completely to become one with the virtual world. Only then did they sigh softly and relax. The injured black-robed person chuckled wryly and said, "Reiter, who knew his death blow would be so powerful? If you hadn't helped me block in time, I would have been injured terribly even if I didn't die."

"Witt, you must have been distracted during our lessons," Reiter could not help but scold when he caught his breath.

"Huh?" Witt turned to look back at his friend in confusion.

"The instructor mentioned very clearly in class that the spectres of other countries all have their own unique characteristics in battle. For the spectres of the Huaxia Federation, we must be especially careful of their final attack right before death. When they have failed, the Federation soldiers are particularly fond of mutual destruction tactics." Reiter recited what the instructor had said back then.

After listening to what Reiter had to say, Witt stuck his tongue out in delayed fear. He had indeed lost focus for a bit during their classes, but he had not expected to miss such an important piece of information <sup>3</sup>. This had almost caused him to drink the fruits of regret right here — luckily his partner was on point and had saved his life.

While Reiter had been speaking, he had also used his spectre power to erase the two hackers lying on the ground. Without Hollow Ground's protection, these two unconscious hackers could no longer be saved. Just like Hollow Ground, they turned into white spots which vanished into the air.

In the headquarters of the National Security Agency of the Huaxia Federation, blaring alarms rang out abruptly from within one of the rooms. Complexion draining of colour, the staff member monitoring to one side quickly leapt towards three virtual pods which were flashing with red lights ...

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“We’ve finally finished off this spectre. It actually took us close to two hours. How shameful. Witt, quickly rush over to the heart of the secret base now and help Carter’s group deal with the spectre there.” Reiter had received D1’s notification a long while back and knew that the spectre at Carter’s side was even stronger than the one here. The two of them were fighting neck-and-neck with the enemy spectre, both sides unable to do anything about the other, locked in a stalemate. Thus, Carter had specially requested Witt’s help. If not for the fact that the battle here was also at a critical juncture, Reiter would have long sent Witt over to help.

“D1 has not received any more messages from D2. Carter’s side has probably already gotten things under control over there. There’s not much point for me to go over there. I might as well follow you and go handle that team of small fries below.” Witt was rather reluctant. He was afraid that he would rush over only to find that Carter and his team had already handled the enemy. Not only would he have travelled all that way for nothing, he would not even obtain any of the battle merits on this end.

Reiter glared at him in exasperation and scolded, “Asshole, go if I tell you to go. What are you blathering on about?” Seeing the obvious reluctance on Witt’s face, Reiter’s heart abruptly softened and he said, “Don’t worry, if there’s nothing for you to do there, I’ll share half of the merits I earn here with you.”

Reiter naturally knew what Witt was worried about, so he shared his plans directly to assure the other. The team below had no spectres protecting them, so no matter how good they were at fighting, there were still like defenceless babes in his eyes. They were like lambs for the slaughter, not posing any difficulty at all for him as a spectre — he did not mind sharing this kind of effortless battle merits with his partner.

“Reiter, you’re the one who said it. Don’t you dare go back on your word later! I’ll go immediately,” said Witt happily. Without waiting for Reiter to respond, he disappeared into the darkness of the night, zooming towards the heart of the secret base. Although they could move through the skies and the earth in the virtual world like gods, moving much more rapidly than normal people, it was instinctive for them to move in the cover of shadows.

Reiter saw Witt rushing off impatiently and could only shake his head helplessly. Witt’s personality was still a touch too impetuous, but he was still young. With a few more years of instruction, all of this would no longer be a problem. Subsequently, he entered the gates, tracking the path taken by the investigation team of the Huaxia Federation ...

He needed to finish off these people before Carter’s side wiped out those invaders on their end, otherwise he would become the butt of their jokes. Having designed such a perfect trap and still needing so much time to finish off these people — if word got out about this, he wouldn’t be able to show his face 4 ...

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Ling Lan had not walked very far with the rest of the team when Li Lanfeng caught up to rejoin them. Ling Lan swept a glance over Li Lanfeng — although his complexion was a little pale, his expression was composed and steady. Ling Lan knew that the leopard would be able to overcome this hurdle with his own strength. She felt extremely relieved inside and no longer worried over the matter.

When Ling Lan's team had entered the secret base, due to the continuous battles they had to fight, it took about one and a half hours for them to reach their destination. On their way out, even though there were still quite a lot of soldiers in their way, because the soldiers' combat power was considerably worse than Ling Lan's team's, the return journey did not take them as long. They were back at the mouth to the tunnel in less than 20 minutes.