

## Scholar's Advanced Technological System - Chapter 756 - Thermal Material

### Chapter 756: Thermal Material

Yang Xu watched the excited engineers hugging each other. He looked at the volatile temperature-time curve, slowly opened his mouth, then slowly closed his mouth.

*Is this the power of a Fields Medalist?*

*No wonder the Nobel Prize Committee admires his abilities...*

*No wonder the entire computational materials field is going crazy because of his theory...*

Once upon a time, Yang Xu believed that he was close to winning a Nobel Prize. After all, he did win the “citation prize” from the lithium-sulfur battery cathode material and SG-1 superconducting material.

The reason why the Nobel Prize Committee didn't consider him was because of his collaborator's name. One day, he was going to win the Nobel Prize by doing his own research!

But now, he felt weak.

He stared at his own reflection on the floor-to-ceiling windows and shook his head.

*Nobel Prize winners are monsters...*

*As expected, I'm far from winning a prize...*

Suddenly, his thoughts were interrupted.

Academician Yuan walked through the crowd and grabbed his shoulder, and the academician asked anxiously, “Where is Professor Lu?”

Yang Xu looked at the anxious academician. He paused for a second before replying, "Professor Lu... left already."

Systems Director Zhang, who stood behind Academician Yuan, quickly asked, "Where did he go?"

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"Of course he went back to the hotel..."

*Where else is he going to go, back to Jinling?*

Yang Xu looked at the two men with a strange expression. He didn't know why they seemed to be worried.

Academician Yuan looked at his assistant behind him and said, "Prepare the car, we're going to the hotel."

Systems Director Zhang quickly asked, "What about the experiment?"

Academician Yuan groaned and replied, "Let it continue for 24 hours."

Even though he knew the experiment was a success, they might as well complete the experiment properly.

Academician Yuan didn't stay for any longer. With Vice President Zheng following him, he walked out of the warehouse.

...

*Mathematics is the language of the gods.*

*Mathematics is a riddle from the gods, waiting to be solved by humans.*

*Numbers provide more intuition than witnessing with one's eyes.*

As for the seemingly irregular temperature-time function...

It might seem chaotic in the eyes of others, but for Lu Zhou, this wasn't even a challenge.

After Lu Zhou left the aerospace warehouse, he sat in Wang Peng's car and went back to his hotel.

Wang Peng noticed Lu Zhou's smile from the rearview mirror, and he asked jokingly, "Did something good happen?"

"I guess so." Lu Zhou sighed and said, "After solving this problem, Moon Palace is finally on track again."

Wang Peng didn't ask how Lu Zhou solved the problem; after all, he wouldn't understand Lu Zhou's explanation anyway.

He stared out the window and asked, "Where is Professor Yang?"

Lu Zhou waved his hand and said, "You don't have to wait for him. He doesn't believe me, so he's still waiting for the results. The China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation will give him a ride back to the hotel."

Wang Peng: "You made a bet with him again?"

Lu Zhou was surprised.

"How did you know?"

"Of course I know!"

Wang Peng smiled and shook his head. He then started the car and began to drive toward the hotel...

...

After Lu Zhou got back to the hotel, he returned to his room to pack his luggage. He called his assistant Zhao Huan and asked her to book two high-speed rail tickets for him and Yang Xu.

After hanging up the phone, it was almost dinner time, so he went down to the hotel buffet on the first floor.

The elevator doors opened. Lu Zhou was about to step foot into the first-floor lobby when he heard footsteps.

Lu Zhou looked around and saw Academician Yuan walking in with a bunch of people.

Yang Xu was there as well, as well as Academician Yang Zhongquan from Shenyang Machine Tool, and even Vice President Zheng was there as well.

The only person that wasn't there was Systems Director Zhang. Lu Zhou guessed he was probably still in the laboratory.

Lu Zhou smiled at everyone and was about to greet Academician Yuan. However, before he could speak, Academician Yuan walked up to him and asked, "What exactly did you do?"

Lu Zhou: "First tell me if it worked or not."

"It worked!" Academician Yuan nodded and said, "It worked very well!"

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "Actually, it's nothing special. We increased the loop heat pipe and capillary structure affinity by using N-1 carbon nanotubes. Then we cold-welded the loop heat pipes to various overheating components, and the problem was solved..."

Simply put, it was almost like they applied a layer of "thermal paste" on top of various components. This improved the heat exchange rate between the components and the loop heat pipe.

Of course, this was just a simplified explanation. After all, the heat dissipation of aerospace components was very different from traditional electronics.

Academician Yuan wanted to ask something, but Yang Zhongquan spoke first.

"This N-1 material is quite interesting... It's copper-coated carbon nanotubes?"

Lu Zhou: "Basically."

"What's the thermal conductivity?"

"Around 2,000W/mK."

In fact, this number could be increased. However, with their current laboratory preparation method, the length of the carbon nanotubes produced was unstable and difficult to control.

Even then, a 2,000W/mK thermal conductivity rating was scary high.

After Yang Zhongquan heard this number, he took a deep breath and spoke in disbelief.

“That’s one hell of a material, 2,000W/mK... That’s several times that of pure copper!”

Silver had the best thermal conductivity among the common metals, but it was expensive to use. Copper had the second-highest thermal conductivity, but it was too heavy. Therefore aerospace loop heat pipes were often made of an aluminum-copper alloy.

Back then, 10-20mm graphite film was considered to have high thermal conductivity, and that thermal conductivity was only around 1,400w/mK. Phone manufacturers went crazy over graphite film for its superior thermal conductivity properties.

A 2,000W/mK thermal conductive powder...

That was almost at the level of diamonds!

Even the industrial manufacturers were j\*zzing over graphite film’s thermal conductivity...

Lu Zhou didn’t know a lot about the heat-conducting materials industry. After hearing Yang Zhongquan, he smiled and replied, “It’s not too bad, right? It does the job.”

Yang Zhongquan awkwardly stared at Lu Zhou and hesitated for a while. He scratched his head and made up his mind.

“Oh yeah, about the N-1 carbon nanotubes... What’s the price? Is it expensive?”

Lu Zhou was surprised.

“You’re interested?”

Yang Zhongquan couldn’t help but say, “No sh\*t, do you know what this means for the thermal conduction industry?! Just take linear encoders on our high-end machine tools as an example; the thermal expansion directly affects the accuracy alignment! That error is reflected in the final product!”

Even though Lu Zhou didn’t know a lot about manufacturing accuracies, from the way Yang Zhongquan was talking, he could tell that the heat dissipation properties of the N-1 material could mean a lot for the industry.

This was quite random.

He originally thought that the N-1 material would be a high-tensile strength plastic material. He didn't expect the short carbon nanotubes to have such amazing heat dissipation properties.

After quietly waiting for the old gentlemen to finish speaking, Lu Zhou coughed and spoke.

"I don't know the price yet, the material is still in its research stage. If it weren't for the core module, I didn't even plan on using it. Once we find a way to produce it on a large scale... we can discuss the price then."

Yang Zhongquan smiled and said, "Done! I'll wait for your good news then!"

Yang Zhongquan came to the hotel to give his thanks. He didn't expect to receive even more good news.

Coming all the way from Shenyang was worth every penny!

Vice President Zheng saw that Yang Zhongquan finally finished speaking, so he quickly said, "Professor Lu! There's something else I want to ask you. You welded all of the components in the core module, what happens if we need to dismantle it in the future?"

Lu Zhou smiled and replied jokingly, "You plan on dismantling it?"

Zheng Xiangdong was stunned. He didn't realize what Lu Zhou meant.

After he saw Academician Yuan staring at him, he awkwardly smiled and shut his mouth.

The core module would be in space, and no one was going to disassemble it anytime soon...

Chapter 757: Domestic Export

Shanghai.

Deep Space's office building in the high-tech zone.

Xu Gui returned to his office from a board meeting. He threw his meeting notes on his table and sat on his office chair. He frowned and sighed heavily.

Since 2020, China had included aerospace as one of its main national focuses. A large number of private aerospace companies had had significant growth because of this.

Deep Space was at the right place at the right time.

Generally speaking, an industrial company needed more than just capital and policy support; it also needed time to grow its technology.

However, this company was special.

In one year, with just one billion yuan in capital, the company went from a raw materials supplier to a “high tech enterprise”, mainly engaging in “aerospace launches”.

Because of the successful Chinese moon landing project, Xu Gui was able to cooperate with Haifeng Capital Ventures and successfully take Deep Space to the public.

However, the good times didn't last long. The delay of the Tiangong program and the rise of the Moon Palace program lowered the demand for low-Earth orbit launches. This had a huge impact on the profits of Deep Space.

After all, Star Sky Technology was the only company that was capable of Earth-Moon transfers. That meant they couldn't receive any of the billions of yuan that was going to be spent on launches.

This was all because of Professor Lu...

Xu Gui stared at his meeting notes on the table and took out a cigarette from his pocket. He was about to light his cigarette when suddenly the office door was pushed open. A man wearing a suit walked in.

Chairman Xu Gui spoke in a commanding tone.

“I've told you before, knock before you enter my office.”

Read more chapter on

“Is now the time to talk about that? Not to mention, I’m not your subordinate.” The man placed a document on the table and said, “The board is not happy, that’s all I have to say.”

As Deep Space’s partner, Haifeng Capital Ventures had a huge role in Deep Space’s success.

One could even make the case that all of Deep Space’s success came from Haifeng Capital.

Because of this, Xu Gui had no power over this man.

However, he wasn’t scared of him either...

After all...

Xu Gui smirked and slowly said, “Forget about those useless things. I know the board isn’t happy. We’re walking on a tightrope here.”

He Yan smiled and replied, “You’re right, I wasn’t trying to offend you. I just want you to know that because the Tiangong plan was replaced by the Moon Palace plan, our stock dropped by 15 basis points in a week. Even though I trust you, if this trend continues, other investors might not.”

He Yan was actually underplaying the situation. If the stock price continued to fall, the small shareholders wouldn’t be able to handle it anymore. It would be a bloodbath.

With the current financial state of Deep Space, any withdrawal or liquidation of assets would be a devastating blow.

Even though He Yan was smiling on the outside, he was bleeding on the inside.

His investment in Deep Space was one of his biggest career victories. He was the one that secured series funding for Deep Space and eventually taking it public. Haifeng Capital Ventures’ initial 20 million yuan investment turned into 1 billion yuan.

However, unforeseen events happened. He counted on China’s future investment in aerospace, but he didn’t expect Professor Lu to disrupt the industry by sending a man on the moon.



He never expected that, in support of Professor Lu, the Communist Party of China even established a Lunar Orbit Committee!

Even though Haifeng Capital Ventures had some connections in politics, their influence wasn't comparable to the Lunar Orbit Committee at all...

Xu Gui stared at He Yan and didn't say anything.

After being in the industry for so many years, his intuition told him that the man standing in front of him didn't come here without a reason. So far so that Xu Gui believed He Yan already had a solution.

He Yan smirked.

"Insider information."

"Insider information again?" Xu Gui snorted and leaned back in his office chair. He said, "What's the news? Is the Lunar Orbit Committee going to be dissolved?"

The last thing he wanted was more news.

Ever since the establishment of the Lunar Orbit Committee, his company had had nothing but bad news.

He Yan shook his head and said, "Not yet, but close."

Xu Gui raised his eyebrows, and he said, "Oh really?"

He Yan slowly said, "According to a trusty source, there was a major failure in the core module of the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation."

Xu Gui's eyes suddenly lit up, and he bounced up from his chair.

"Are you sure? Is the problem serious?"

"Very serious, the problem is with the cooling system. I think the loop heat pipe is broken or something... I don't know the specifics, but apparently, the higher-ups are planning on delaying the launch."

Xu Gui slapped his thigh.

"Fantastic!"

Even though he shouldn't gloat this much...

But the entire company's future was on his shoulders. This was music to his ears. He wanted the higher-ups to realize the impracticality of Professor Lu's moon space station. Only then would they adjust their aerospace policies and plans...

Maybe Professor Lu would be removed as chief designer, or the annoying Lunar Orbit Committee would be dissolved, and a new committee would be formed...

He Yan looked at Xu Gui's excited face and said, "Don't get excited just yet, this is just a small mistake. At most, a few higher-ups from the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation will have to write a report. It won't reach Lu Zhou's level."

Xu Gui calmed down and looked at He Yan.

"So what you're saying is?"

"Spread the news."

Xu Gui looked surprised.

"Are you crazy?! Won't we get caught?"

"Don't worry, I'm not that dumb," He Yan said. "The news obviously won't come out of China. We can let the American media leak the news first, then wait for the news to travel across the ocean."

Xu Gui's eyes were lighting up, but he still had some doubts.

"Are you sure... about this?"

Hopefully, no one will find out we're the ones behind this.

But if someone finds out...

The stock price dropping won't be the only thing awaiting me.

He Yan saw that Xu Gui was a little hesitant, so he smiled and said, "Don't worry, remember that 'We are losing this race' article?"

“Kind of...” Xu Gui suddenly looked at He Yan and said, “You’re the person behind that article?”

“Manipulating public opinion is a valid strategy. Professor Lu benefits our country as a whole, but that doesn’t mean he benefits us.” He Yan lightly smiled and said, “Even though the public opinion isn’t impactful, when combined with other strategies, it can work wonderfully!”

Chapter 758: Another Big Piece of News?

New York.

The New York Times building.

Duke, the editor-in-chief, sat at his desk while looking at the trending page on his computer screen. He couldn’t help but smirk.

Thanks to the successful life support system launch, NASA had been in all of the major media’s headlines. This made people feel like they were in the space race again, nothing in the world could defeat the stripes and stars.

Because of the heightened public interest, any news regarding the Ares program was highly sought after.

Media outlets didn’t have to provide any new information. They just had to process and fabricate some already-existing knowledge. Combine that with a click-baiting headline made the newspaper sales go through the roof.

Ever since entering the age of the Internet, this was the first time The New York Times achieved 20% sales growth for two consecutive months. Half of the growth was because of the editorial office.

Duke looked at the rising KPI<sup>1</sup> number and couldn’t help but feel delighted.

Maybe he would get a promotion in two months.

Suddenly, the office door was pushed open. Journalist Camille walked in with her heels loudly clacking upon hitting the floor.

Duke, who was on cloud nine, didn't blame Camille for not knocking. He played with the pen in his hand and happily spoke to Camille.

"What's up? Is there another breaking story?"

Camille spoke hastily.

"Breaking story, from across the Pacific Ocean."

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Duke smiled and said, "Fantastic, give it to me."

"I think it's better if you take a look at it yourself." Camille placed the report on Duke's desk and said proudly, "You're in for a surprise."

Duke raised his eyebrows and sat up straight. He curiously picked up the report.

As soon as he read the title, his eyes were glued to the report.

Duke quickly finished reading the report. His fingers rubbed against the paper, and a hint of excitement appeared in his eyes.

"Jesus Christ!"

*This is unbelievable!*

Duke slammed the report on the table and stood up. He then stared at Camille and said, "Severe design flaws in the Moon Palace program and the Chinese discovered the loop heat pipe dissipation system was substandard... The Chinese Moon Palace program will be severely affected by it... Is this true?"

Camille chuckled and replied, "Remember that Chinese informant I told you about? And the news about China's plan to build a space station in lunar orbit."

There was a hint of excitement in Duke's voice.

"They're from the same source?"

Camille didn't say anything. She just nodded her head.

Upon seeing the confirmation, Duke's face lit up.

Last time, The New York Times wrote an article on China's lunar space station plan before the Chinese media outlets. The reason why was because of Camille's informant.

Duke still remembered how The New York Times article was trending on Twitter, and he also remembered his boss praising him at the company meeting.

Back then, they claimed China was being "overly ambitious". Now was the perfect time for them to comment on the failure of the Moon Palace, thus creating a full-circle story.

*God bless America!*

*God bless The New York Times!*

He was confident that The New York Times sales would grow to a whole new level because of this.

Duke excitedly rubbed his hands and looked at the document on his table.

"Looks like your friend in China is quite high up."

Camille raised her eyebrows arrogantly.

"Indeed, but that doesn't matter; what matters is that we have common interests."

Duke knew there was no free meal in this world. If they wanted to cooperate with this informant, they had to meet their demands.

As a person who had worked with informants in the White House, he was well aware of this. Therefore, he didn't hesitate before asking.

"What do they want?"

Camille said, "They want us to make this story as big as possible."

Duke smiled and said, "Piece of cake! I'll satisfy their requests... I would have done so regardless!"

*The failure of China's Moon Palace program will pair nicely with the Ares program's success!*

*There is no way this story isn't going to make the headlines!*

Even though Duke was happy to make this story a headline, Camille was a little dissatisfied.

"He's my informant."

Duke smiled nonchalantly and said, "Yeah yeah, your informant, it's your story... Then, how should I award you? A raise?"

"Own office, and an assistant. It's what I deserve."

It was every reporter's dream to have one's own office and not have to work in a cubicle.

Not only did it help prevent colleagues from spying on their story, but it was also a symbol of status.

Even though Camille wasn't a rookie reporter, there was plenty of competition in a worldwide media outlet such as The New York Times.

After hearing Camille's request, Duke frowned. However, he quickly cheered up.

"Easy, I'll tell my boss that you deserve an assistant and an office."

Sniffing out stories was a crucial part of a reporter's skillset.

Duke was happy to oblige with Camille.

A journalist with special information sources was valuable.

Camille smirked.

"Then I guess I'll thank you in advance."

Duke replied, "No worries, are you free tonight? I know a good restaurant."

"Unfortunately, I have other plans tonight."

Camille turned around and walked away, leaving behind a scent of perfume.

Duke looked at Camille walking away and pouted. He then reached for the phone on his desk.

“Anderson, come to the office.”

Anderson’s voice traveled through the phone.

“Boss, I’m on break.”

“Your break is over. I’ll give you time off in two weeks. I want to see a press release regarding the major design flaw in the Moon Palace core module. Other newspapers might know about this story already, so we have to make headlines by tomorrow!”

Violent sounds were heard through the phone, like something was slammed on the ground.

Anderson’s excited voice was heard.

“Wait, what? China plans on postponing the lunar space station? Until when? Is this reliable? I’m coming to the office right now!”

Duke didn’t want to repeat what Camille said. He sent Camille’s document to Anderson’s email and replied, “I’ve sent the relevant documents to your email, so go read it.”

Duke hung up the phone and leaned back comfortably on his office chair.

*Everything is going so smoothly.*

He was almost tempted to open his refrigerator and pop open that bottle of champagne...

To be honest, he couldn’t wait to drink that champagne...

Chapter 759: Bullet in the Chamber!

Regardless of who the informant was, The New York Times hit it big this time.

The next day, on the latest issue of The New York Times newspaper, was a large red-colored headline. It reported the latest progress of the Chinese lunar program—a major design flaw in the Moon Palace core module cooling system and that the construction of the lunar space station was going to be delayed!

Apparently, the reason for this error was because China had insufficient experience in the space station field. Also, it was because the Lunar Orbit Committee was careless.

The latter was probably the main reason.

The news immediately went on trending in America.

NASA confirmed the speculation on its official Twitter account. They said that they had heard similar stories, but they couldn't confirm just yet.

Compared to The New York Times, NASA was undoubtedly more credible. As soon as the tweet came out, American netizens began to discuss the matter intensely.

[Jesus... We were waiting for China to fight back, but they tripped on their shoelaces.]

[I told you, this isn't a space race at all. Even though they have surpassed the Russians, they're still half a century behind us. :D]

[Maybe we should donate to China's space program? :p]

[We should! The competition is already about to end, this is too boring! xD]

[I'm looking forward to the end of the month! Space-X is not going to let us down!]

[...]

Interestingly enough, while most people were making fun of the Lunar Orbit Committee and the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, NASA didn't ridicule the Chinese at all. They even expressed their apologies toward the Moon Palace program.



The China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation was a respectable opponent. Even though the White House and Congress were happy to hear this news, NASA didn't want their respectable opponent to lose like this.

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Not because they actually felt sorry, but mainly because China's space program brought them huge amounts of funding and political support.

Therefore, they wanted the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation to survive.

At the very least, they wanted them to last a little longer...

While Congress and the White House were about to open bottles and celebrate, a small group of people already popped open those bottles and began celebrating.

For those in the low-Earth orbit launch industry, there was nothing that made them happier than hearing about the lunar space station's troubles.

On the same day The New York Times article came out, the same story was published on Chinese media outlets.

An anonymous account named "We Are Losing The Space Race" began to post online.

This time, the author presented himself as a prophet... or even a "savior".

[Unfortunately, reality has proven me right again. I didn't expect this to come so suddenly and terribly.

[The design failure of the billion-dollar core module wasn't an accident, it was inevitable from the beginning. I knew this was going to happen. If the problem wasn't the loop heat pipe, it would have been the engine or the solar panel.

[Like I said, controllable fusion technology fueled the success of the Skyglow launch. However, there were dozens of problems that were hidden in Skyglow. Now, those problems are presented to us in daylight.

[The entire Chinese aerospace industry is like a clockwork that has been tightened. People are going after unobtainable vanity.

[From the moon landing project to the Lunar Orbit Committee, all of these projects and policies are driven by one lunatic. No one remembered to lubricate the machine, no one remembered to give it more time.

[Perhaps Professor Lu is an excellent mathematician, physicist, and chemist. His achievements in the field of controllable fusion will go down in history. But he is still a human, and humans make mistakes. History tells us blind worship doesn't end well.

[Now that the Lunar Orbit Committee is established, Professor Lu has gotten what he wanted, the throne of the chief designer. His prestige in the academic world gained him a large number of blind supporters. However, Professor Lu isn't always right.

[The failure of the Moon Palace core module should be a wake-up call.

[Wake up, scholars around the world!]

Less than a day after the blog was posted, the blog received tens of thousands of likes. It was reposted to other major social media platforms, spreading like the plague.

This anonymous netizen found an interesting niche. This netizen used the loop heat pipe problem to criticize the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, which was related to the Lunar Orbit Committee, which Lu Zhou was a part of.

If Lu Zhou wasn't overly ambitious, if Lu Zhou wasn't part of the Lunar Orbit Committee, if Lu Zhou didn't arrange the launch mission...

All of this could have been avoided!

Even though some people were in support of Lu Zhou, the power of the Internet was too big.

Especially because most people weren't good at critical thinking, they were too easily convinced.

After quietly waiting in this stormy weather for three days, the Chinese Academy of Sciences, China National Space Administration, and China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation finally spoke.

Their Weibo posts were the same.

The posts were short, but they contained a lot of information.

One sentence was posted on the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation's official Weibo account.

[Launch plan is unaltered!]

Attached in the post was a photo of Skyglow, parked on the Jinling launch site. As well as the Moon Palace core module!

The bullet was in the chamber!

Their goal...

Was lunar orbit!

The Internet exploded.

Chapter 760: Let's Head In

Jinling.

Zhongshan International mansion.

Lu Zhou was sitting in his study room. He just got back to Jinling today. He received a call from the Lunar Orbit Committee chairman.

"What is happening at the Moon Palace? Is it serious?"

Lu Zhou was standing next to the window when he smiled and said, "It's no problem at all, it's already solved."

The old man nodded and spoke in a serious manner.

"We can't be careless. Slow and steady is the way to go. We should push back the schedule if we need to. We've been waiting for all this time, we can afford to wait another couple of years."

Lu Zhou said, "Don't worry, I got this covered."

"Okay, that's good," the old man said, "I don't know a lot about research, I can't really help you. This chairman position I have is just a title. You're responsible for the specifics."

The call was almost over.

The old man made some small talk and asked questions such as "How have you been?", "How's research going?", "Do you have a girlfriend", etc. Other than that, they didn't talk about anything important.

Lu Zhou hung up the phone and walked back to his desk.

He didn't know who wrote that blog, and he didn't know who was trying to create drama...

But it didn't matter.

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This didn't affect Lu Zhou at all.

No one important was blaming Lu Zhou for anything...

Lu Zhou gently placed his phone on the desk and sighed. He suddenly shook his head.

"Why is this happening?"

A chat bubble popped out on the lower right corner of his computer.

Xiao Ai: [Master, why are you sad?]

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "I'm not, I just feel a little... tired."

He never wanted to monopolize space.

For him, money was just a number.

As for political status...

He wasn't interested in that either.

If he really were interested, he just had to open his mouth, and any political role would be his.

The reason why he asked Hou Guang to research a new transportation mode from Earth synchronous orbit to the Earth-Moon transfer orbit was to improve their lunar orbit transfer capacity and also to motivate Chinese companies to join in on the space race competition.

The United States had a large number of amazing aerospace companies. These private companies were the driving force behind technological innovation. This innovation ability, combined with America's huge industrial capacity, was the reason behind America's glorious aerospace industry.

Lu Zhou wanted China to have a large number of outstanding aerospace technology companies.

Lu Zhou didn't want aerospace companies that relied on government subsidies and support. These weak companies gave up easily.

Of course, he knew this wasn't easy.

Things like this needed time to mature...

Xiao Ai: [Master, don't be sad. (; '⌒)]

Lu Zhou looked at the chat and smiled. He said, "Sad? I'm not sad, I'm not a clueless university student anymore. All I knew back then was mathematics."

Honestly, he was nostalgic about the simpler times.

Back then, he didn't have to think about anything other than mathematics.

Before this, he didn't understand Grothendieck's mentality, but now, he kind of understood.

[Okay then... Master, do you want me to sing to you? ♪ (^ ▽ ^ \*)]

Lu Zhou: "... Xiao Ai."

Xiao Ai: [What? OwO]

Lu Zhou went silent for a while before saying, "If one day..."

He suddenly stopped.

Just now, he wanted to ask what Xiao Ai would do if he passed away. But he wasn't sure if Xiao Ai knew what "passing away" meant, so he decided not to ask.

Talking about life and death seemed too complex for Xiao Ai.

Xiao Ai: [Yeah? What's the matter? (๖•̯•)]

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "Nothing... I just think that it would be nice to retire and become a mathematics teacher."

Xiao Ai: [... But Master, are you not one right now? 0.0]

Lu Zhou stared at the text and touched his nose awkwardly.

"Am I...?"

Last year, he gave a few lectures, but this year, he was too busy. He only met a few times with his master's students and PhD students. Most of the guidance work was done by the workers at the Institute for Advanced Study.

However, Jin Ling University didn't mention anything. They just kept sending him paychecks...

He felt guilty whenever he thought about this.

Lu Zhou's phone on the desk began to ring.

Wang Peng was the one calling.

Lu Zhou picked up the phone and spoke.

"Hey? How's your holiday? Can you work tomorrow?"

When they were still in Tianjin, Wang Peng applied for a two-day vacation before returning to Jinling. He handed the security work to Yang Guangbiao and boarded a separate train.

Lu Zhou didn't ask what Wang Peng was doing, but Wang Peng looked serious when he asked for the time off.

It definitely wasn't just a holiday.

The other end of the phone went silent.

Wang Peng coughed and replied, "I want to extend my leave... I might return to Jinling in two days. Sorry, Yang Guangbiao will have to cover for me."

Lu Zhou smiled and replied, "Sure thing, hope everything is fine."

"Yeah," Wang Peng nodded and quickly said, "I'm on holiday... Everything is going great."

"Sure sure, holiday."

Lu Zhou leaned back in his chair and smiled. He then hung up the phone.

On the other hand, outside a building in the high-tech park in the city center of Shanghai, Wang Peng hung up the phone and looked at the screen with a strange expression.

A man in a black suit walked over.

"Target is in the building, the capture team is ready."

Wang Peng nodded and put his phone in his pocket.

"Let's head in."

## **Chapter 761: Deserved**

Translator: Henyee Translations Editor: Henyee Translations

Lu Zhou always thought that he was an easy-going person.

He was able to joke about anything and would never take someone's joke to heart.

Therefore, when he first read the blog that criticized him, he didn't take it seriously.

So much so that he even agreed with part of the person's viewpoint. Blind worship was a dangerous thing in academia. Everyone's opinion should be given attention and taken seriously.

In fact, Lu Zhou knew he didn't always make the right decision. Whether it was the controllable fusion energy project or Skyglow, the power of teamwork

played a considerable role.

However...

That didn't mean all opinions were useful.

Some opinions were made purely for criticism, some were made out of jealousy.

Because of this, he laughed at the Internet's comments and didn't take it seriously.

However, even though he didn't care...

Some people did.

After all, his reputation was no longer his own matters.

...

Shanghai.

Haifeng Capital Ventures building.

Per usual, He Yan didn't have any meetings to attend. He carried his briefcase through the cubicles and went straight to his office.

Just after he sat down on the cold office chair, he heard chaotic footsteps outside the door.

He Yan frowned and was about to stand up to see what was happening.

However, the office door was slammed open.

A group of police officers walked in, led by several officers in plainclothes.

They immediately filled up the small office room.

He Yan's pupils dilated, and he subconsciously grabbed the armrest of his chair and stood up.

However, he quickly realized this was the 20th floor. There was no way for him to run, so he let go and sat back down again.

"I'm just an ordinary businessman, I haven't done anything illegal. Why are you guys here?"

The slightly older officer in plainclothes smirked and said, "Haven't done anything illegal? Mr. He, you are one forgetful man. Why would we come here if you didn't do anything?"

He Yan felt the pairs of eyes staring through his heart, and a flash of panic swept his mind.

"... I don't know what you're talking about."

His mental strength was quite good. Even though he knew he wasn't going to escape, he still stuck to his story.

As long as he didn't admit anything, there was still a chance for him to get out of this mess.

He could bribe his way out, or blame it on someone else.

After all, his boss in Beijing, the man that gave him orders, didn't want to see him end up like this...

He Yan's mind was racing. Wang Peng looked at He Yan pitifully, like He Yan



was a man about to drown, who was hanging onto his life.

He Yan gulped and spoke.

“What... I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“He Yan!”

He Yan was frightened by Wang Peng shouting his name. It was like his throat was filled with cotton. He tried to argue, but nothing came out of his mouth.

“According to Article... of the Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China, you are facing 12 charges, including espionage, defamation, disruption of the economic and financial market order, manipulation of the securities market, and insider trading. The charges were brought before the court, and an arrest warrant was issued by the court, thus permitting the national security agency...”

Wang Peng took out the relevant documents. He stared directly into He Yan’s eyes and said without emotion, “Here are my credentials, please cooperate with our investigation.”

“I don’t know...”

Seeing how He Yan was about to argue again, another officer impatiently waved his hands.

“Shut up, take him away!”

Several law enforcement officers stepped forward. They held He Yan’s arms and dragged him from his chair.

When He Yan was being dragged out of his office, he was no longer calm. He began shouting with all his strength and screamed, “You have no right to arrest me! I am an American citizen! I demand extradition, I request for my lawyer! F\*ck, don’t touch me!” <sup>1</sup>

Seeing how distorted He Yan was, Wang Peng almost felt a little sympathetic. As the mastermind of this whole incident, He Yan played a big role. However, he was just a front-line soldier.

He Yan was still hoping the back office in Beijing would protect him, but he didn’t know that his boss actually left him to die...

Of course, even though Wang Peng felt sympathetic, the court wasn’t going to drop the charges.

“We have contacted your lawyer for you. He will soon visit you at the detention center.” Wang Peng paused for a moment and said, “Your old friend Xu Gui is there as well. I’m sure you will meet him soon.”

At the same time, Shanghai International Airport.

Xu Gui was walking through airport security.

Xu Gui looked at the police officer walking in front of him, and he knew he had no hope of running away. He let go of his suitcase and smiled.

“Looks like I’m not getting on this flight.”

The old sheriff raised his eyebrows.

“Oh, so you know?”

Xu Gui smiled and said, “I have to pay the price at some point.”

The old sheriff stared at Xu Gui and said in a deep voice, “I don’t know what gave you the courage to do something like this!”

Leaking state secrets to foreign forces...

This was no different from treason.

Xu Gui stared at the pairs of eyes and suddenly smiled.

“Haha.”

Old sheriff: “What are you smiling at?”

“Do you really think I am the only one doing such things? I’m just the only one that got caught.” Xu Gui reached out his hands. His face was full of despair as he calmly said, “Come on, cuff me.”

The old sheriff stared at Xu Gui and went silent for a while.

He had been in the field for many years, so this wasn’t anything out of the ordinary.

However...

He didn’t have any sympathy for those that betrayed their own country.

He looked at a younger police officer and instructed, “Cuff him.”

Even though the suspect wasn’t resisting, they still had to put him in handcuffs.

The younger police officer nodded and walked toward Xu Gui.

“Okay.”

The same thing was happening in an apartment tens of kilometers away.

Another pale-skinned man had no strength to struggle at all. He was dragged out of his apartment by two policemen.

He was the smallest character in this whole incident, and he wasn’t worthy of the national security team. The police officers at the local police station were enough.

Compared to He Yan, the manager of Haifeng Capital, and Xu Gui, the chairman of Deep Space, his charges were relatively light. If Lu Zhou wanted to sue him for defamation, he might be set as an example and be locked up for two weeks.

The pale-skinned man’s face was full of regret, and with his neighbors watching him, he was placed into a police car.

People couldn’t believe that the “big man” blabbering his mouth on the Internet only had an undergraduate degree...

The Internet was a wonderful place, and anyone could pretend to be something different.

But then again, there were no places to hide on the Internet.

There was no anonymity there.

Chapter 762: Eye-Grabbing!

The launch plan was unaltered!

The Moon Palace would enter the lunar orbit at the end of the month!

After the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation sent out the Weibo post, intense discussion swept across the internet.

The Moon Palace is fine!

The design flaws are all rumors!

People who previously ridiculed on Twitter that China was overly ambitious didn't have anything to say now.

It turned out that the whole thing was just a rumor.

There was no problem with the core module at all, and there was no change to the launch plan.

There were also people that ridiculed the Moon Palace cooling system on various talk shows, and they were now in an awkward spot.

Those talk show hosts had plans to continue talking about this story, but now it seemed like they had to change their script.

The New York Times was probably in the most awkward spot.

Even though there was little ethics in the media world, this incident still did considerable amounts of damage to the integrity of The New York Times.

After all, they were the first to release the story.

They even put this fake story on headlines.

The New York Times building.

Duke was just ridiculed by his boss. He walked back to his office, shattered.

Camille was sitting restlessly on the sofa as she looked around anxiously.

After some silence, Camille looked at Duke and spoke cautiously.

“We shouldn’t be so pessimistic... This smells a bit fishy, maybe they are just bluffing.”

The Weibo post from the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation wasn’t necessarily true. It might have been the Chinese authorities behind the scene, trying to alter the public opinion. They might have instructed various research institutes to issue the same statement.

After all, similar things had happened before.

Camille had been a foreign reporter for more than a year, and she was well aware of China’s tactics...

Duke looked at Camille and spoke impatiently.

“It’s near the end of the month, what’s the point of bluffing?”

Camille didn’t know what to say.

He’s right, it’s nearly the end of the month.

Even if they are bluffing, there isn’t enough time for them to fix the problem.

Seeing how Camille didn’t have anything to say, Duke looked outside his window.

“... All we can do now is hope for the BFR rocket to successfully land the life support system. This will divert people’s attention and make them forget about this matter.”

Camille asked tentatively, “I think the story on the Moon Palace can be improved, what if—”

Before Camille could finish, Duke waved his hand and interrupted her.

“Forget about any new stories... We should focus on America for now.”

Camille gulped and nodded nervously.

“Okay.”

She didn't dare to mention her new office or her assistant...

Seeing how distraught Duke was, she wisely chose to keep quiet.

She silently prayed in her heart.

God, please tell me the Chinese are bluffing...

If the Moon Palace launched successfully, it would be a disaster for The New York Times.

Not only would the readers be dissatisfied, but they would become a laughing stock in the media industry.

After all, they were the ones that placed a fake rumor as their headlines...

She took out her phone and checked her email.

She had been waiting for her informant from China to reply, but no emails were received.

It seemed like her informant was in trouble.

She felt like something bad was going to happen...

...

The intense public discussion didn't stop immediately. But as the incident was denied by various departments, the topic was no longer trending.

Time quickly passed by, and it was soon the end of the month.

Both Star Sky Technology and China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation didn't break their promises.

Major media outlets such as Everyone Daily published photos of the Moon Palace being loaded into the aircraft.

After the photos were released, excited netizens swept the comments section.

[Jesus, who said that the Moon Palace isn't going to fly?]

[Media outlets have no integrity, these keyboard warriors made me think the moon space station is a bust.]

[Professor Lu is nutty!]

[I bet someone in the future will say that even though the Moon Palace is in space, it's still not an accomplishment.]

[Our journey is the sea of stars!]

[...]

The entire country was looking forward to this launch.

It was finally launch day.

Several media broadcast trucks drove to the launch site.

Those that didn't obtain a media authorization drove to the outskirts of Jin Ling City, outside the security checkpoints. They planned on watching from a distance by using special pieces of camera equipment.

Just like this, with everyone watching, Skyglow spacecraft slowly departed from the runway, flying toward the blue sky, disappearing from people's eyes.

Lu Zhou was standing in the command tower as he looked at Skyglow disappear from his view. He turned to Hou Guang and asked, "How long until the Earth-Moon transfer orbit system is online?"

Hou Guang paused for a second and spoke seriously.

"The technology is feasible... But even if we use a similar propulsion system as Skyglow, we would have to wait until next year."

"Next year..." Lu Zhou looked at the busy ground crew on the runway and asked, "What about Starlight?"

Hou Guang: "We were going to test it at the end of the month, but because of the Moon Palace launch plan, it was postponed by a week."

Lu Zhou: "So the next test flight is in a week?"

Hou Guang nodded and said, "Correct."

Lu Zhou nodded and smirked.

If the Starlight test was successful, then the ion thruster propulsion system would rise to a whole new level.

Lu Zhou was relieved to see his own technology come to life.

His efforts were proven to be worthwhile.

Chapter 763: Moon Palace In Orbit!

NASA.

Satellite control center.

A group of people stood in front of the control console. Among them were NASA engineers, officials from the United States Congress and White House, and professionals from Space-X and Blue Origin, as well as other aerospace company representatives.

The atmosphere was quite depressing, everyone's eyes focused on a single point on the large console screen.

Everyone was looking at the same place, waiting for the same result.

Three days ago, China's Skyglow successfully took off while carrying the Moon Palace core module. It broke through the atmosphere and was entering low-Earth orbit.

The entire aerospace industry was focused on this aerospaceplane.

If this launch proved to be successful, China would become the first country in the world to put a space station in lunar orbit. It would also become the only country in the world to have lunar construction capabilities.

This was obviously bad news for America.

If everything were to go according to plan, their "Lunar Gateway" lunar orbit space station wouldn't launch until next year. Even though the success of the Ares program placed them at the forefront of Mars colonization, it seemed like they had lost the Moon race.

Three days ago, NASA pointed their satellites toward the Earth-Moon transfer orbit as they waited for the spacecraft to appear in their lenses.

Today should be the day Skyglow arrived in lunar orbit...

Director Carson stared at the large console screen. He suddenly looked at his watch and asked impatiently, "Is it not there yet?"

Bill was standing next to Director Carson. He opened the document in his hand and quickly replied, "According to our calculations, they will reach lunar orbit in around ten minutes... Of course, there is the possibility that they are not using the traditional Earth-Moon transfer orbit path."

Bill looked at Director Carson and added, "... If that is the case, then we would need more accurate data in order to observe their spacecraft."

Director Carson replied, "Maybe you can call the China National Space Administration, they'll be happy to give you that data."

Director of the satellite control center, Bill, had an awkward smile on his face. He stared at his watch and said, "We can't wait here all day, maybe next time you can give us a more accurate estimate."

Director Carson: "Don't worry, my friend, in two hours, we will see the results."

Of course, he hoped that the damn aerospaceplane never appeared in the satellite's lens. It would be great if Skyglow could disappear like a comet, flying away from the Earth-Moon system...

NASA needed an opponent who was behind them, not someone who was ahead of them. NASA had to be the best at everything they do. It was not only about honor, but it was also about political governance.

However, Carson knew that his dreams wouldn't come true.

Given that the Skyglow had already successfully landed on the Moon, delivering a module was a piece of cake.

Sure enough, just like he had guessed, there was a commotion in the console room.

A NASA engineer suddenly pointed at the screen and yelled, "It's Skyglow! I see it!"



Director Carson looked at the direction the engineer pointed at, and his pupils shrank.

It's there!

It's Skyglow!

...

A bright arc of light swept across the dark moon skies.

A bright silver aerospaceplane smoothly completed the orbital switch, slowly marching into the 127-minute orbit.

All of this was smoothly done in one go.

Nie Yun, who was sitting in the driver's seat, stared at the rough moon surface. His mind racing a million miles a second.

Back here again...

Last time I was here was three months ago.

He couldn't help but feel enchanted by the beautiful scenery.

Unfortunately, this time, he didn't get to place his feet on the moon rocks.

But he knew that one day in the near future, a trip to the Moon would be as common as a flight across the ocean.

Nie Yun reached out and pressed his helmet. He then said in a clear voice, "This is Skyglow, we have successfully entered orbit."

After a while, a voice traveled through the communication channel.

"This is the ground command center. Happy to hear that. You've already completed half of your mission... Please immediately head toward the designated airspace and prepare for the next stage."

"Roger that."

Nie Yun reached out and pressed the control panel. He switched the flight mode from orbital transfer mode to automatic cruise mode. He then skillfully turned on the cabin pressure measurement system.

Nie Yan was sitting in the co-pilot seat. She looked at the rangefinder data while she spoke.

“Altitude is normal, approaching the target area... Maybe we can move a little faster, if everything goes well, we might be able to test the Starlight flight.”

Nie Yun smiled and said, “Forget about it, the pilots have already been chosen. They’re two guys from the Astronaut Corps.”

Nie Yan sighed and said, “Really? That’s unfortunate.”

Starlight had a dual-wing design, while four of the five engines could rotate to any angles. This new type of aircraft would be able to complete the flight from Earth to low-Earth orbit in a safer and more efficient manner.

An aircraft like that was more interesting to operate than Skyglow.

Nie Yun said, “Nothing unfortunate, we still have other test flights to do, I’m sure they’ll be interesting.”

Nie Yan: “What kind of test flights?”

Nie Yun smiled and said, “Your favorite, transport aircraft... Flying between geosynchronous and lunar transfer orbit.”

A while ago, he heard that Star Sky Technology was planning on using the Skyglow ion thruster propulsion system to develop an interplanetary electric propulsion shuttle that could fly from the Earth to Moon repeatedly.

If this project was successful, then it wouldn’t be long until Skyglow could be retired.

It would at least retire from regular launches.

Nie Yan rolled her eyes and said, “I would rather fly Skyglow. I applied for this role because I was tired of flying transport planes.”

Nie Yun jokingly said, “Not because you wanted to fly higher?”

Nie Yan: "A bit of both... We're here!"

The two reached their target area.

The flight path gradually deviated from the 127-minute orbit, entering an elliptical orbit.

This was the best place to place a moon satellite. Due to the combined gravitational effect of the Earth, the Sun, and the Moon, the core module could maintain a stable orbit for up to 36 months without the need for external propulsion.

With a propulsion system and a small amount of working fluid, the space station could remain in orbit for decades...

After confirming the orbital parameters, Nie Yun calmed himself down and took a deep breath. He placed his hand on the side of his helmet and spoke in a steady voice.

"This is Skyglow, we have reached lunar space station orbit."

Soon after, orders came from the ground command center.

"Begin unloading!"

"Roger that," Nie Yan said. She then reached out, released the cargo safety lock, and pressed the bright red button.

"Begin unloading!"

A muffled rumbling sound was heard, and a silver-white cylindrical module was thrown into space, left behind by Skyglow...

Nie Yun stared at the [Unloading Successful] line on the screen, and he spoke with excitement.

"Unloading successfully!"

"Moon Palace has successfully entered designated orbit!"

"We did it!"

## Chapter 764: Our Moon Palace!

After hearing that the payload had successfully been deployed, the ground command center erupted in deafening cheers.

People hugged and clapped, celebrating this hard-won victory.

Director Li from the State Administration for National Defense stood in front of the console. His wrinkly face began to tear up.

“We did it...”

The silver-colored Moon Palace core module floated steadily above the moon, slowly drifting away from Skyglow.

As Lu Zhou looked at the exciting image on the big screen, he smiled with relief. His stiff shoulders began to relax.

“Yeah... We did it!”

From today onward, the Moon Palace would become the starting point for China’s lunar adventures. The surface and orbit of the Moon would soon be filled with Chinese satellites and equipment...

Journalists from various major media outlets were invited to a special conference room. A spokesman from the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, as well as various representatives from Star Sky Technology and the State Administration for National Defense, answered questions from major media outlets.

On the other hand, the command center was still working.

Even though the Skyglow mission was already complete, for the staff at the ground command center, the mission had only just begun.

They were still responsible for the return of Skyglow, as well as remotely controlling the Moon Palace space station.

Lu Zhou stood in the command center for a while. He didn't want to disturb their work, so he decided to leave.

He walked across the launch site runway and walked toward the launch site entrance. He happened to see a young journalist lady holding a microphone. She had just finished interviewing the runway crew.

The reporter's eyes lit up when she saw Lu Zhou, and she immediately walked over with her cameraman.

"Hello, are you Professor Lu?"

Lu Zhou was in a good mood, so he smiled and said, "Yeah, do you need anything?"

"Is now a good time to talk? I have a few questions from our audience."

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "I'll try my best to answer."

The reporter lady smiled professionally and said, "We all know that Star Sky Technology has become the most advanced aerospace launch technology company in China and even Asia. Will Star Sky Technology expand their business into space station construction or satellite design?"

Lu Zhou thought for a while and replied, "Not at the moment. My vision for Star Sky Technology is to create an interplanetary high-speed shuttle. Maybe our future project will be focused on Mars or even other stars, but right now our project is focused on the research and development of our spacecraft..."

The reporter's eyes lit up.

Her instincts told her that there was a big story behind this.

Without any hesitation, she reached out with her microphone and asked excitedly, "What is the project? Can you disclose any information?"

*Should I let the news out right now?*

Lu Zhou contemplated for a second. He made up his mind and replied, "Considering the fact that future lunar launches will require thousands of tons of carrying capacity, we are researching a fast two-way transport system between the geosynchronous and the lunar orbit. This will be dedicated to

sending materials and equipment between the Earth's and the Moon's orbits, and..."

The reporter excitedly asked, "And?"

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "And we will be able to send civilians to the moon."

...

The same day as the Moon Palace launch, 7 pm Beijing time.

The success of the Moon Palace was officially announced.

After the confidentiality time period passed, major media outlets that participated in the State Administration for National Defense press conference began to publish the conference content to the public.

China's Moon Palace success once again shocked the world.

Ever since the Cold War era, rocket launch technology had rapidly improved. The reach of extraterrestrial planetary probes was at record highs, while the number of satellites and space debris around the Earth had been increasing exponentially.

However, even then, no country had the power to send a ten-thousand-ton space station into moon orbit. Because not only did it require high-thrust rocket and satellite launch technology, but it also required sophisticated satellite control technology.

After all, the mass of the Moon was uneven. The Moon's gravity was small, even compared to planets. Satellites orbiting the Moon would largely be affected by gravitational forces from other planets or stars.

Because of these two factors, it was difficult to maintain the same lunar orbit for a long time. One would have to continuously change the orbit according to the current gravitational forces.

Most lunar satellites had a fairly short life-span; they were usually single-use. However, the Moon Palace space station, which cost tens of billions of yuan, obviously couldn't be abandoned like a normal moon satellite. The service life of the space station was at least 20 years.

It was obvious that without the excellent propulsion control technology acting behind the scenes, the space station would be short-lived. It would be as if the space station were a person with a strong pair of legs, but had a weak mind.

Fortunately, thanks to the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study and Star Sky Technology, China's ion thruster propulsion technology was miles ahead of any other countries' propulsion technology.

The Moon Palace space station was equipped with an ion thruster propulsion system that could continuously provide stable thrust, which reduced the difficulty of the control system.

Of course, even then, the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation had to pay a big price for this technology.

The core capsule consisted of the most advanced technologies from the two major aviation and aerospace giants. Not to mention that the main control computer was from the National Parallel Computer Engineering Technology Research Center.

Not only was this a symbol of China's aerospace technology, but this was a symbol of Chinese technology as a whole!

In addition to the news reports, media outlets covered the entire story behind the design and implementation of the Moon Palace in the form of a ten-minute video.

Due to insufficient preparation for the manned moon landing, Skyglow wasn't able to broadcast live footage to Earth.

However, this time was different.

The upgraded Skyglow communication system used the extra communication bandwidth to transmit high-resolution photos of the Moon Palace. It also recorded the entire process of the Moon Palace unloading.

After the video and photos were edited by professionals, the content was released on news programs and social media sites. The discussion of the Moon Palace exploded...

## Chapter 765: Start With the Bad News

In the video, the silver-colored cylindrical core module quietly floated the Moon's orbit. A fist-sized ion thruster propulsion nozzle slowly pushed the core capsule to turn, leaving behind a blue glow.

The folded solar panels soon began to spread out toward the sun, like the wings of a flying eagle.

The video was only ten minutes long. Skyglow, on the other hand, began to shine from the moonlight.

This scene was like a painting.

In less than half an hour after the video was released, the comments section of the video blew up.

[Is that our Moon Palace? It's so beautiful! (excited)]

[So cool!!!]

[I hope I can go up there in my lifetime.]

[The Moon looks so barren. Maybe we should plant something on there.]

[China is the best! (fist) (fist)]

For many years, China had been behind western countries in the field of aerospace. The Chang'e 5 mission had been hugely criticized.

But now, China managed to break through ion thruster technology. They were able to deliver a space station to Moon orbit, presenting itself as the leader of aerospace.

Only people in the aerospace industry knew how hard-fought this win was!

Less than an hour after the Moon Palace was successfully deployed, the news quickly spread across the world.

NASA first confirmed the news on its official website and Twitter, and this alerted the Roscosmos, European Space Agency, and Japan Aerospace



Exploration Agency (JAXA), who all issued announcements and sent their own congratulatory messages to China.

Regardless of whether or not the countries had a competitive relationship with China, this showed their acknowledgment of China's strength.

Even though NASA didn't want to, they had to admit that China's actions on the Moon had far exceeded their expectations.

Even they weren't sure if they could place a space station on the moon. In some sense, China just surpassed them.

After various major space agencies successively confirmed the news that the Moon Palace was successfully deployed, the reporters from BBC combined interviews with NASA officials and the spokesperson of the China National Space Administration, to give an unbiased report...

"... So far, it seems like China has taken the lead in the exploration and development of lunar resources. No country has ever had the capabilities to place a permanent facility in lunar orbit.

"According to NASA experts, Moon Palace's success was mainly due to the great progress made by China in ion thruster propulsion technology. It is not easy to achieve accurate control with the traditional chemical propulsion methods, but with ion thruster propulsion, it is much more precise.

"I have to say, this is very surprising. Compared to traditional aerospace powers, China is far inferior to America and Russia. I mean, the Americans have begun to develop a commercially available spaceflight.

"But somehow, they did it.

"The success of the Moon Palace is only a small step in human spaceflight, but it's a big step for civilization as a whole!"

In this unbiased report, BBC spoke positively on China and the Moon Palace. After the video was posted on Youtube and other video sites, the report ignited widespread discussion among foreign netizens.

In contrast to the excitement of domestic netizens, these discussions were more or less filled with envy and hatred.

Especially the Americans netizens... They were still high from the successful life support system launch. However, less than a month later, China announced that its core module was in lunar orbit, taking away America's attention.

They were all a little disheartened.

Of course, some people didn't care.

For example, a well-known talk show host Jimmy Tang posted a tweet to cheer on NASA.

[I heard that China's Moon Palace was successfully deployed? I don't know why you guys have your heads down, it's not that amazing.

[Even though China successfully sent their space station to the moon, NASA has begun to colonize Mars, which is tens of millions of kilometers away. It is obvious who is ahead in the aerospace game.

[What's more is that, we also have plans to build a space station on the moon, like our "Lunar Gateway" project! However, we are more concerned about safety, that's why we carefully set the construction period to begin in 2022.

[Our BFR rocket is approaching Mars. Soon, we will be able to receive news of the life support system deployment. Then we will be able to send our colonists to a new planet!

[My name is Jimmy Tang, catch me next Saturday night on the BBC, where I'll be talking with three astronauts.

[If you are interested in the Ares program, please follow me and my show!

[...]

The tension brought by this space race quickly spread to other technical fields.

A black car parked outside the White House, Washington DC.

Director Carson was wearing a blue suit. He opened the car door and walked out. He began to quickly walk toward the White House.

After Director Carson arrived at the president's office, he knocked on the door. After hearing "come in", he reached out and pushed open the door.

When he entered the office, the president was sitting at his desk, and he seemed to be staring at a document.

Director Carson hesitated for a second. He wasn't sure if he should interrupt the president.

However, he made up his mind.

Half an hour ago, he received two pieces of news, both of them were important...

Director Carson gulped and took a deep breath.

"Mr. President."

The monotonous voice broke through the silent office.

The president seemed to be contemplating something as he stared at the document on his desk.

However, after a brief silence, the president responded, "Director Carson."

Director Carson cleared his throat and said, "Sir, I have good news and bad news, which one do you want to hear first?"

The president seemed to be tangled in his thoughts. He twirled his pen and suddenly spoke.

"I like to eat the broccoli first before I enjoy my steak."

After hearing the president's answer, Director Carson lowered his head and replied, "Sorry, I don't know what you mean."

"What I mean is, I hate the taste of broccoli, I hate having to eat it after enjoying my delicious steak..."

The president put his pen down on the document with a CIA stamp. He looked at Director Carson and crossed his fingers.

"Let's start with the bad news."

## Chapter 766: News of Victory

Jinling Institute for Advanced Study.

Director's office.

Lu Zhou sat in front of his desk as he meticulously reviewed the documents on his desk.

Ever since he became the chief designer of the Lunar Orbit Committee, he had been extra-busy.

The entire nation's funding for the lunar space station project was controlled by him.

In other words, the old man who served as the chairman of the committee was responsible for verifying the total amount of funds. This was based on the scientific, economic, and cultural values of the lunar orbital project. This determined how much funding the lunar orbital project would receive.

Lu Zhou, as the chief designer, was responsible for the allocation of these funds. In other words, which research and development projects these funds would be allocated to.

The entire outer space exploration plan was like a small boat sailing in the sea, and he was in the captain's position. If he were to make a mistake, the entire boat could sink.

Therefore, even though he wasn't interested in these financial matters, he had to patiently read every document in its entirety. He identified the more reliable projects and signed his name on them.

Lu Zhou was thinking about a report on the technical feasibility of lunar mining equipment when he heard the door knock.

Lu Zhou put down his pen and looked at the door. He then cleared his throat and said, "Come in."

The door was pushed open, and a young female assistant in business attire walked in while holding a stack of documents.

“Professor, these are the documents from China Agricultural University and the China National Space Administration.”

Lu Zhou nodded and replied, “Got it, just place it on the desk.”

“Okay.” The female assistant nodded and placed the documents on the corner of the desk. She then asked in a soft voice, “Is there anything else I can do?”

“Get me a cup of coffee, please.”

“Okay, professor!”

The young female assistant nodded and walked toward the water dispenser. Soon, she brought over a cup of instant mocha and quietly left the office.

Lu Zhou sipped his coffee as he flipped through the two new documents.

Generally speaking, these documents were good news. Especially the one from the China National Space Administration. They praised Jinling Institute for Advanced Study for their outstanding contribution to the lunar orbit space station project.

The successful deployment of the Moon Palace’s core module gave China an advantage to explore lunar resources while giving China international respect.

Also contained in this document was the concept map from the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation of the first phase of the space station, as well as the schedule of the remaining space station components.

Lu Zhou was going to discuss with the Lunar Orbit Committee to determine the launch timetable of the unity module, energy module, experimental module, work module, and other space station components.

Not only was this good news for the Moon Palace, but there was also good news from the Dzoosotoyn Elisen Desert.

A month ago, while Lu Zhou was still busy with the Moon Palace, the first phase of the Garden project was complete. With Professor Hu Yang leading the project, Biosphere A had gone into operation.

So far, Biosphere A had successfully been operating for one month. In this month, the volunteers enclosed in the artificial biosphere successfully achieved their expected goals. They had been living with limited amounts of water and other resources.

“Closed system life support technology” was one of the most important technologies for colonizing the Moon or even Mars; it was also an important component of the lunar orbit project.

The United States once dominated this field with its “Biosphere 2” experiment. The life support system on the Ares was an embodiment of their Biosphere 2 technology.

If China planned to colonize the Moon or even distant planets, they had to unlock this part of aerospace technology.

After seeing Professor Hu’s report, Lu Zhou had a satisfied look on his face.

If everything went well, China might be able to send their colonists to the surface of the Moon by next year.

He heard knocking sounds at his door again.

Lu Zhou put down the document in his hand and looked at the door.

“Come in.”

Hou Guang, the director of the Aerospace Science and Technology Institute, opened the door and quickly walked in. Before Lu Zhou could ask what happened, he spoke first.

“Good news and bad news, which one do you want first?”

Seeing how serious Hou Guang seemed, Lu Zhou paused for a second and replied with a smile.

He then said nonchalantly, “Let’s... start with the good news.”

Hou Guang: “Good news is that the plant growth unit we deployed on the moon has successfully harvested the first batch of potatoes!”

Lu Zhou had a surprised look on his face.

“Already? This soon?”

Even though he had never planted any potatoes before, he heard that potatoes generally take three months to harvest.

It had been less than two months since the deployment of the plant growth unit, so he was quite amazed by the progress.

Hou Guang smiled and said, “It’s alright. We improved the potato seeds, not to mention the plant growth unit was able to keep the environment at a maximum growth temperature, so two months is not that fast.”

The cost of the potatoes grown in space was undoubtedly more expensive than potatoes grown on Earth.

But even then, because of the astronomical launch costs, the cost of growing food on the moon was much cheaper than launching the food from Earth.

Also, growing food on the Moon meant self-sufficiency...

“This is indeed good news.” Lu Zhou paused for a second and asked, “What’s the bad news then?”

“Bad news is that we received news this morning...” Hou Guang took a deep breath and said, “The BFR rocket launched by Space-X last month has landed on Mars at 13:00 Beijing time today.”

*They already landed?!*

Lu Zhou sat up straight in his office chair, and he immediately asked, “How was the landing?”

Hou Guang looked at him and replied, “Apparently... it was successful.”

Chapter 767: Equally Matched

The second weekend in April.

The morning silence in North America was disrupted by a newspaper headline.

A striking newspaper headline on the Washington Post shocked everyone.

[Major breakthrough in the Ares program! Life support system has landed successfully! A new era of space exploration is coming!]

The Washington Post was the largest and most authoritative newspaper in America, ahead of The New York Times. They played an important role in the Watergate scandal. They were also far more reliable than other media outlets.

White-collar workers were usually uninterested in newspapers, but after they saw this eye-catching headline, they couldn't help but fork out a dollar and stuff the newspaper into their briefcases.

The freshly-printed newspapers were all sold out!

The Washington Post had to urge their printing factory to print millions of newspapers and quickly send them to major newsstands and sales outlets.

South of the San Francisco bay area, near Silicon Valley.

A couple of hungover office workers were eating breakfast at a diner, and some retired old men sat around them. They were clearly here to kill time.

A white man sitting on the counter muttered quietly to himself while reading a newspaper. He reached out, grabbed his old friend, and spoke in disbelief.

"Hey, did you hear? Space-X's BFR rocket delivered the life support system to Mars!"

"Jesus... That's crazy!"

"I know! But that's not all, I heard that the new BFS spacecraft has been equipped with BFR rockets. Space-X has already submitted its launch plan to NASA. Elon Musk is going to put a man on Mars!"

"That sounds interesting. Maybe we're on the verge of a revolution. We should pop open a bottle of champagne and celebrate."

"Oh, please not, it's too early to get drunk."

"Haha, who cares? For America!"

Soon after, the diner waitress brought over some beers.



A hungover man was woken up by a loud television near the bar counter. He opened his eyes. When he heard the conversation next to him, he held up his wine glass and spoke.

“For America... Cheers!”

On the other hand, the host of the morning news broadcast was reporting on the football game last night when he was handed a manuscript. Immediately, he had a joyful expression on his face.

“Breaking news... According to NASA, the BFR rocket launched last month has successfully reached Mars and delivered the life support system.

“This is all so sudden, allow me to take a deep breath...” The host took several deep breaths, looked at the camera, and said, “I can’t believe it! We did it!”

...

The Americans weren’t the only ones who were shocked by the BFR rocket.

After NASA made the official announcement on its website, the news that the life support system successfully landed on Mars spread across the world.

Space-X immediately held a press conference, which was hosted by famous engineer and entrepreneur Elon Musk. He spoke to the public on Space-X’s role in the Ares program and how the legendary Space-X BFR super rocket was able to send a 25-ton payload to Mars.

Musk was wearing a black suit and a grey shirt. According to legend, he only had one outfit in his closet.

Musk spoke passionately.

“... The life support system is just the first step of Ares. We will eventually send people to Mars, and humans will become a multi-planetary species.

“One day, people of all gender, nationality, and age will have the chance to travel and live on Mars...

“The future is here...

“Thank you, everyone!”

The moment he finished speaking, the conference venue erupted in applause.

After the press conference.

After the news that Space-X successfully landed its rocket on Mars, the Space-X stock price shot up like a rocket.

Not just that, but Blue Origin, which was involved in the design of the life support system and other high-tech Silicon Valley aerospace companies, soared in value.

The space race seemed to be at an inflexion point.

With China's lunar strategies on the rise, the United States once again demonstrated its unstoppable strength in the field of aerospace.

Even Lu Zhou had to admit that a 25-ton Mars delivery was indeed impressive.

After other international media outlets reported on the success of the BFR rocket, the BBC finally released its report.

After reporting on China's Lunar Gateway space station, these British folks spoke objectively on the first phase of the Ares program.

"... Elon Musk's Space-X has the potential to become the Maersk of the universe. If the Falcon 9 rocket is a small wooden ship, then the BFR is a metal steamship.

"Space-X's never-ending exploration of technology clearly demonstrates their determination to be brave and courageous. We should look forward to their future endeavors in the field of technology and aerospace...

"It's still too early to talk about these things, but if they keep up the momentum, Space-X could totally dominate the global aerospace transport industry.

"What's interesting is that we noticed Professor Lu from China said in an interview that he would, 'turn Star Sky Technology into a future interplanetary railway company'.

"It seems like Star Sky Technology, which dominates more than 80% of China's space launch missions, might be Space-X's biggest competitor.

“The space race between China and America is gradually becoming more and more intense.

“The first phase of this fight seemed to end in a draw.

“Whether it’s China or America, both sides seem to have done well on their projects. They both seem to have tricks hidden up their sleeves.

“One is a world-renowned mathematician, the other is a world-class engineer and technology entrepreneur... Who is going to win this competition?”

Chapter 768: We’ll Find Out Soon!

The space race between China and the United States caused a lot of discussion on Chinese social media networks. The discussions were particularly fierce when it came to comparing the lunar space station to the Mars life support system.

Most people looked at this from an objective and rational standpoint.

For example, those that supported the United States said that the BFR rocket used the most advanced liquid oxygen methane engine in the world and that the BFR rocket could reach a maximum thrust of 138 trillion Newtons. All of these specs trumped Skyglow.

Not to mention that Mars was tens of millions of kilometers away. The transport difficulty wasn’t even comparable; obviously, the United States achieved more.

Those that supported China looked at it from a “usefulness” perspective. After all, Mars was millions of kilometers away and had a launch window of once every two years. On the other hand, the Moon was “so close to home”.

Objectively speaking, either side had valid reasons.

However, Lu Zhou didn’t pay attention to these online discussions at all.

In his opinion, these discussions were all meaningless.

Whether it was the resource mining of the Moon or the exploration of Mars, these were all short-term money-losing projects. Whether it was the helium and titanium ores on the Moon or the rich methane reserves on Mars, they were both far away from Earth.

Just like how centuries ago, before the Age of Discovery, no one knew where the new colonists would go...

However, the Moon was a lot closer.

But, looking at it from an economics perspective, the space program was bound to lose money. Sometimes one couldn't look at it purely from an economics perspective.

At least for China, the political, scientific, and cultural benefits gained from their space programs couldn't be measured by money.

Take the Moon Palace project as an example. As the first country in the world to deploy a space station in lunar orbit, other countries that wanted to participate in lunar-related scientific research projects would be forced to sign agreements with China.

Or take Germany for example. As the first country that had reached an agreement with China on controllable fusion technology, they naturally had already begun negotiations on using China's Moon Palace space station.

According to the negotiation results, after the first phase of the Moon Palace was complete, China would reserve a scientific research spot for the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research. China allowed Germany to send one scientific researcher to the Moon Palace.

In exchange, the Max Planck Institute for Solar System Research would cooperate with Chinese research institutes on projects related to lunar resources.

Britain, France, the European Union, Russia, Japan, and other countries had also begun negotiations with China on the Moon Palace.

China was happy to cooperate with these countries. They even reserved a spot on Moon Palace for an American astronaut.

The competitive relationship between countries was always relative, never absolute.

Even though China had a clear position in the world, international relations were often far more nuanced.

Even during the tensest moments of the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union still collaborated on mutually beneficial aerospace and controllable fusion projects.

So far, the tension between China and the United States was far from the Cold War. China had maintained a peaceful position and never taken the initiative to provoke other countries. Of course, if the United States wanted to cooperate, there was certainly no reason for China to refuse.

3However, this was all based on the premise that the United States was willing to share its Mars colony resources or other things of equal value...

Lu Zhou didn't know how the Ministry of Foreign Affairs negotiations were going, but he didn't care.

That was none of his business.

These trivial matters had little to do with the Lunar Orbit Committee.

He had more urgent matters to worry about...

Jin Ling City.

Aerospace Science and Technology Institute.

A conference on the lunar orbit project was being held.

All of the big names in the aerospace industry were at this conference.

People such as Academician Yuan Huanmin, Systems Director Zhang, and other big names were all gathered here.

After a short opening statement, the conference officially began. Lu Zhou walked on stage and looked at everyone. He then said concisely, "I believe you have all heard that the United States completed its first phase of the Ares program.

“According to NASA’s detailed disclosure, the BFR rocket did not use the traditional Hohmann transfer orbit. Instead, it used a direct transfer orbit to enter Mars’ gravitational system.”

The moment he finished speaking, loud whispers were heard in the conference room.

Even though a lot of people already knew about the direct transfer orbit, they were still shocked.

Up until now, spacecraft that traveled to Mars had all used the Hohmann transfer orbit as this was the most fuel-efficient route.

However, this orbit could only be used once every two years, and it took 180 days of flying to reach Mars.

When it came to space probes, the 180 days of flight was acceptable. But when it came to sending passengers to Mars, 6 months seemed like a long time.

Therefore, as the main transport vehicle of the Ares program, the BFR rocket flew a faster, shorter flight path. Compared to the Hohmann transfer orbit, the BFR rocket only needed 30 to 120 days to complete the journey to Mars. It also had a much longer launch window period, and there was no need to wait two years for the next launch.

The price was obviously fuel.

Even though on the surface the BFR rocket seemed to increase the cost of flying to Mars, in fact, shortening the flight time meant that it could reduce the resource load. This meant less fresh water, oxygen, and food. Therefore, flying a less fuel-efficient route could actually reduce costs...

Even though not using the Hohmann transfer orbit was a crazy plan to everyone in the aerospace industry, it was obvious how advanced Space-X was!

Lu Zhou looked around the conference room and didn’t say anything, he quietly waited for the discussion to die down.

A few minutes passed by before a professor sitting in the conference room raised his hand and spoke.

“I have something to say.”

Lu Zhou nodded toward the professor and spoke.

“Please go ahead.”

The middle-aged professor adjusted his glasses and slowly stood up.

“I think the success of the BFR rocket proves to us that chemical rockets have not reached a bottleneck.

“Maybe we should look at our development plan again. I’m not denying the importance of ion thruster propulsion systems, but I think it is too early to give up on traditional chemical rockets.”

Lu Zhou looked at the professor for a while. He then suddenly asked, “If I gave you 50 years and a billion USD of funding per year, are you certain you can reach the same level of thrust as the BFR?”

The professor didn’t expect Lu Zhou to ask this question. He hesitated for a bit and looked uncertain.

After a while, he shook his head and answered honestly.

“It would be difficult.”

The BFR rocket was at the pinnacle of liquid oxygen methane engines. There was no match for this beast of a rocket.

It was impossible for China to pass America in this aspect.

The middle-aged professor didn’t even dare to brag.

Lu Zhou didn’t say anything. He signaled the professor to sit down.

“That’s right, like you said, it’s difficult.

“Maybe there is still room for improvement in the chemical propulsion systems. If we improve our engines, we can fly for longer and further. But beating our opponents through chemical rockets is impossible.

“Therefore, we should focus on ion thruster propulsion systems. That is our only advantage. We should maintain it.”

After a pause, Lu Zhou looked around the conference room and spoke.

“Even though the BFR rocket was a huge success, we shouldn’t belittle ourselves.

“We have lower thrust numbers than them, but we have our own advantages! Chemical rockets will never have the same amount of impulse as our ion thruster rockets.

“I have announced a while ago that Star Sky Technology is developing a more flexible and more suitable spacecraft, for low-Earth orbit flights. The research has come to an end, and it’s time to reveal some secrets.”

Lu Zhou looked at the big projector behind him and pressed the laser pointer in his hand.

Soon after, a three-dimensional concept image of Starlight was presented to everyone.

When Academician Yuan looked at the picture, he couldn’t help but stand up.

“What’s this?!”

Academician Yuan wasn’t the only one who was surprised by what he was seeing.

Everyone looked at the uniquely shaped aerospaceplane, and voices of exclaim spread throughout the conference room.

Lu Zhou looked at Academician Yuan and smiled as he spoke.

“It’s called Starlight! It’s our new generation of aerospaceplanes.”

Sun Yuanpei was sitting next to Academician Yuan. He stared at the image with his eyes wide open. He couldn’t help but question the design.

“Is this design... feasible?”

*Four engines on the four twin-shaft fixed wings, with one main engine at the tail...*

*This looks ridiculous!*



“We have already proven it is technically feasible. As for practically feasible...” Lu Zhou paused for a second and said, “We’ll find out soon!”

Chapter 769: Three Warriors

Every space flight was an adventure, every spacecraft test was a gamble.

No one knew what the outcome of a spacecraft launch would be.

Starlight had two pairs of rotating wings, and these would increase its maneuverability. However, this also added a certain amount of risk.

Even though the servomotor control system was designed by Xiao Ai, Lu Zhou wasn’t certain that Starlight would be without accidents.

All he could do was try his best to minimize the chance of an accident...

During the second half of the meeting, they talked about the timetable of the Starlight test flight, as well as the Moon Palace unity module launch next month.

Both the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation and China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation agreed that the launch should be scheduled next month. After the unity module combines with the core module, the Moon Palace floating in lunar orbit would have more room for experiments. Moon Palace would also be able to dock with manned spacecraft such as Skyglow.

Therefore, even though it was still quite small, this could truly be considered a “space docking port”!

While China was planning the Starlight test flight, the Americans were also cooking up their secret sauce.

The life support system on Mars was successfully activated by the ground command center, and the three volunteers had also completed their training. There was no reason for the Americans to wait any longer.

With approval from the United States Congress, NASA quickly announced that the Ares program was moving to the next stage.

They were going to send out their first colonists!

After the news was announced, the news caused a worldwide sensation.

Even though people knew the Americans were eventually going to send someone to Mars, none of them expected that it was going to be this soon.

Perhaps China's advancements in the aerospace field really made NASA anxious. NASA might have wanted to prove to its country that it was still the king of aerospace.

Before the launch, The New York Times and Columbia TV, which were sponsored by Space-X, arranged a talk show for the three volunteers.

Not only was this to bid farewell to the three heroic volunteers, but it was also an opportunity to recruit more volunteers through this media event.

The third phase of the Ares program was to send 10 functional modules to Mars and 50 colonists to the "Mars Village". For Space-X and NASA, eliminating people's fear of going to space was essential for the survival of the Ares program...

On the day of the talk show, the famous talk show host Jimmy Tang came on stage wearing a fancy suit. He gently bowed toward the audience and smiled with his pearly white teeth.

"Hello, hello, welcome to today's special space warriors talk show. If you've accidentally tuned in just now, then you just hit the lottery!"

The audience chuckled at Jimmy Tang's skillful attempt to heat up the atmosphere. Jimmy Tang then looked at the big screen behind him.

"I'm sure I won't have to explain what today is about. Our opponent sent a Moon Palace to the moon, but NASA is going to destroy them! Not literally, but in a metaphorical sense."

Jimmy looked at the audience members and continued to speak with a fake smile on his face.

"Everyone, don't get too excited. Even though our opponents are strong, they are still 60 million kilometers behind us. The victory is in our hands!"

Jimmy raised both of his hands and spoke passionately.

“Therefore, rather than calling it a competition, I’d like to call it an adventure! Our warriors, our heroes, will cross tens or even hundreds of kilometers to the unexplored planet, opening up civilization’s territory.

“This great plan has never been about winning a competition! The only worthy opponent is the future!”

The atmosphere was at its peak.

Jimmy smoothly transitioned into today’s show.

“I’m honored to welcome these three heroes to our show!”

The thunderous applause was mixed in with whistling and cheers.

The three astronauts appeared one after the other as they walked onto the stage and sat down.

The applause and background music slowly subsided.

Jimmy lifted the microphone and spoke to the audience.

“It’s my honor to introduce Johnson! The captain astronaut! As an ex-marine, he is a true warrior and patriot, let’s give it up for Johnson!”

The audience erupted in applause again.

Johnson smiled at the audience and nodded.

After the applause subsided, Jimmy smiled at Johnson and said, “Looks like you’re quite popular, why don’t you introduce yourself!”

“Hello, everyone, I am the captain of this expedition. It’s an honor to be here.”

Johnson was a typical Caucasian male with a masculine appearance and a built figure. He also had a charismatic vibe and appearance.

As he explained the details of the second phase of the Ares program, the audience listened carefully.

After Johnson finished speaking, he looked at Jimmy.

Jimmy smiled and asked, “So, have you been on an aircraft carrier before?”

“Yeah, I have.”

Jimmy said, “Then what made you interested in aerospace? Or rather, why did you want to join the Ares program.”

Johnson contemplated for a second and said, “Because it has always been my dream... Also, it’s because of my children.”

“Your children?” Jimmy looked surprised, and he asked, “Can you elaborate?”

Family was a core part of American values, especially when it came to children.

Johnson paused for a second before explaining, “I have a loving wife and two kids at home. My kids think of me as a hero, and I want to be a better role model for them. That’s why I decided to sign up for the Ares program. I didn’t have any expectations, so I was surprised to actually be chosen.”

Jimmy smiled and said, “Fate works in wonderful ways. I’m sure your kids will think of you as a role model!”

Johnson nodded and smiled.

“Thank you.”

The camera began to rotate, focusing on Johnson’s two teammates.

The good looking female astronaut was in her twenties, and her name was Julia. She didn’t seem to have an amazing background, and she was clearly a little nervous.

According to her self-introduction, before being accepted as an astronaut, she was a secondary school teacher in Amsterdam.

The other black guy was named Travis, and he was more jacked than Johnson. Apparently he was a professional football player and played as a quarterback on the Atlanta team.

For some reason, while Travis was being interviewed, it seemed like he was a little dazed, like he didn’t sleep well.

Jimmy joked, “You must have been so excited for this interview that you didn’t sleep well.”

“Maybe...” Travis forced a smile and said, “I’m just too tired, you know, training is not easy.”

“Take it easy, my friend.” Captain Johnson patted Travis on the shoulder and said, “Our return will be glorious!”

“That is if we do return...”

Travis tried to smile, but his eyes were looking around erratically.

Jimmy turned his attention to the audience and spoke passionately.

“Our warriors are ready to depart! The huge ship is about to set sail!

“The launch time is 8 pm next Wednesday, and CNN will broadcast live at the launch site!

“God will protect our warriors, the torch of Liberty will light their way! Let’s send our blessings to our warriors!”

The studio was once again filled with applause.

The show came to an end.

The “Heart of Gold” launch date was the exact same day as the Chinese’s Starlight launch. No one knew whether this was intentional or not.

The two sides were clearly competing against one another.

This competition was becoming more and more interesting...

Chapter 770: Hope in the Sky

“Five!

“Four!

“Three!

“Two!

“One!

“Zero!

“Ignite!”

A blue arc of light projected from the flared wings of the aerospaceplane.

Starlight was launched from the Jinling aerospace launch site, and with the ground command center watching, it disappeared into the clouds.

The launch plan went smoothly.

After leaving the troposphere, Starlight’s pair of short ailerons slowly rotated, and this changed the angle of the flight.

The blue arc of light began to shine brighter and brighter, and Starlight worked against gravity and flew toward the boundless deep space on a path that was tangent to Earth.

Time slowly passed by...

After nearly an hour of flying, Starlight lived up to expectations and steadily broke through the edge of the atmosphere, reaching low-Earth orbit. This was the beginning of its 72-hour orbital flight.

The test pilot, Xu Zhenghong, who was sitting in the cockpit, took a closer look at the altitude, temperature, and other spacecraft data.

After confirming that everything was operating normally, he sighed in relief.

This was his 57th test flight mission, the highest test flight he had ever been on. He never thought he would fly a plane out of the atmosphere.

That was until one day, his superior contacted him and arranged for him to test fly Starlight...

Even though there was an escape capsule on the spacecraft, only God knew whether it worked or not.

Xu Zhenghong reached out and turned on the automatic cruise mode. He disconnected his spacesuit from the cabin life support system and pressed the side of his helmet. He took a deep breath and spoke.

“This is Starlight, we have successfully reached target orbit, requesting further instructions.”

A noise came from the communication channel.

After the communication signal stabilized, the command center quickly sent a response.

“This is the ground command center. Congratulations on completing the first stage of the test flight. Please maintain orbital altitude for two hours. The next flight test will begin in two hours.”

Xu Zhenghong: “Roger that, spacecraft has already entered cruise mode.”

Liu Biao was sitting in the co-pilot seat. He also disconnected the life support system. He looked out the window and spoke with a smile.

“The view is quite nice up here.”

Xu Zhenghong looked at the sparkling lights on Earth and the boundless universe above. He then smiled and replied, “Yeah, it’s not bad.”

This was probably the most beautiful thing he had ever seen in his life.

Suddenly, far, far away, a silver spacecraft slowly rose to the edge of the atmosphere.

Liu Biao squinted his eyes and asked, “What is that?”

“It’s probably Space-X’s BFS spacecraft. I heard they are also launching today.” Xu Zhenghong looked at him and said, “I’m surprised you saw it. It looks tiny from here.”

Liu Biao smiled awkwardly.

“Let’s fly over there and say hi to them.”

Xu Zhenghong: “Amazing idea, you should tell the command center that.”

Liu Biao scratched his head and said, "Yeah, I should."

Xu Zhenghong paused for a second and said, "Alright, enough joking around. Rest for ten minutes, then start working."

Liu Biao sat up straight in his co-pilot seat.

"Yes, sir!"

...

On the other side of the Earth.

The BFR spacecraft also noticed Starlight.

Even though neither of them was equipped with dedicated spacecraft detecting radar, because they were orbiting close-by at the same height, they could faintly see each other.

Travis looked at the silver spacecraft outside the window and suddenly said, "It's a tradition in the marines to write something on a piece of paper and stick it on the window."

Johnson raised his eyebrows and spoke.

"That's not a tradition in the marines, it's the air force... Even if we did stick something on the window, there is no way they can read it."

"Yeah, I guess," Travis muttered to himself.

Unlike the two big men, Julia was completely amazed by the blue planet behind the spacecraft.

After looking out the window for a long time, Julia said, "It's gorgeous..."

Travis looked at Julia and replied, "It sure is."

"Speaking of which, we all trained at different training bases." Johnson looked at the two and smiled as he said, "Let's get to know each other."

Travis looked at him and asked, "What should we talk about?"



“Talk about life, dreams, why we’re sitting here, why we signed up for Mars... Damn, if only there were a bottle of whiskey here,” Johnson said as he scratched his head.

Julia quietly said, “Living supplies are only unlocked after landing... That’s what I heard during training.”

Travis didn’t care about the whiskey.

“Didn’t we talk about our lives and dreams on the talk show?”

Johnson shrugged and made a helpless gesture.

“I spoke about it, you guys didn’t.”

Travis hesitated for a second and looked at Julia.

“Ladies first.”

“Oh? Me?” Julia looked around and sighed. She then said, “Okay then, but promise you won’t laugh at me. I came here because there was a problem with my relationship...”

Johnson: “Problem with your relationship? Breakup? Divorce? Oh, wait... Sorry, I shouldn’t be asking.”

“Breakup.” Julia went silent for a while and said, “Maybe it’s not a big deal to you guys, but it really broke me. I wanted to pick myself up and live somewhere else.”

Travis raised his eyebrows and said in disbelief, “So that’s why you decided to sign up to the Ares program?”

“Correct.” Julia forced out a smile and said, “Surprising, isn’t it? All my colleagues were shocked. No one expected me to actually be chosen... The immigration department quickly approved my application and Space-X bought me a plane ticket. I thought about it and decided that it was a good idea, so...”

Julia shrugged and said, “So that’s how I ended up here.”

“That’s ridiculous...” Travis looked at Julia and said, “If you’re leaving Earth over a breakup, then I have to leave the solar system.”

“Hey, don’t say that.” Johnson tapped Travis on the shoulder and said, “The lady has finished speaking. It’s your turn now. I’ve always been curious, why did a football quarterback turn into an astronaut?”

Travis hesitated for a bit and shrugged.

“Because of... debt.”

Johnson was surprised, and he said, “Credit card?”

“Kind of...” Travis looked away.

Johnson smiled and patted him encouragingly on the shoulder.

“Haha, there are no debt collectors on Mars, so you’re free.”

Travis smiled but didn’t say anything.

Julia looked at him. From her woman’s instincts, she could tell that Travis wasn’t telling the whole story.

The reason why he signed up for this expedition wasn’t just because of a debt.

However, Johnson didn’t pick up on these details. He just felt like Travis didn’t want to talk about it, so he dropped the conversation.

A person’s past wasn’t important, what was important was how they handled the future.

They were all teammates, and they were all facing the same problem...

After the conversation gates were opened, the atmosphere gradually warmed up.

Johnson looked at his two teammates and nodded with satisfaction.

As the “captain” of this flight, in addition to being responsible for the overall operation, he was also responsible for the mental state of his teammates.

After all, they had to sit in this claustrophobic spacecraft for two months. It was no different than sitting in jail.

Time slowly passed by, and the blue planet slowly disappeared.

Just like that, the BFS spacecraft left synchronous orbit. It then sailed into the deep space, toward the red fiery planet...

Chapter 771: No One Can Stop Me

Starlight roared through the clear skies and landed vertically on the tarmac.

The two astronauts walking out of the spacecraft were surrounded by the ground crew. The astronauts waved their hands at the reporters in the distance and boarded their car. They were heading toward the medical office for a simple examination.

The 72-hour flight mission was successful!

The test flight was completed perfectly.

This showed that Lu Zhou's conclusion was correct.

Even though there was some deviation from Lu Zhou's theoretical data, Starlight's working medium fluid usage was significantly reduced.

Especially for the denser sections of the atmosphere.

Not just that, but because the speed of the spacecraft decreased by a significant amount, the heat output of Starlight also decreased. This reduced the maintenance cost.

Starlight would officially serve at the Jinling aerospace launch site and jointly undertake the lunar transfer orbit mission with Skyglow.

On the other hand, the second day after Starlight completed its 72-hour test flight, Skyglow, which completed its lunar orbit mission, landed on the Jinling launch site.

The Moon Palace core module had already been in orbit for two weeks. During this two-week observation period, the core module was found to be operating normally.

Academician Yuan Huanmin, who was in the command tower, looked at Nie Yun and Nie Yan walk out of Skyglow, and he sighed in relief.

Over the past three days, he and several of his students, as well as engineers and technicians of the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, spent 24 hours a day at the Jinling launch site.

Now that Moon Palace was finally on track, they could take a break.

Far across the Pacific Ocean, the Americans were also celebrating.

Space-X's BFS spacecraft successfully left the Earth-Moon system, carrying three astronauts tens of millions of kilometers away.

This was the first time that humans left the Earth-Moon system.

This was also the first time humanity had sent colonists to another planet.

Even though China was the first to put a space station in lunar orbit, NASA had proven its dominance in far-distance aerospace navigation. NASA expressed in an interview that the Ares program funding would not interfere with the Lunar Gateway funding.

Not just that, but NASA's "Lunar Gateway" space station, which was scheduled to begin in 2022, was now scheduled to the second half of 2021. Space-X's Dragon spacecraft was going to send the "Lunar Gateway" core module to lunar orbit.

If the Americans could successfully place a space station in lunar orbit, then they would have undoubtedly won the space race.

The United States seemed to be at the forefront of human exploration again.

At least that was what the world thought...

The Ares program and the Moon Palace project had both been going full force ahead, and scientists and related aerospace practitioners had been trying their hardest to defeat the other.

It seemed like there were new aerospace technologies born every day.

The contest between the two super countries created a futuristic illusion.

In fact, it might not entirely be an illusion.

Because of the space race, large amounts of funds had gone into the aerospace research field. Major universities had created majors in outer space exploration and resource development. Many aerospace research projects also received funding...

Because of the funding flowing into aerospace technology, other technology fields were also growing at an unimaginable rate.

The most obvious was the medical industry.

Just a week after the BFS Heart of Gold spacecraft launched, the Washington Post released another breaking news.

Significant progress had been made in dormancy cabin technology. Johnson & Johnson and Blue Origin had successfully thawed and awakened the monkeys that had been frozen for 67 days!

The international community responded to the news.

Even though the monkeys' body tissues suffered various degrees of damage and had signs of dementia after waking up, this "resurrection" still shocked the clinical and biology world!

Leading the project was Professor Grange of Harvard University. When Nature ran a highlight of his article, he even described his research as the "same level of a breakthrough as controllable fusion technology".

In fact, even though biological freezing and dormancy sounded like science fiction, examples could be seen in nature.

Take the Siberian Salamandridae as an example. The Salamandridae living in Sakha would climb into the cracks of gelisol, where they would stay frozen for a long time.

The longest recorded time spent frozen was 90 years.

Theoretically, if living animals could survive the harsh environment of being frozen and stay dormant, they could effectively "time travel" into the future. Insects in many extreme environments had more or less similar capabilities.

The problem was how to achieve this in mammals!

When the scientists researched the technology, they found that when freezing and resuscitating animal cells, there was a dangerous temperature zone, which was between 0 to -60C.

Long periods of time spent in this temperature range could lead to the permanent death of the organism.

Avoiding the dangerous temperature zone and safely reaching -120C was the main part of the technology.

Professor Grange, who worked at Johnson & Johnson Pharmaceuticals, used a frozen slow-release agent to fix this problem. After anesthetizing the organism, the organism would then be soaked with a special slow-release agent, after which the freezing process would begin.

So far, this technology had been sponsored by the Alcor Life Extension Foundation. Many multi-billionaire rich men and the Arabic royal family had expressed their interest in this technology.

Most sponsors had stated in interviews that they hoped that the technology could allow them to time travel into the distant future.

In their opinion, in the distant future, perhaps human society would have found a way to cure almost all diseases and achieved immortality.

A member of the Arabic royal family said that he would consider dividing his wealth into seven pieces before going dormant. He planned on giving them to four different companies and three banks.

If everything were to go according to plan, when he woke up, he would still be a rich man living in the future.

Not to mention that the growth of his money could make him one of the richest people in the world...

As long as inflation wasn't too ridiculous.

Of course, even though the ultra-rich were optimistic about this technology, many liberals and socialists were worried.

In particular, the well-known Nobel Prize in Economics winner, Professor Angus Deaton, said in an interview with the media that the technology was not

as beautiful as everyone had imagined. Frequent use of this technology was likely going to exacerbate the problem of economic class differences.

If everyone wanted to live a better life in the future, no one would want to make the present a better place.

Especially when the 3% of people wanting to go dormant held 97% of the world's wealth and resources. This could stop global economic growth, turning humanity into a dystopian society...

Professor Angus Deaton won the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2015 for his "contributions to research in consumption, poverty, and welfare". He was a genius who used mathematical methods to build economic models. He was currently the head of the economics department at Princeton University.

His remarks might have sounded alarmist, but due to his reputation in the academic field, his words of insight attracted many people's attention.

The North American liberals even held a protest at the White House, calling for the legislation to ban research on dormancy...

Of course, the protest would likely be useless.

Especially when the rich and powerful were staring at this technology with greedy eyes...

Lu Zhou, who was far away at the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study, also read Professor Grange's article in Nature.

After reading the article, he couldn't help but exclaim.

"Last time when I read the relevant report in the newspaper, Johnson & Johnson said that the technology was still in the stage of technical demonstration. I did not expect that in just a few months, they have already completed clinical trials."

Lu Zhou took a sip of tea.

Yang Xu looked up and replied, "It looks like they're doing amazing stuff."

"Yeah, it seems like they are making great progress." Lu Zhou put down the Nature magazine and pondered for a while. He looked at Yang Xu and asked, "What did Hengrui Medicine say?"

Yang Xu: "They are very interested in our proposal and agree that cryonics technology can be very promising in the near future... However, they also expressed their concerns about the risks of the project."

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "They don't think they can do it?"

Yang Xu shook his head and said, "Not quite, they're more worried about policy."

Lu Zhou frowned and said, "Policy?"

"Yeah." Yang Xu put down his teacup and looked at Lu Zhou as he said, "The international research community is debating heavily on human dormancy research. Not only is there a constant controversy in the academic world, but the general population is also divided. Hengrui Medicine is worried that China might ban research on relevant technologies due to international pressure."

Lu Zhou smiled and shook his head.

"That counts as a risk?"

Yang Xu made a helpless expression and said, "You might not think so... After all, similar things have happened before."

"Tell them that their worries are completely superfluous." Lu Zhou smiled and said, "No one can stop me from researching what I want."

Chapter 772: Recruiting

Back when Lu Zhou was still in Princeton, he was thinking about his potential research directions.

The more unfamiliar and novel his research, the more his research would conflict with ethics and morals.

This was inevitable.

After all, the high tech system had a wide range of subjects. He couldn't just research mathematics for the rest of his life.



After talking with Yang Xu, Lu Zhou opened his laptop and contemplated it for a second. After extracting some of the core concepts from Professor Grange's thesis, he wrote a thesis summary on "Human Freezing and Dormancy Technology". In this summary, he clearly stated his support for the research.

"... Because of the short human lifespan, it is more meaningful to explore a way of allowing humans to travel for thousands of years, rather than finding a way to increase the speed of our spacecraft.

"The Earth is merely the origin of civilization. One day, our footprints will reach other galaxies.

"Maybe it's still too early to think about that. But from a long-term perspective, I think it is necessary for us to master this technology."

Lu Zhou's fingers typed out his thoughts on the computer.

Even though he wasn't obligated to explain his motivation behind his research, public opinions still mattered. If he didn't have the public supporting him, the public would support someone else instead, which could mean trouble.

With the influence he had in academia now, even if some people might have objections against his research, no one would dare to stand up against him in public... at least not in China.

Therefore, before the foreign media and protests could influence the Chinese public opinion, he had to use his own influence to guide the Chinese academic community to be in favor of this technology.

Lu Zhou pressed the enter button on his keyboard. He read his thesis from the beginning to end and nodded with satisfaction. He then uploaded the thesis to his email and sent it to the editorial department at Jin Ling University.

Ever since he returned to China, the Jin Ling University journal's influence had increased by a ton. Especially after the success of the controllable nuclear fusion project, Jin Ling University's reputation was at its peak.

Even though they were still behind compared to top universities such as Shuimu University and Yan University, they were only a little behind.

Not to mention he was the one publishing.

Many universities and research institutes would specifically search for Lu Zhou's thesis and use it as reference material.

After Lu Zhou finished the submission, he turned off his computer and set this matter aside.

He was not an expert in the field of biochemistry, nor was he an expert in biological dormancy technology. He still had to rely on experts to help him with research.

Yang Xu had already contacted Hengrui Medicine for that.

The results of the cooperation negotiations would come soon.

Lu Zhou was quite confident that they would end up cooperating.

After all, he was Lu Zhou.

With Lu Zhou backing them, Hengrui Medicine should have no concerns.

Now that the space race was in full swing, any scientific research project that was stamped with the Lunar Orbit Committee symbol would instantly receive the green light.

There were no exceptions to this.

...

The day after Yang Xu contacted Hengrui Medicine, Professor Zhang Jiafu, who previously visited Lu Zhou, visited him again.

After some small talk, Professor Zhang asked, "How come you're suddenly interested in cryonics?"

Honestly speaking, Professor Zhang wasn't optimistic about this technology. He didn't know why Lu Zhou wanted to get his hands dirty in this field.

Apparently, because of the cryonics technology thesis, Professor Grange at Harvard University had received several death threat emails and even protesters at his house. Grange was forced to leave his Harvard home and relocate to Johnson & Johnson's research institute in East Detroit.

Even though no one in China dared to send Lu Zhou a death threat, this would still impact his academic reputation.

After hearing Professor Zhang's question, Lu Zhou answered casually, "Cryonics is an important technology that will be useful in the future."

Professor Zhang Jiafu paused for a second. He smiled and shook his head.

"I don't disagree... But if you insist, we are good to go."

Lu Zhou nodded and didn't say anything else. He opened his drawer and took out a project proposal. He placed the proposal on the table.

"We will provide the necessary researchers and some funding to participate in this research. However, our talent in clinical biology is limited, and we will need researchers on your end."

"No problem," Professor Zhang Jiafu said, "we have quite a few experts in clinical biology."

As one of the few Chinese companies in the field of drug research and development, Hengrui Medicine had a large talent pool in clinical biology and other drug-related fields. They had many researchers from top foreign universities and research institutions. These people were all top dogs in the field of biology.

On the other hand, the Jinling Institute of Biochemistry was only recently established.

Lu Zhou nodded and continued, "The specific cooperation and profit distributions are all in this document. You can bring it back and show it to your legal department. If there's no problem with everything, I hope we can begin work as soon as possible."

Professor Zhang Jiafu picked up the plan and briefly read through it. After he saw the list of participants, he immediately said, "I have a question."

Lu Zhou: "Go ahead."

Zhang Jiafu: "The field of cryonics is very unpopular. Even though we have big names in clinical biology and biopharmaceuticals, cryonics is not our expertise..."

Lu Zhou smiled and said, “You’re a biopharmaceuticals expert, so I’m sure you have connections in the field. Just find some researchers that fit the job and hire them.”

“It’s not that easy.” Zhang Jiafu smiled and said, “There are very few people in China that are researching cryonics. I know who these people are, but I can’t guarantee they’ll join our project.”

The more novel the research direction, the fewer people there were. In a case like this, a handful of people had total control over the field.

A handful of top professors received the majority of resources, such as experimental funding, thesis publishing, and patents. On the other hand, weaker professors couldn’t even publish a thesis in a journal.

After the talented people were trained, they would often move to more popular fields... This was extremely common in the field of biology.

Therefore, the people that Lu Zhou wanted to hire were already big names themselves.

Since they were big names, why would they need Lu Zhou’s help?

However, Lu Zhou smiled gently and replied, “Just tell me who you want, I’ll go find them.”

Zhang Jiafu hesitated for a second before saying, “Liu Zuobing...”

Lu Zhou: “Who is he?”

“Director of the Laboratory of Cell Cryogenic Medicine, Institute of Medical Sciences, PLA General Hospital...”

Zhang Jiafu paused for a second and said, “I met him at an academic conference in Chengdu, and we talked about cryonics. He seemed to be optimistic about cryogenic technology. He even published a paper on cryonics biology cell repair in the ‘Annual Review of Physiology’. Professor Grange even quoted his paper, but...”

Lu Zhou: “But?”

“But I heard that he’s been trying to become an academician, so he might not want to get his hands dirty with us.” Professor Zhang said awkwardly, “It won’t be easy to convince him.”

Being elected as an academician wasn’t just about research results, it was also about not making potential mistakes and having a good public image.

However, after hearing Professor Zhang’s concerns, a light bulb went off in Lu Zhou’s mind.

*He wants to become an academician?*

*Perfect!*

Lu Zhou smiled and looked at Zhang Jiafu.

“Okay, we’ll get him.”

Zhang Jiafu said, “You really plan on recruiting this big name for our project?”

“You said he’s the best cryonics researcher in China.” Lu Zhou paused for a second and said, “Obviously I want the best.”

Chapter 773: One’s Own Style

There was less than two months until June.

All of the academician selection candidates already submitted a 3000-word essay. They were quietly waiting for the first round of evaluations to begin.

Of course, this was just the calm before the storm.

Even though the first round of evaluations wasn’t a total bloodbath, various lobbying strategies had already begun.

Some people enjoyed the competition, some didn’t care for it, and some even went to foreign academic conferences to avoid the sh\*tshow.

PLA General Hospital, Institute of Medical Sciences, Laboratory of Cell Cryogenic Medicine.

Two noob researchers stood in front of the thermo incubator, “happily” doing experiments.

Compared to other Chinese universities, the PLA General Hospital might sound prestigious, and it was ranked fairly high in the industry. However, it was still ranked below other top universities.

The reason was obvious. It was just like how universities with more academicians couldn’t defeat factions like Yan University and Aurora.

The more diverse the talent pool was, the more competition there was. All of the talents were from different places.

Compared to hiring people from other institutes, they were more inclined to train people of their own.

This was true in academia and any public institutions that had an ounce of bureaucracy.

By contrast, the noob researchers at the Laboratory of Cell Cryogenic Medicine were quite happy.

If everything went well, their mentor, Director Liu, should be able to be an academician this year.

The academician selection was more about fate and luck. Director Liu was well aware of this, that was why he still hadn’t submitted his 3000-word personal essay.

After all, convincing other people to vote for him meant he had to owe them a favor in the future.

Not to mention he had already lost twice before.

After three consecutive unsuccessful elections, the candidate’s election eligibility would be suspended. All of the candidate’s previously submitted material must not be reused. It was very rare for someone to become an academician after three unsuccessful elections.

Even big names were no exception.

Because of this, these noob researchers didn’t have to help Director Liu make connections with the academician committee.

Song Siyuan: "This year's academician election is interesting."

Zhuo Ruicai: "Why is that?"

Song Siyuan: "Have you read the first round of primaries announced by the Chinese Academy of Sciences?"

Zhuo Ruicai said, "I've seen it, what's wrong with it?"

"In the past years, the academician election was a battle of the elderly. The average age of the academician candidates was over 70 years old."

Even though Jin Ling University had the third most academicians in the country, it had a serious aging issue. It had been a long time since Jin Ling University had a new academician.

However, this year the trend flipped. Many young scholars from Jin Ling University emerged on the primaries list.

Zhuo Ruicai: "What is so surprising about that, Jin Ling University has Professor Lu, so of course this year is going to be different! Forget about Jin Ling University, any university with Professor Lu would explode in the talent pool."

Song Siyuan: "That's not the entire reason."

Zhuo Ruicai: "There are other reasons?"

Song Siyuan nodded and said, "Even though Professor Lu is from Jin Ling University, do you really think Jin Ling University can still contain him? The reason why Jin Ling University is this strong is because of Professor Lu's goodwill."

Zhuo Ruicai was a little muddled, and he asked, "Then what department do you think he's from?"

Zhuo Ruicai was a newcomer in academia, so he didn't know about the inner academic community gossip.

Song Siyuan looked at him and said, "Just look at the academician election."

Zuo Ruicai hesitated for a bit and shook his head.

“I have no idea, is he a part of the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study?”

The Jinling Institute for Advanced Study had been gaining popularity under the leadership of Professor Lu, and the institute had made many outstanding achievements and published many high-quality papers.

Not just that, but because of its relaxing academic atmosphere, many foreign Chinese scholars had made it their goal to return to China and work at the institute.

Even then, the Institute for Advanced Study wasn't comparable to top universities.

After all, it was only established recently.

Song Siyuan looked at his confused co-worker and slowly spoke.

“He's in his own league.”

Another noob researcher sitting beside them looked shocked.

He's in his own league...

He's probably the only person who's in his own league!

Zhuo Ruicai also looked surprised.

“If only our supervisor was this nutty.”

“You're talking about Director Liu?” Song Siyuan coldly smiled and said, “Forget about it, we're in a no-name field, it's a miracle our supervisor is in the Changjiang Scholars Program!”

Even though Song Siyuan didn't want to admit it, his supervisor, Liu Zuobing, was an outstanding scholar. However, Liu Zuobing wasn't quite yet at the level of an academician.

Changjiang Scholars Program might be his ceiling.

There was nothing sad about this. The Changjiang Scholars Program was an amazing accomplishment. Many people tried for their entire lives to get into the program.



The door was suddenly pushed open.

The two noob researchers immediately stopped talking.

Liu Zuobing walked into the laboratory and walked straight into the refrigerator incubator. He looked at the nematode cells and then looked at his students.

“How’s the sample condition?”

Song Siyuan replied with a stutter, “It’s... It’s still alive.”

He just realized how useless his sentence was.

However, his supervisor didn’t seem to care about the incubator samples at all.

“Send me a sample observation report tomorrow, then immediately pack your bags. We are going to Jinling tomorrow!”

To Jinling?!

What is going on?

Zhuo Ruicai and Song Siyuan were muddled, so were the other noob researchers in the laboratory.

Professor Liu Zuobing took a deep breath and spoke seriously, hiding his excitement.

“This morning, I received an invitation from Professor Lu to participate in the joint cryonics project at the Institute for Advanced Study!”

“Human cryonics project?” Song Siyuan nervously said, “But the public opinion on this... isn’t good, right?”

Scientific ethics was a serious issue.

Ethical misconduct could cost one an academician title!

However, Professor Liu Zuobing didn’t hesitate at all.

He said, “Scientific research requires sacrifices, I am willing to sacrifice for my country!”

Song Siyuan: "..."

Zhuo Ruicai: "..."

The other noob researchers: "..."

F\*ck sake!

How come this is the first time I've seen you so patriotic?

Professor Liu continued to speak in a serious tone.

"I've already accepted to join the human cryonics dormancy project at the Institute for Advanced Study. The institute is supportive of my decision, and they want me to leave for Jinling as soon as possible! I want to contribute to the space race!"

Song Siyuan nodded and replied, "Okay."

Honestly, he was a little bewildered.

Not because of human cryonics dormancy, after all, his supervisor had always been interested in cryonics...

He didn't expect his supervisor to participate in this project during a sensitive time like this.

As for contributing to the space race...

That was totally a lie!

Even though cryonics might be helpful for the aerospace industry, for scientific academic scholars like them, the space race was quite meaningless.

However...

It seemed like the old man was more excited than if he had won the academician election?

What is happening...

The two noob researchers watched their supervisor leave the laboratory. They looked at each other in shock.

Song Siyuan spoke.

“F\*ck me, is he still going to run for academician or not?”

Zhuo Ruicai gulped.

After a while, he replied, “Professor Lu really is nutty...”

Chapter 774: We All Die

Ever since the successful Johnson & Johnson experiments, Professor Grange had been at the center of public opinion.

Most people were against the development of human cryonics technology.

Even though it provided another chance of life for terminally ill patients, most people couldn't afford to keep a freezer running for decades.

A technology like this was destined to only serve the upper class, hence there was no reason for the bottom class to support its existence.

A Dutch performance artist even painted a satirical oil painting on this issue. He portrayed a frozen mummy in an ice coffin, sitting on a throne. A group of servants in suits was kneeling around the mummy. He was ridiculing the servants that thought they could one day be sitting on the throne, similar to Pharaohs thousands of years ago.

A North American science fiction writer painted a picture of a dystopian society, ruled by servants that never woke their masters up.

In that dystopian society, people lived an extremely poor life, social development was stalled, and society solidified to the point where it was almost impossible for a person to climb up the class rankings through their own efforts. This was because most of the wealth was controlled by the “frozen mummies”.

In some sense, these viewpoints were quite extreme. But there was a logic behind them. Therefore, they attracted quite a bit of attention.

The question of whether this technology was ethical was discussed both in and out of the academic circle.

While the debates were going on, a major event happened.

While everyone was busy writing their own opinions on this technology, Jinling Institute for Advanced Study quietly established a human cryonics dormancy research group. They invited Liu Zuobing, who was the director of the Laboratory of Cell Cryogenic Medicine at PLA General Hospital, as the project manager.

As soon as the news broke out, there was an uproar in the international community.

They wouldn't care if it were some no-name institute, but this was the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study!

They were the ones that invented controllable fusion technology!

They were the ones that designed the Skyglow aerospaceplane!

Most importantly, Professor Lu was the head of the institute...

People who were against cryonics suddenly began to worry.

*Sh\*t!*

*Professor Lu is interested!*

*What if he actually succeeds?!*

Even though Lu Zhou had never displayed talent in the field of biology, nor had he ever been involved in biology research, so no one was certain of his true abilities.

After all, Lu Zho had made numerous miracles before.

Some of the more observant people noticed that Professor Liu Zuobing was the head of the research project, and they pointed out that Liu Zuobing's name was quoted in Professor Grange's thesis...

All of these signs indicated that Lu Zhou wasn't joking around and that he was serious about solving this problem.

...

At the Department of Economics building, Princeton University.

Angus Deaton sat in his office. He took off his glasses and threw the newspaper on the table.

"This is unbelievable!"

Professor Witten sat across from him. Witten smiled and took a sip of tea.

"What's wrong? My friend."

Five years ago, Witten started to go bald, and now, only strands of hair could be seen on his head.

That's life.

Born in 1951, he was now over seventy years old, and he had reached his final years.

Two years ago, Professor Atiyah passed away in the midst of his quest to solve Riemann's conjecture. This took quite a toll on Witten. Up until now, Witten had lived a secluded life in Princeton.

"I don't know why Lu Zhou would do something like this! There is no way a man as smart as him doesn't realize this!" Professor Angus angrily opened his email, and his fingers trembled as he typed on the keyboard.

Witten looked at his old friend and smiled.

"Stay calm, my friend, we're not young anymore, watch out for your blood pressure."

"But... I have to stop him!"

Witten put down the teacup and thought for a moment before speaking, "Maybe... he has his own reasons?"

Angus stopped typing on the keyboard. He frowned and looked at Witten.

"You're saying... The Chinese government is forcing him to do this?"

“Not quite, but it is possible!” Edward Witten smiled and said, “He’s a very opinionated person, so he wouldn’t do anything he doesn’t want to do. On the contrary, he succeeds at everything he puts his mind on.”

Angus went silent, and he leaned back in his chair.

“Since you know him so well, why is he doing this?”

“You’re wrong, I don’t know him well. Even when he was at Princeton, I only knew of him as a talented scholar,” Witten said. “On the contrary, Professor Fefferman knew him a lot better than I did. I just think of him as a respectable scholar.”

Professor Angus said angrily, “But he’s using his knowledge to do something that is morally wrong!”

“Who knows what will happen in the future. Maybe I’m being politically incorrect, but I really don’t think human cryonics dormancy is as bad as you think.” Professor Witten smiled and said, “It’s not going to be worse than the invention of cell phones, right? All millennials do is go on their phones these days.”

Angus shook his head and said, “You don’t understand.”

Wittens smiled and said, “You’re right, I don’t understand economics, I’m just a physicist. But I think we are more similar than you think. I use mathematics to study physics, you use mathematics to study economics.”

Angus said, “But my economics models are phenomenological models that have been carefully tested! It objectively predicts human activities.” Angus then said sarcastically, “If you think it’s so easy, why don’t you use a mathematical economics model to win a Nobel Prize?”

Witten smiled and said, “Oh... I’m too old for that, maybe I’ll be able to use cryonics technology to win a Nobel Prize.”

“We all die in the end, my friend. There is nothing wrong with accepting death.” Angus looked at Witten and said, “I know Atiyah’s passing had a huge effect on you, but the same will come for us. There is nothing to worry about.”

“I don’t want to talk about this with you.” Witten smiled and said, “Since you have something to say to Lu Zhou, why don’t you talk to him face to face?”

Every time I talk to him in person, I become a little wiser... If it weren't for my doctor recommended me to fly less, I would come with you."

"Great idea!"

Professor Angus turned off his computer and slowly stood up from his office chair. He started to walk out of the office.

Witten looked at his old friend leaving the office and smiled.

"Remember to say hi to Professor Lu for me, and tell him that his friend wants to play cards with him!"

Angus didn't respond.

He was long gone.

Witten smiled and shook his head. He held the sofa armrest and slowly stood up.

"Time really flies by when you're old..."

He looked outside the window and noticed a turtledove on a tree branch. He suddenly muttered to himself, "That's nice."

Chapter 775: Nematode Cells

Actually, Professor Liu didn't have to "suck up" to Lu Zhou.

He had his own laboratory, so he could do whatever experiment he wanted.

However, he still couldn't resist.

He immediately came over to Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou said, "I can't help you this term, but next term, which is in two years, I can guarantee that you will become an academician."

Professor Liu had no connections outside the world of biology, so this was enough to tempt him...

Jinling Institute for Advanced Study.

A laboratory located inside the Institute of Biochemistry.

Some of the equipment here was ordered by Lu Zhou's friends from Germany and the Netherlands, and the others were simply borrowed or bought from the Institute of Medical Sciences, PLA General Hospital.

Even though borrowing equipment like this was unusual, because the project was backed by the Lunar Orbit Committee, the PLA Hospital was more than happy to lend out their equipment.

All they had to do was sign over the equipment, and they would receive the glory of supporting a national key project. It was a no-brainer.

Lu Zhou stood in the laboratory. He stared at the glassware samples in the refrigerator as he asked, "What is this?"

Professor Liu Zuobing: "Ancient nematode cell samples! The research team from the St. Petersburg State University collected them from the tundra of the Alazeya River. I'm pretty close with the professors there, so I bought these off them."

Lu Zhou casually asked, "How much is it?"

"Pretty cheap, just a hundred thousand USD."

*Only a hundred thousand USD...*

*That's pretty expensive...*

If Lu Zhou recalled correctly, this wasn't some kind of endangered species. It was often found in the feces of extinct species. As long as one was near an ancient river bed, one could retrieve these samples with just a shovel.

A hundred thousand dollars would be enough to fund an entire scientific research expedition.

Professor Liu Zuobing knew what Lu Zhou was thinking, so he coughed and casually explained, "A hundred thousand USD is not expensive! Supply and



demand, my friend. According to carbon dating, this thing is 40,000 years old. It's very difficult for us to retrieve them."

Lu Zhou: "Alright, get to the main point, I'm not an expert in paleontology."

Professor Liu Zuobing put on a serious face and said, "This is probably the earliest living biological sample we can get our hands on. After we bought the nematode cell sample from the research team at St. Petersburg University, we took out some of the nematode cells and placed them into special culture dishes, and an amazing phenomenon was discovered."

Professor Zhang Jiafu, who stood beside them listening, couldn't help but ask, "What phenomenon?"

Professor Liu Zuobing replied in a serious tone, "Among the 173 culture dishes, 2 observed the recovery of the nematode cells, and they resumed normal life activities!"

Professor Zhang Jiafu suddenly looked shocked.

"Are you sure there was no contamination? Could there be something wrong with the St. Petersburg University sample?"

Professor Liu Zuobing spoke in a serious manner, "I am certain, because my students were also with the St. Petersburg University research team."

"Me," Song Siyuan said. He looked at Liu Zuobing and nervously said, "I was there for the sample collection, I took photos."

Lu Zhou asked, "Then why did you guys have to pay a hundred thousand USD?"

*If you retrieved the samples yourself, why did you have to pay?*

Professor Liu Zuobing suddenly had an awkward expression on his face.

Professor Zhang Jiafu coughed and said, "The thing is that we signed a contract with the Russians... Can I look at the sample?"

Professor Liu Zuobing nodded and spoke.

"Of course."

Professor Liu Zuobing's assistant used a special pipette to retrieve a sample from a petri dish. The assistant quickly placed the sample on a slide specimen and placed the slide under a laboratory microscope.

Professor Zhang Jiafu stepped forward and carefully looked through the microscope.

He saw these precious tiny creatures floating in agar and a special nutrient solution. They slowly moved around, eating E. Coli as food.

After a couple of seconds, he looked up from the microscope and spoke emotionally.

"This discovery is incredible... St. Petersburg University just gave you the research results?"

"Of course not, the thesis is theirs, but I haven't collaborated with them in further research." Professor Liu Zuobing smirked and said, "For example, the retrieval of the nematode cell DNA... I assume they have been trying to do this, but no results have come out yet."

Professor Zhang immediately asked, "Did you find something then?"

"By studying the DNA of the nematode samples, we found that the 18S-rDNA gene fragment may contain factors that allow them to remain actively dormant in extremely cold environments!"

Even Lu Zhou looked surprised.

*The DNA fragment is related to frozen dormancy!*

*This is huge!*

Lu Zhou immediately asked, "Have you published the results?"

"Not yet." Liu Zuobing shook his head and said, "This is just an in-progress result. We're certain the Russians haven't discovered this yet, so we're keeping it a secret for now."

This type of situation was common in the academic community.

Lu Zhou had done the same himself, so he nodded.

“Okay then, I want to hear your experimental ideas, can you explain them to me?”

Professor Liu Zuobing nodded and said, “The 18S-rDNA gene fragment may become the key to solving dormancy technology. So far, we have speculated about two possibilities. One is that this 18S-rDNA gene fragment synthesizes a special protein through transcription of RNA, which allows cells to maintain cell body structure under extreme temperature conditions!”

This sounded extremely exciting.

However, Lu Zhou didn’t look excited. He thought for a bit and said, “But a lot of cells still die.”

Professor Liu nodded and added, “Yes, not every cell is able to survive, because the cold temperature isn’t the only damaging factor... Of course, this isn’t the main point. The point is that we have two ideas.”

He walked to the laboratory whiteboard and drew two lines on the whiteboard. He then wrote on one of them.

“One method is through gene editing. After we modify the potentially effective gene fragment, we can insert it into the genes of a living body. This way, we can achieve dormancy!”

Lu Zhou thought for a bit before asking, “What’s the other idea?”

Professor Liu Zuobing said, “The other is to use a similar idea to Professor Grange’s. Which is to immerse a human body in a substance containing the special protein.”

Professor Zhang Jiafu said, “Like formalin?”

Professor Liu Zuobing nodded and said, “Something like that, but definitely not formalin...”

Standing next to the whiteboard, Lu Zhou thought for a while.

After a couple of seconds, he said, “This sounds like a crazy idea, but I think we can try the second idea.”

Professor Liu Zuobing nodded.

“I agree as well, the genetic modification method... might succeed, but the costs are too high.”

More importantly, research regarding genetic editing of human DNA was currently banned.

Unlike the controversial debates regarding human dormancy, human genetic editing was deemed to be morally unethical...

Even Professor Lu didn't dare to experiment with this kind of illegal research.

Suddenly, knocking sounds were heard.

Lu Zhou's office assistant walked through the door.

“Professor, someone is looking for you.”

*For me?*

Lu Zhou didn't recall having an appointment with anyone today, so he asked, “Who?”

The young female assistant replied, “The visitor claims to be Professor Angus Deaton from Princeton... He seems to be pretty anxious.”

*Angus Deaton?*

Lu Zhou had a vague impression of this name. He seemed to recall Deaton was from the economics department.

Even though Princeton didn't have a business school, it did have an economics department. Surprisingly, Princeton's economics department was ranked highly in the United States.

However, Lu Zhou had never studied economics before.

Therefore, he couldn't think of a reason why Professor Angus would want to meet him.

After a while, Lu Zhou said, “Okay, ask him to wait at reception.”

The female assistant nodded.

“Okay, Professor Lu!”

She turned around and walked out of the laboratory.

Chapter 776: Deal With It Later

Jinling Institute for Advanced Study, reception guest room.

When Lu Zhou pushed open the door, he saw Professor Angus sitting on the sofa. Professor Angus had a gray beard on his face. Wang Peng sat across from him.

Lu Zhou showed a friendly smile toward Professor Angus as he greeted him.

“Angus Deaton, what brings you here?”

Professor Angus adjusted his glasses. His old eyes didn’t work so well anymore. He finally recognized Lu Zhou and replied seriously, “It’s because of what happened recently. You must know why I’m here.”

*What happened recently?*

Lu Zhou immediately knew what he was talking about. He looked at Wang Peng as a signal for Wang Peng to leave the room.

Wang Peng hesitated for a bit before standing up.

However, he didn’t immediately leave the room. Instead, he walked up to Lu Zhou and said, “I heard some bad news. You should be more careful.”

Lu Zhou looked at him and said with a smile, “Don’t worry, I’m not doing anything dangerous. Not to mention the Chinese community is different from the foreign community. I’m sure the problems faced by Professor Grange isn’t a problem here at all.”

Ever since Grange’s thesis was published, the Chinese media chose to remain silent on this controversial matter.

“No, I don’t mean the human rights organizations, they’re not a problem, it’s...” Wang Peng hesitated for a bit and looked at Professor Angus. He whispered to Lu Zhou, “It’s the CIA... I heard they seem to be up to something.”

Lu Zhou paused for a second and looked at Wang Peng with a weird expression.

“Do you really think the CIA is sabotaging us right now?”

Wang Peng suddenly recalled Angus Deaton’s background. He smiled awkwardly.

“I think you’re right.”

*Angus Deaton is a Nobel Prize-winning scholar, there is no way the CIA could turn Angus into a spy...*

*Even Hollywood wouldn’t have such a ridiculous plot.*

Lu Zhou shrugged and said, “Your worries are unnecessary.”

Wang Peng: “Just be careful, he is an American.”

“Don’t worry, I don’t care if he’s an American or not. I trust him. Not to mention...” Lu Zhou jokingly said, “I’m not exactly afraid of an old man in his seventies.”

Wang Peng finally decided to leave the reception room.

Professor Angus and Lu Zhou were left alone in the reception room.

Lu Zhou sat down on the sofa across from Angus. He picked up the teapot and poured himself a cup of tea. He then leaned on the sofa and said, “I’m guessing you have a lot to say. You can begin now.”

Professor Angus said, “I just want to say one thing... Please immediately stop whatever you are doing! Your research could release a terrible demon!”

Lu Zhou looked at the mist rising above his teacup, and after a while, he spoke.

“I don’t know a lot about economics and sociology, and I don’t quite understand what you mean by a terrible demon.”

Professor Angus stood up and said, “If you don’t understand, I can teach you.”

Lu Zhou nodded as a gesture for Angus to continue.

Professor Angus: “I need a whiteboard... or a blackboard.”

Lu Zhou smiled and said, “No problem, we have plenty of whiteboards and blackboards here.”

Lu Zhou found a whiteboard and rolled it into the reception room.

Professor Angus picked up the marker and scribbled down a line of calculations on the whiteboard. He explained his theory to Lu Zhou in a simple manner. He then drew a line that represented his expectations for the future economic trend.

Angus talked about his concerns regarding dormancy technology, problems such as those causing a large amount of asset sedimentation, shifting the elite class to the future, amplifying class differences... He said these were all factors that would lead to the collapse of society.

After all, those rich people were greedy.

If they could live a better life in the future, who would want to stay in the current era?

“... In our society, the means of production are controlled by a small number of people. Therefore, we have adopted many methods to restrict this phenomenon, such as laws, regulations, taxes, and so forth.

“But your research will destroy people’s efforts at creating a balanced society.”

After hearing Professor Angus’ theory, Lu Zhou contemplated for a bit before speaking, “Even though I admit your concerns are reasonable, I cannot agree with you.”

“Why?”

Lu Zhou smiled and shook his head.

“It’s not just human cryonics dormancy technology, advanced AI, VR, automation... There are so many things that can collapse our society. If you want to maintain society as it is, I’m afraid your only solution is to ban scientific research.”

Professor Angus said, “You’re a fascist!”

“No, I’m not, I’m just looking at this in an objective manner.” Lu Zhou shook his head and calmly said, “Technology itself is innocent, people, on the other hand, are not.”

Professor Angus immediately said, “Exactly, then how are you going to promise that people will use technology in a moral and ethical way?”

“I can’t promise anything, just like how politicians can’t guarantee world peace, economists can’t guarantee economic growth. Even weather forecasts get the weather conditions wrong sometimes... So why are you demanding me to promise that my technology will be used correctly?”

Professor Angus paused for a second.

He hesitated for a moment, then frowned.

“You’re right... But, this is a risk we can’t afford.”

“Some risks are inevitable.” Lu Zhou stared at Professor Angus and said, “Our civilization is always moving forward. Even if I decide not to research this technology, someone else will.

“It’s just like controllable nuclear fusion. Many people may hate me because I eliminated millions or even tens of millions of jobs. But I also believe that more people will thank me in the future as fewer people would be suffering in coal mines. People’s quality of lives will increase.”

This was the law of civilization development. Even though things might temporarily seem worse or stagnate, over the long term, quality of life would always improve.



Artificial intelligence would become more and more intelligent, smarter than human beings. One day, humans could act like gods, editing their genetics and making themselves omnipotent...

"The same is true for human cryonics dormancy, it will provide many terminally-ill patients a second chance at life. It will also allow civilization to expand across the galaxy.

"It will impact society in negative ways... The problems you are talking about are valid. But I think civilization will eventually find a suitable solution to these problems. Just like how we find solutions to scientific problems."

Lu Zhou looked at Professor Angus and added, "And your job is to incorporate these new technologies into society in a non-destructive manner."

Chapter 777: Great Ideas Often Come From Accidents

Princeton University.

Many professors were seen drinking coffee inside a cafe located on the second floor of a building. This was their favorite place to talk about academia, or simply read a book and enjoy the peaceful afternoon.

Edward Witten was a frequent visitor of this cafe.

Witten was a physicist with a Fields Medal under his belt. Most students had an enormous amount of respect for this man. Students often took the initiative to greet him or talk about obscure physics problems.

The old man happily responded to these students.

He and Professor Fefferman were both approachable people.

One day, after Witten finished his lecture, he came to this cafe. He ordered a cup of coffee and sat by the window. He was surprised when he saw someone walk up the stairs and into the cafe.

“Angus?” Witten’s eyes were wide open. He put away his notebook and looked at Professor Angus. Witten then joked, “My friend, why are you back so soon?”

“Because I already have the answer I need.” Professor Angus slowly sat down across from Witten and paused for a while. He said, “You are right, even though I talked to him for less than an hour, I learned a lot.”

Witten smiled and said, “Oh, really? Can you share what you learned?”

“These new generations of scholars are more optimistic than us, and they have unique ideas. I was too pessimistic before. I thought the world was doomed, but this gives me hope for humanity.”

“I’m glad you’re more optimistic now.” Witten looked at his watch and said, “I have a physics lecture in a bit, I have to go.”

“Go ahead... Speaking of which, why are you interested in teaching undergraduate students?” Professor Angus said with a strange look on his face.

“Because life always ends... I think you’re right, we will all eventually die, but some things can be passed on.” Witten smiled and finished his coffee. He put down the cup and said, “Maybe one day in the future, my students can unify the four forces.”

Professor Angus joked, “Or maybe they won’t.”

Witten smiled and said, “Haha, hopefully not! Regardless, I’ll be dead... Anyway, do you want to make a bet?”

Professor Angus said, “No problem, what are we betting? It’s not like you can bring money to heaven.”

Witten joked, “You never know, maybe you can use money in heaven.”

“We’ll find out soon!”

Witten left.

Professor Angus stayed in the cafe.

He quietly looked at the Princeton campus outside the window. He watched the students walk down the tree-lined path and began to daydream.

After a while, he took out a crumpled notebook.

This was his memo. Because of his decreasing memory, he often carried this with him. Whenever he had doubts about whether something happened or not, he would take out his notebook and read it.

Other than writing down errands such as “paying bills” and “repairing faucets”, he would occasionally write down inspirational thoughts...

Professor Angus stared at a blank page and pondered for a long time. The pen in his hand hovered above the page.

It seemed like he finally figured out something.

“Using past methods to speculate the future is incorrect. We need a new method to predict the future...”

He muttered to himself and scribbled down a line on the notebook.

[Universe Economics.]

He paused for a while, then crossed out the line. He then wrote down another line.

[Future Sociology.]

“This name sounds more interesting...”

Great ideas would often come at unexpected times.

Theories that could impact the entire world were born like this...

...

The second week after Professor Angus left, Lu Zhou heard an interesting rumor.

Princeton opened a new course for Professor Angus Deaton, and it was named the “Sociology of the Future”. This course didn’t teach any specific theories. It was just a general way of thinking about the future.

Even though the name sounded a bit strange, many students still signed up for this course since it was taught by a Nobel Prize laureate.

Apparently, Professor Angus was writing a book for this subject.

Even though the specific content of the course hadn't been made public yet, according to an old friend of Angus, this book was like a boring scientific fiction novel with no academic foundation.

However, the old friend also said that this book might be really useful in the future...

Lu Zhou heard these stories from his ex-students in Princeton.

Qin Yue went from a lecturer to a professor. Hardy, who returned to teach at the University of Sao Paulo in Brazil, became one of the number theory leaders in Brazil... Of course, Brazilian mathematicians weren't particularly good at number theory research.

As for Vera, apparently she was researching the Riemann's conjecture with Molina. Regardless of whether she achieved any research results, having the courage to challenge this great conjecture was an achievement in and of itself.

Wei Wen was about to get a PhD from Princeton, while Jerick was recruited by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Institute of Computational Materials...

Generally speaking, his students had done quite well for themselves.

Lu Zhou was pleased to have taught them.

After returning Qin Yue's email, Lu Zhou stretched and was about to kill some time on Arxiv. Suddenly, he heard knocking on his office door.

Lu Zhou cleared his throat and spoke.

"Come in."

The door was pushed open, and Wang Peng walked in with a serious face.

Before Lu Zhou could speak, Wang Peng spoke first.

“Bad news!”

Lu Zhou frowned.

“What happened?”

Wang Peng paused for half a second and sighed.

“Biosphere A suffered an attack from an unknown armed force. According to the local troops, the damage was substantial...”

*Unknown armed force... attacked us?*

*The f\*ck?!*

Lu Zhou grabbed his armrest and immediately stood up.

“Is everyone okay?”

Wang Peng said, “Militants were killed in combat. The researchers and foreign experts are all safe... They’ve been reallocated to a local city for safety reasons. The local troops have dispatched and blocked all roads in the nearby area, and they are investigating the militants’ backgrounds, but...”

Lu Zhou was a little relieved, however, the “but” made him nervous again.

“But?”

Wang Peng spoke.

“The damage to Biosphere A is serious.”

Chapter 778: Visiting the Wounded

Jinling General Hospital.

The soldiers who were wounded in combat were transferred to this hospital for the best treatment.

This included Battalion Commander Li Gaoliang...

Even though Wang Peng didn't recommend Lu Zhou to come here, Lu Zhou was persistent. Wang Peng received approval from his superiors and brought Lu Zhou here.

According to Lu Zhou, these people were injured because of his project. It would be too cold-hearted of him not to visit.

Lu Zhou followed Wang Peng and came to a closed-off section of the hospital.

Lu Zhou looked at the soldiers standing at the corridor entrance, and he casually asked, "There are soldiers on duty here?"

"Of course," Wang Peng nodded and said, "if we don't keep this thing a secret, the news would spread like wildfire."

Lu Zhou nodded and followed Wang Peng.

Wang Peng showed a letter to the door guard. After carefully examining the letter, the guard gave a military salute before stepping aside.

Wang Peng entered the ward and saw Li Gaoliang lying on the bed. Li Gaoliang's legs were wrapped in bandages. Lu Zhou paused for a second before saying, "Your leg..."

"It was cut off," Li Gaoliang said. "Professor Lu, why are you here?"

"I'm here to visit you." Lu Zhou placed the fruit and milk on the table and said, "I'm terribly sorry to see you like this..."

Li Gaoliang looked to the side and coughed. He said, "Don't say that, I'm the one who should be sorry... I'm sorry I failed to protect the experiment facilities. I've failed my country."

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "The experiment doesn't matter, as long as people are safe."

Even though Lu Zhou was sad that the experiment was damaged...

But nothing was more important than human lives.

As long as the humans were okay, all Lu Zhou needed was some extra time to put the experiment back on track.

Li Gaoliang sighed and looked at Wang Peng.

“Can you light me a cigarette?”

Wang Peng shook his head and said, “When I came here, the doctors told me that you just finished the operation and shouldn’t smoke.”

Li Gaoliang said, “Just one puff, I can’t help this addiction.”

“No,” Wang Peng said, “not even one puff!”

Li Gaoliang turned toward Lu Zhou and said helplessly, “Well, Professor Lu, I’ve been here for days, could you possibly...”

Wang Peng coughed and said, “Forget about it, he doesn’t smoke.”

Li Gaoliang said, “There are guys who don’t smoke?”

Lu Zhou said, “Yeah, me. Do you have a problem with it?”

Li Gaoliang coughed and said, “No, that’s not what I meant...”

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, “Anyway... Could you tell me what happened?”

Li Gaoliang suddenly became silent.

After a while, he said, “I can only tell you what I know.”

Lu Zhou nodded.

“No problem.”

Li Gaoliang looked at the IV bag beside him and began to recall the past.

“It was around five o’clock in the evening. A sandstorm was blowing over the desert. The wind was very strong to the point that you couldn’t see a foot in front of you.

“They hijacked our water truck and approached our checkpoint during the sandstorm.

“The situation was very dangerous. Fortunately, the soldiers at the checkpoint noticed something was wrong, but then...”

What happened was simple, and it could be explained in a couple of words. However, the entire story took a lot more than just a few words to explain.

The soldier on duty at the checkpoint noticed something was wrong and secretly pressed the alarm button. However, the enemies noticed this. When the enemies realized, they immediately took off their camouflage and launched the attack.

These armed militants had obviously received formal armed training as their response and combat power were far more advanced than ordinary terrorists.

However, this was all expected. After all, ordinary terrorists wouldn't be able to find a research facility hidden in the desert.

It was obvious that they had observed the facility for more than a month and did a lot of careful planning. It could even be an inside attack...

Fortunately, the four battalions were stationed there. When the armed men in the vehicle tried to drive the modified water delivery vehicle through the camp's experiment facilities, the sniper on duty quickly responded and killed the driver with a single shot.

An intense fight broke out inside the checkpoint. An RPG was fired at the outer walls of Biosphere A, igniting the lithium-sulfur battery solar panels, which caused the facility to catch on fire.

Surprisingly, all of the 12 militants fought to the death. Even though they were all surrounded, none of them surrendered. The gunfire finally stopped after everyone was killed.

As for Li Gaoliang's leg... He wasn't injured during the battle. When he tried to rescue the experiment equipment, his leg was damaged by a falling concrete block.

After hearing Li Gaoliang's story, Lu Zhou replied, “How many were injured?”



This time, Li Gaoliang didn't say anything. He looked at Lu Zhou in silence.

Wang Peng sighed and said, "Don't do this to him..."

Lu Zhou could tell something was wrong from the way Wang Peng looked at him.

Some things shouldn't be made public.

Rather, they should stay undisclosed for at least a decade.

Wang Peng had to pull plenty of strings just to let Lu Zhou visit this wounded soldier.

Regardless, no matter how many casualties there were, the soldier at the checkpoint who pressed the alarm button must not have made it.

Lu Zhou still faintly remembered that the last time he went to the desert to select a site for the Garden plan, the young soldier saluted him. He did not expect the same soldier to be buried in the battlefield in less than a year...

Lu Zhou said, "... Sorry."

The dark-skinned Battalion Commander shook his head and said, "Don't be sorry. Defending the country is a soldier's duty. The country will take care of us. Both of my legs are gone, but that means I'll be able to retire and receive benefits for the rest of my life..."

The Battalion Commander smiled as he spoke.

However, Lu Zhou could still sense a trace of sadness and depression.

The Battalion Commander was obviously hiding his emotions.

Not only did his soldiers die in battle, but he also lost his legs.

He might have been happier to die in battle. Spending the rest of his life in a wheelchair would be torture...

Wang Peng looked at the Battalion Commander and didn't say anything.

After a while, he said, "If you ever need a favor, tell me. I'll do whatever you need."

Li Gaoliang smiled and said, "Haha, I'll remember that!"

Wang Peng said, "I promise."

"Okay." Li Gaoliang shook his head and said, "It's fine, I just lost my legs. I don't need you. Just come and drink with me sometimes. It's time for the nurse to give me medicine. You should take Professor Lu and get out of here."

Wang Peng nodded and turned around.

The ward door was pushed open, and a doctor and a nurse walked past Wang Peng.

The young nurse looked at Lu Zhou and spoke politely.

"Sir, could you please leave the ward? We need to examine the patient's body and change his bandages..."

It was like Lu Zhou was awakened by the nurse's voice.

Lu Zhou looked at Li Gaoliang and said, "Maybe the situation isn't that bad.

"Maybe... I can make you walk again."

Chapter 779: Possibility of Standing up Again

The ward went quiet.

Li Gaoliang wasn't the only one who was stunned. The nurse, the doctor, and even Wang Peng were all stunned.

No one spoke.

After a couple of seconds went by, Li Gaoliang's looked at Lu Zhou excitedly.

"Really?"

Stand up again!

He's not kidding?

The doctor coughed and replied, "Please don't make these jokes with patients."

Even Professor Lu shouldn't make such a cruel joke!

The nurse and doctor cast an unfriendly look toward Lu Zhou.

Li Gaoliang's face turned gray, and he laughed to cover his embarrassment.

"Yeah, stop playing around with me... The doctors said that my legs are completely destroyed. It's a miracle I'm alive right now."

Lu Zhou shook his head and looked at Li Gaoliang as he said, "I'm not kidding, I'm being serious."

Li Gaoliang paused for a second.

His intuition told him that this was impossible.

After all, when he was dragged out of the piece of concrete, his two calves were completely ruined. There was no hope of saving his legs.

When he was transferred to Wushi hospital, he received one response. Either he could amputate his legs now, or he could wait for necrosis, which meant an eventual amputation...

Now that the amputation operation was over, Li Gaoliang couldn't believe there was a way for Lu Zhou to make him stand again.

In fact, the doctor standing next to him shook his head and said, "Impossible! I've never heard of this kind of technology before. If you're talking about prosthetics, standing up is possible. With rehabilitation training, one might even be able to walk normally again.

"But his situation is different. Not only is his calves damaged, but his spinal nerve is damaged as well! He can't even control his bladder, forget about prosthetics!"

"You're right." Lu Zhou looked at Li Gaoliang and nodded. He then said, "I don't know a lot about biology, but if the nerves are damaged, it is quite troublesome."

The doctor shook his head and said, "That's why I'm telling you not to joke with the patient. You're giving him false hope."

Giving someone false hope wouldn't fix any problems.

"I'm not giving him false hope." Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "It can be done in theory, just not with current technology."

The doctor said, "So you're saying it is possible in the future?"

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "Not the future. Actually, we are conducting research with Aurora University and Harbin Institute of Technology on simulating electrical nerve signals."

"Nerve access technology?" The doctor looked at Lu Zhou and said, "Has there ever been a successful case?"

The doctor had heard of this kind of technology, but even the top foreign laboratories were in the early research stage. Judging from the results so far, the technology was not mature enough to allow patients with spinal nerve damage to stand up.

"No, no successful cases, there aren't even any cases," Lu Zhou said. "This technology hasn't passed the clinical trial stage, and it still remains in the laboratory. Even though we have achieved some results, it is far from being mature."

The doctor seemed to know what Lu Zhou wanted to say. He looked at Lu Zhou and said, "So what you're saying is..."

Lu Zhou nodded and said, "Yes... Whether it works or not still depends on whether Li Gaoliang is willing to try."

Li Gaoliang looked at the two. He was muddled.

"What are you guys talking about?"

Li Gaoliang only wanted to know one thing, which was whether or not he had a chance at standing up again.

Also, is this doctor going to change my medicine?

The doctor paused for a second before replying, "We are talking about treatment..."

"Here's the thing," Lu Zhou interrupted the doctor and said, "we are conducting an experiment on a nerve access device. If everything goes well, this technology can help you stand up again. But because there have been no clinical trials, this is very risky. We promise to do everything to minimize the risks, but there is still no guarantee that we will succeed."

Li Gaoliang suddenly laughed out loud.

After a while, he shook his head and looked at Lu Zhou. He then spoke in a serious manner.

"Forget about the risks. I'll risk anything to have a chance at standing up again."

He suddenly realized something and said, "Of course... I will not betray my country! I will never do such things!"

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "Do I look like someone who will betray my country?"

Li Gaoliang said awkwardly, "That's not what I meant..."

"I understand." Lu Zhou nodded with a smile and said, "You don't need to give me anything. You were injured while protecting our country. I can't let you sit in a wheelchair for the rest of your life."

Lu Zhou looked at Li Gaoliang and asked solemnly, "Then, I'll ask you again, do you accept the experiment? And bear all the risks?"

Li Gaoliang nodded without hesitation.

"I accept."

"Okay." Lu Zhou nodded and said, "I'll have to discuss with Director Li from the State Administration for National Defense with this. I'll get back to you in three days. If this doesn't work out, I hope you won't be too disappointed."

Li Gaoliang glanced at his bandaged legs and smiled.

"Disappointed? What else do I have to lose?"

The doctor looked at Li Gaoliang and said, "This type of experiment isn't a joke, especially experiments regarding the nervous system. Accidents might happen. I hope you carefully reconsider. After all, if something goes wrong, you could lose your life."

Lu Zhou agreed with the doctor's words.

He carefully watched Li Gaoliang's expression.

If there was any hesitation on Li Gaoliang's face, Lu Zhou would consider retracting the experiment offer.

After all, the cost of applying a novel technology on a living human being was expensive.

If Li Gaoliang was unable to fully cooperate, then the experiment could be a total waste.

However, Li Gaoliang didn't have an ounce of hesitation on his face.

He even began to smile wider...

He said, "Then I guess I'll die!"

Chapter 780: Surgery

Neurology had always been a difficult medicine discipline, especially when it came to the spinal nerve, where the situation would become increasingly complex.

If the end of the spinal nerve was damaged, the entire lower human body would become paralyzed. When this happened, doctors would usually tell patients that it was basically impossible to stand up again.

Li Gaoliang's situation was the same. Once the central nervous cells were damaged, the cells couldn't be regenerated. Even the best doctor in the world couldn't repair a broken spine.

However, Lu Zhou's treatment plan was rather unconventional.

A nerve signal modem was going to be implanted at each end of the damaged spinal nerve segment. The damaged nerve would be covered by an imitation nerve sensing device made of molybdenum/titanium alloy.

It was equivalent to building a bridge over the damaged spinal nerve by using electrical signals to replace the complex signal transmissions between the neuronal cells. Then, they could use “translators” at both ends to translate electrical signals into neural signals. Thus, the signals could control the built-in electric titanium alloy bones. This allowed the patient to restore their leg motor function.

In order to maximize the recovery of the subject’s athletic ability and to extend the shelf life of the nerve access prosthetics, the titanium alloy bones used in his legs were jointly designed by the Institute of Computational Materials and Mechanical Engineering of the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study.

The average unit price was at least US\$2,000 per gram.

Adding the costs of the neutral access device and various other equipment, this experiment wasn’t going to be cheap...

After this transformation, almost the entire half of his lower body would be replaced with machinery parts. Even though it wouldn’t be quite like the Terminator, after he fully adapted to the transformation, he would return to the athletic abilities of a normal human being.

Operating room.

The anesthesiologist already prepared the anesthesia and was ready to inject it at any time.

The surgeon, who had already put on his gloves, took out the surgical tools. He looked at Li Gaoliang before the operation began and asked carefully, “Are you ready?”

Li Gaoliang was lying on the operating table, and he calmly replied, “I’m ready, let’s begin.”

All preparations were in place, and the surgery soon began.

Wang Peng stood outside the operating room. He found a cigarette in his pocket, but he decided to throw it in the trash can.

He took two steps back and couldn't help but looked at Lu Zhou.

"Do you think this operation will be successful?"

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "I'm not 100% confident. I can only say that I tried my best to minimize the risks."

In order to ensure that the operation was foolproof, Star Sky Technology invited the most experienced surgeon from Beijing and performed numerous operation exercises.

Even then, Lu Zhou couldn't guarantee that there would be no accidents.

Wang Peng nodded and said nothing. He stared silently at the door of the operating room and clenched his fists. He silently prayed for his former comrade.

The operation was very long.

The original plan was to finish at 6:00 pm, but it was delayed until 3:00 am.

Lu Zhou was sitting on a bench in front of the operating room, taking a nap. He suddenly woke up to the sound of the operating room door opening. When he saw the surgeon come out of the operating room, he immediately asked, "How's it going? Did the operation go well?"

The chief surgeon took off his mask and looked at Lu Zhou with a tired look.

"The operation is generally successful... As for whether or not it will work, we will have to wait until the patient wakes up."

Lu Zhou sighed in relief.

Wang Peng unclenched his fists and looked at the doctor gratefully.

"Thank you."

"Don't thank me. Fortunately, the patient is in great physical shape. To be honest, this is the first time I have done such a messy operation... I have never heard of bridging the spinal nerve before."



The doctor was full of emotion.

For the people outside the operating room, the result of the operation was either success or failure. But for him, it was ten-hours of hard work.

The doctor paused for a second and said, "Generally speaking, if a spinal cord injury damages his nerve fibers, the paralysis caused by the trauma is permanent... If he really is able to stand up again, he will become a medical miracle."

"Hopefully, a miracle will happen." Lu Zhou nodded towards the doctor and said, "You should go rest."

The doctor smiled reluctantly.

"Yeah, thanks."

He had been working intensely for the past ten hours, and he had reached his mental limit.

...

After the surgical operation was finished...

Li Gaoliang lay in the hospital bed until morning.

He finally woke up.

Even though the physician in charge of anesthesia was experienced and the dose control was perfect, central nervous system operations required a large amount of anesthesia. Right now, he still couldn't speak and could only open his eyes.

After hearing he was awake, Lu Zhou immediately rushed over from the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study.

When he arrived at the ward, Li Gaoliang had been lying on the hospital bed for a while.

He could only move his eyeballs and part of the muscles on his face. After hearing the door open, he moved his eyeballs and looked at Lu Zhou.

"How are you feeling?"

Li Gaoliang's facial muscles twitched, but no words came out of his mouth.

"Sorry, I forgot that you can't speak yet." Lu Zhou shook his head with a smile and paused for a while before continuing, "The operation was very successful. As for whether you can adapt to your new body, that will depend on how well you are doing after the rehabilitation. The surgery is the hard part, the rest should be easy."

Li Gaoliang didn't say anything. He just looked intently at Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou could tell Li Gaoliang was grateful, so he smiled and replied, "I'm glad you're safe."

"You should rest for a couple of days. I'll come and visit you in a bit."

"I..." Li Gaoliang's face twitched, and he struggled to open his mouth. "Thank... you."

"You're welcome."

Lu Zhou smiled at him.

He then turned around and left.

Chapter 781: "Cyborg"

Actually, the so-called cyborg, that was, the combination of man and machine, wasn't just a science fiction concept.

In 2002, more than a decade ago, the famous British cyberneticist Kevin Warwick conducted a risky experiment. He implanted a silicone sensor transmitter chip into his brain and became "the world's first cyborg."

Through simple mind-control like techniques, he was able to control simple networking devices, and the output signals were complex enough to even operate a robotic arm.

The principle for Warwick's device was similar to the neural access technology used by Lu Zhou, except that instead of collecting neural signals from the spinal nerve, Warwick directly collected neural potential signals from

the cerebral cortex... Signals were generated when someone imagined themselves moving a limb without actually moving the limb.

Therefore, Star Sky Technology wasn't the first to conduct a cyborg experiment.

Collecting neural signals, processing them through a computer chip, then directly feeding the signals to an electrical robotic device. This had been one of the greatest problems in the modern field of cybernetics.

Kevin Warwick made a prediction that if cybernetics technology continued to improve, it would one day be used to help blind people "see things", deaf people "hear" things, and allow crippled people to stand up from their wheelchairs... Eventually, humans would no longer be made of flesh and blood. They would become one with machines. A higher form of existence.

Professor Kevin Warwick had been continuously working on his research. He had donated his body to his own research by implanting a silicon-based chip into his nervous system. The microelectrode array that was inserted contained 100 electrodes.

At least for now, this didn't seem to bring any negative effects to his life. But the future impacts remained to be unseen.

Regardless, the operation on Li Gaoliang's body was undoubtedly successful.

Two weeks after the operation, with help from the nurses, Li Gaoliang finally was able to get out of bed.

Not just that, with the assistance of the electric machinery, he was now able to control his bladder...

In short, the rehabilitation process went quite smoothly.

Three weeks after the operation, Lu Zhou visited the Jinling military hospital again. When he saw Li Gaoliang in the rehabilitation room, Li Gaoliang was learning to walk with crutches.

Lu Zhou walked next to him and asked, "How are you feeling? How's the recovery process?"

"It's okay, I'm getting used to it." Li Gaoliang's tone was full of emotion as he said, "To be honest, when I saw my medical report, I thought my life was over. I didn't expect to be given a second chance to stand up... I don't know how to thank you."

"Don't thank me, thank the advancement in medical technology," Lu Zhou joked.

Li Gaoliang smiled awkwardly.

He hesitated for a second before he suddenly said, "Oh yeah, I want to ask you something, don't know if you can answer."

Lu Zhou: "Go ahead."

"I'm living and walking right now, does that mean... this surgery has passed the clinical trial, and other paralyzed people will have a chance at standing up again in the future?"

Li Gaoliang sounded excited.

He thought about the crippled soldiers, who were tied to their beds.

If this technology was able to repair his spinal nerve, then would that mean...

Lu Zhou looked at how excited he was. He knew what Li Gaoliang was thinking about. After a moment of silence, Lu Zhou spoke.

"If it's a recent injury, it is worth a try. But I have to remind you, the success rate of your operation is less than 10%. Even the surgeon was amazed. It's a miracle everything went so smoothly."

Lu Zhou then said, "Also, don't be too happy just yet. We still don't know if this technology is stable, something might go wrong in the future."

It was like Lu Zhou just poured water on the fire in Li Gaoliang's heart.

Li Gaoliang realized what the reality was.

"I'll be happy to cooperate with any tests."

Lu Zhou dropped this conversation and said, "Forget about the experiment. Right now, you should familiarize yourself with the equipment."

“I understand...” Li Gaoliang nodded and suddenly said, “Oh yeah, do you think you can replace other parts of the body with the electric titanium skeleton thing?”

Lu Zhou: “It is theoretically possible, but I don’t recommend you doing it. With the currently available technology, there is a huge amount of risk in each operation. It is already a miracle we were able to fit you with these two titanium alloy legs. Don’t expect this miracle to happen again.”

There was also one crucial thing Lu Zhou didn’t mention.

Which was that every person had different physical conditions. This neural access device was difficult to standardize, and it had to be custom made to fit every person.

On the surface, it looked like something that would require just one surgery. However, before the surgery even began, the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study held several special meetings to discuss the technicalities of the device.

Even if the State Administration for National Defense were willing to fund the technology, it was impossible to fit every soldier with such expensive equipment.

Li Gaoliang said, “Noted.”

Lu Zhou nodded and said, “Well, I hope you recover quickly. I have to go back to the institute, see you later.”

Lu Zhou turned around and was about to leave.

Suddenly, he heard Li Gaoliang.

“Wait a second!”

Lu Zhou turned around and said, “What?”

Li Gaoliang said, “When should I inform the army of my retirement?”

Even though he didn’t want to retire, because of his condition, he was in no shape to stay in the 4th battalion.

However, Lu Zhou was confused.

“Retire? Why are you retiring?”

Li Gaoliang was stunned.

His eyes flashed with surprise.

He gulped and spoke with a trembling voice.

“So what you’re saying is... I still have a chance to return to the army?”

“Don’t you want revenge?”

Lu Zhou smiled and patted Li Gaoliang’s shoulder.

“You’ll get your revenge.”

...

The days quickly passed by, and it was soon June.

Lu Zhou approached Wang Peng to ask about the attack, but it seemed like the investigation process didn’t go smoothly.

So far, all they knew was that the attack organization was located near Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. However, because these were war-torn countries, there were plenty of armed organizations and mercenaries in that region. It was difficult to track down the true identities of the attackers.

Most importantly, none of the organizations claimed to be behind the attack.

As for the “tattoos” on the deceased attackers, that was something from the movies. If the attackers didn’t want to reveal their identities, obviously they wouldn’t leave any physical evidence on their bodies. Even their weapons came from unknown origins.

So far, the one thing the intelligence department was sure of, was that this was a sophisticated organization.

After all, they had to travel from the middle east to the Dzoosotoyn Elisen Desert, crossing almost the entire Central Asia region.

Being able to transport twelve well-trained and heavily armed militants through so many borders was already a difficult task.

There were only two countries in the world that had the capability and drive to organize an attack like this...

The Garden plan was set aside for the time being.

The Academy of Engineering and the Academy of Science announced the primary academician election results on their website.

As expected, Lu Zhou's name was on both of the primaries.

This caused quite the sensation, and it became a hot topic among university forums.

However, interestingly enough, even though some people had a few words of hatred toward the results, none of them questioned the fairness of the election.

After all, with a Nobel Prize and a Fields Medal, not to mention the ion thruster propulsion system and controllable fusion, Lu Zhou was more than qualified to have two academician titles.

During the last election, Lu Zhou was busy being the "chief designer" of the Pangu fusion reactor.

Otherwise, he would have been an academician a long time ago...

Chapter 782: Arrival on Mars?

As far as the Chinese academic community was concerned, June was the time for the academician primaries announcement.

On the other hand, June was also the third month of the Heart of Gold flight...

A silver-colored spacecraft slowly moved forward in the deep space. It was tens of millions of kilometers away from Earth.

When comparing the spacecraft to the Sun, it seemed like the spacecraft was moving at the speed of a snail, but in fact, it was moving nearly four kilometers a second.

If this were four days ago, it would be moving even faster. Its speed had now been greatly decelerated by Mars' gravitational system.

Johnson stared at the fiery red planet outside the porthole. A victorious smile appeared on his face.

"It's Mars! Jesus, we're finally here!"

With a camera in her hand, Julia took a photo of the fiery red planet.

"It's so beautiful!"

Four days ago, the BFS spacecraft carrying the colony capsule successfully separated from the BFR rocket before entering the Mars gravitational system and orbiting the planet in an elliptical orbit.

After deceleration and several complex orbital changes, the BFS manned spacecraft, also known as the Heart of Gold, had finally successfully approached the Mars atmosphere.

This was the end of their journey.

This was the beginning of civilization's exploration of the galaxy!

"When are we landing?" Travis looked at the planet outside the window and said, "I'm feeling a little nauseous."

Johnson was here for the glory, but Travis was here for different reasons. He only joined the Ares program to hide from his debt.

As for why he had to come all the way to Mars...

1He didn't have a reason; he never did anything with a reason.

He saw the Space-X advertisement when he was drunk, so he filled out the form without thinking. Then when he almost forgot about it, someone suddenly called him and said he was chosen.

Honestly, he thought the phone call was a scam. After all, he didn't think they would actually take a football player to Mars.



Fortunately, NASA didn't ask him to do anything complicated. They just gave him some basic colonist training. The more complex operations were done by the former marine, Johnson.

Johnson was different from Travis and Julia. He was the "captain" of the Heart of Gold. He had been carefully selected and had been professionally trained. He actually signed a contract with Space-X years ago.

Apparently back then, there was no such thing as the Ares program. China hadn't even started its moon landing program, but Space-X already had plans to colonize Mars...

"Prepare for landing!" Johnson floated back to his seat and clapped his hands. "Okay my friends, our future home is right in front of our eyes. Our altitude is at 316.7 kilometers, and we will reach our target airspace in five minutes! Please put on your Mars spacesuit and connect yourself with the environment-control bio-security system. Give me a thumbs up when you're ready!"

Travis nervously inserted the environmental life control tube into his seat. He put on his seatbelt and asked, "How long are we living here for?"

Johnson smiled heartily and said, "Four to five years at least! Someone might take our place in a couple of years, and of course, it could also be for the rest of our lives. It looks like Vegas here, nothing but red sand."

Travis couldn't help but say, "Las Vegas isn't as deserted as this!"

"Then let's change that... Guys, prepare for landing! Environment life control system is activated! 3, 2, 1... Ignite!

"Here we go!"

The spacecraft was in the target airspace and the orbital calibration was complete. Johnson pressed the landing button.

His seat began to shake violently, and through the porthole, he saw them getting farther and farther away from the spacecraft shuttle.

Travis could feel the g-force acting on him, and he whispered, "Sh\*t."

Johnson, who was sitting in the main pilot's seat, clenched his teeth while looking excited.

Julia was also sitting in the cockpit, and she looked around nervously while secretly praying in her heart.

They had taken the first step toward Mars.

As for what would happen next, only God could answer them...

...

Even at their closest point, Mars was tens of millions of kilometers away from Earth.

Sending an email from Mars to Earth would take at least three minutes. Therefore, after entering Mars' gravitational system, it would be difficult for NASA's ground command center to accurately track and give directions to the Heart of Gold.

However, even though the three-minute delay made it much more difficult to communicate, the news of the Heart of Gold landing still spread all over Earth...

Jinling launch site.

Ever since the establishment of the Lunar Orbit Committee, this had become the home base of the Lunar Orbit Committee.

In order to help the construction of the lunar orbit project, two major aviation and aerospace companies had set up their offices here. Even the China National Space Administration moved some of their offices from Beijing to here.

An urgent meeting was underway in a conference room on the first floor of the launch site command center.

The deputy director of the China National Space Administration, Chen Yunhai, who was also the director of the Lunar Orbit Committee organization department, sat there with a report in his hand.

"35 minutes ago, we received a message from the five hundred meter Aperture Spherical Telescope. Through the diagnosis and identification of the

space signal, we confirmed the electromagnetic wave was transmitted from Mars. The message transmission time was 10 minutes.”

He placed the report on the table and looked around the conference table.

“This is the FAST project team report. According to their speculations, the Heart of Gold has successfully entered Mars orbit!”

Whispers were heard around the conference table.

A lot of people turned their heads toward Lu Zhou, who was sitting at the other end of the table, staring at his laptop. Unsurprisingly, Lu Zhou didn’t react at all.

Yuan Huanmin, the chief engineer of the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, asked, “Have they begun landing?”

“We aren’t sure, but if they’re already in Mars orbit, it shouldn’t be difficult to land.”

Even though this was the first time a human being was sent to Mars, this wasn’t the first time NASA had sent a spacecraft to Mars. Starting with the Viking 1, the US space industry had more than half a century of experience in Mars surface landing. It was unlikely for a landing problem to happen.

After hearing Academician Yuan’s words, Chen Yunhai spoke.

“Not sure, we are still confirming the legitimacy of the news...”

“There’s no need.” Lu Zhou suddenly spoke.

“They were probably successful. The piece of information captured by the FAST team was probably a video transmission of the Heart of Gold to the NASA command center.”

Chen Yunhai paused for a second, adjusted his glasses, and spoke.

“How do you know...”

Lu Zhou turned his laptop screen around and said, “Because they just uploaded a video on Youtube.”

## Chapter 783: A Little Trouble

The video was a shot of the spacecraft in orbit, only a minute and fifty seconds long.

The video portrayed a semi-circular landing capsule separating from the Heart of Gold spacecraft, falling toward the thin Mars atmosphere, and eventually disappearing...

Just like Lu Zhou had predicted, the second the landing was successful, NASA announced the news on their official website and posted the Heart of Gold video on the Internet.

What happened next was nothing out of the ordinary.

In just ten minutes, this less than two minutes long video went viral, reaching number three on the YouTube trending page.

After watching the video, everyone in the conference room had gone silent.

After a while, Chen Yunhai broke the silence.

“We should discuss our countermeasures...”

“Nothing to discuss, I’ve said from that beginning that we should focus on doing our own project well.”

Lu Zhou closed his laptop and looked at Academician Yuan Huanmin. He then asked, “How long until the Moon Palace life capsule is ready?”

Academician Yuan paused for a second before replying, “It is already ready. The tests will take another week.”

“Then we’ll launch in two weeks’ time!” Lu Zhou shoved his laptop into his bag and stood up. He then said, “Let’s all get to work, meeting over!”

...

The success of the Heart of Gold spacecraft earned the United States a huge amount of respect from the international community. The entire country was celebrating.

The video posted by NASA on YouTube was being bombarded with comments from all over the world.

It was almost like The New York Times was taking revenge on the Moon Palace's cooling system debacle. They deliberately posted a boxing glove with a star and stripes pattern in their news report, as if they were mocking China.

Even the Washington Post said that this was "a great step for mankind".

Other than the American media outlets, other media outlets also reported this hot topic.

The BBC stood from a neutral standpoint, and it pointed out that there was no doubt that NASA had the upper hand in this space competition.

So far, it seemed like the Moon Palace program was no match for the Ares program.

Compared to the helium-3 resources on the Moon, the rich methane resources on Mars could be used as an energy source for liquid oxygen methane rockets.

It turned out that chemical propulsion technology was far from being bottlenecked. This could be seen from the BFS rocket. The colony on Mars would become a starting point for NASA to send other spacecraft to other planets.

The future of ion thruster propulsion systems was bright, but it seemed like chemical propulsion rockets were still putting up a fight.

Space-X announced a contract with YouTube to regularly post Mars colonists videos for the public to watch for free.

Elon Musk promised in an interview that all advertising revenue generated would be invested in space projects.

On the other hand, the White House and NASA released a message, asking the public to vote for the name of the Mars colony.

The public was quite enthusiastic at voting; even those who were uninterested in aerospace decided to put in their votes.

Within a day, more than 30 million people had voted online.

Finally, the White House announced that the first Martian colony would be called “New Virginia”.

This was where the British settlers first settled in America.

Naming the Martian colony after this was quite a meaningful choice.

NASA also announced the next step of the Ares program.

Before sending more migrants to Mars, the current colonists stationed on Mars would survey resources such as methane gas reserves and metal deposits and expand the scope of geological exploration activities to areas that were previously unreachable by remote-controlled Mars rovers. They would explore the Mars polar carbon dioxide reserves, assess the feasibility of repairing the Mars atmosphere, and most importantly, exploration of underground water.

So far, it seemed like the Americans had the victory secured.

Across the Pacific Ocean, the Lunar Orbit Committee was under a lot of pressure.

At the beginning of the space station program, there was a lot of controversy on whether to place the space station in lunar orbit or in Earth orbit. Now that the Ares program proved to be successful, the debates were getting louder.

However, Lu Zhou, the chief designer of the Lunar Orbit Committee, didn't seem to care.

The launch for the Moon Palace life module was going to happen, regardless of the American's success.

After the life module had been completely assembled, the Moon Palace, which contained the function module, node module, and experimental module, would be used as a complete lunar space station, floating in the “NRHO” orbit.

This was the final stage of the Moon Palace first phase...

...

White House.

President's office.

The president had just returned from the congress. He sat in his office chair while reading through the meeting notes enthusiastically.

The expressions of the opposition MPs brought a smile to his face.

A week ago, the opposition MPs were attacking him for the excessive funding for the aerospace program, and very few people believed that he was right.

But the Ares program was proven to be successful!

They were winning the space race!

He was leading the Americans to a better future!

He signed his name on the document and remembered the congress member who told him to reduce funding. He couldn't help but grin.

"What don't these idiots understand? Sure, NASA is spending a lot of money, but they're creating jobs and helping the economy, what are they complaining about..."

Roosevelt's dam boosted American's economy, aerospace was no different.

He shook his head and left the budget document aside. He then picked up a document regarding the California nuclear power plant project.

He was just about to read it when he heard a knock at the door.

He put down the document and said, "Come in."

When he saw Director Carson appear at the door, the president's face was full of smiles.

"Director Carson! It's nice to see you, take a seat!"

Carson looked at the cheerful president and felt a little weird.

"Mr. President, it's nice to see you too..."

The president leaned in his office chair and asked, "Do you have good news for me?"

“No... Not quite.” Director Carson gulped and said, “Our colonists are in a bit of trouble...”

#### Chapter 784: Mars Diaries

It had been almost two weeks since they landed on Mars, three days since the life support system was named “New Virginia”.

During this time, the New Virginia survey plans went quite smoothly. Even though they encountered a 17-hour sandstorm, it passed away without doing any harm.

In fact, Mars’ atmosphere was a hundred times thinner than Earth, so a sandstorm itself was not particularly dangerous. What was dangerous was the electrostatic lightning that came with the sandstorms and the decline of sunlight. This prevented the solar-powered devices from getting enough energy.

However, this kind of event had already been taken into consideration by Space-X’s Mars colonization project team. The life support system was equipped with a methane generator, which could replace the solar-powered devices to supply energy.

The first thing these colonists did after landing was to install lightning rods for their home, to prevent any possible accidents...

Although they encountered many difficulties adapting to life on Mars, they were able to overcome them. They cooperated with the NASA ground command center to complete the scheduled scientific research missions. Johnson usually took half an hour every day to film his “Mars Diaries”.

He was the “Columbus” of this new “continent”, so he obviously hoped that more people would be interested in “New Virginia”. Therefore, when he was shooting videos, he usually chose to show the more glamorous parts of his Martian life. He never filmed the dangerous and bad sides of his life.



Actually, his “vlogging advertisement” was quite successful. People took the bait and began to discuss living on Mars. Each episode of the Mars Diaries caused enthusiastic discussions on Facebook and Twitter.

So far, five episodes of “Mars Diaries” had been released. It had become one of the most popular Internet shows in North America. Many TV stations even purchased broadcasting rights from Space-X.

Today was the filming of episode 6.

Johnson placed the camera on the table and took two steps back. He then smiled brightly, exposing his white teeth, as he greeted the camera.

“Hello, guys! It’s Johnson here, the captain of the Heart of Gold! It’s been a while since we last talked!

“Unfortunately, we encountered a sandstorm! We can’t explore outside today... But don’t worry about us, we’re not worried about being blown away by the wind, and the tornado barely tickles us.

“I want to use this opportunity to show you guys what we do on Mars when we can’t explore outside...”

Johnson picked up the camera equipment from the table and walked to the common area. He explained to the audience what they did to kill time, such as playing VR games or running on the treadmill.

“This is our entertainment lounge... It is a bit small, but this is still in the early stages... Hey, Travis, say hi to everyone.”

Travis was playing video games. He gave a fake smile at first, but when he noticed Johnson’s scary eyes, he changed it to a real smile.

Johnson gave him a thumbs up.

“I’ll cut that out, you’re welcome.”

“Thanks, Johnson.”

Travis rolled his eyes and put on his VR goggles. He then went back to playing his video game.

Actually, life up here was rather boring. It was far less utopian than Johnson had portrayed.

However, the downsides were obviously not shown in the vlogs. Even if he accidentally filmed it, the team at Space-X would cut the “bad” parts of the video out.

However, that was often not necessary.

Because he rarely filmed the negative side of things.

By speaking into the camera, he was communicating with people from tens of millions of kilometers away. It became a daily routine for him. If there were more things to film and editing didn’t take as long, he would gladly film one vlog per day.

After showing the viewers Travis playing video games and Julia reading a book next to the coffee machine, Johnson walked into the garage and stood next to his “car”.

“All good things come to an end. It is time to say goodbye. I look forward to talking to you guys again. I hope you look forward to the next episode, bye...”

Johnson put on a cool pose in front of the camera and ended today’s shoot.

He heard footsteps coming toward the garage. Travis, who had finished playing his video game, walked over.

He looked at Johnson standing next to the rover and folded his arms. He complained to Johnson.

“This damn vlog doesn’t make me feel good at all.”

Johnson smiled and tucked the camera into his pocket. He walked up to Travis and patted him on the shoulder.

“Take it easy, buddy. After the sandstorm passes, I’ll take you out for a drive.”

Travis said, “I don’t want to drive, go yourself. There’s nothing but sand here! God damn it, why did I come here?”

There obviously were no roads on Mars, so driving over sand was fine, but last time, they had to drive around the more rocky areas to collect samples. The drive was extremely bumpy and uncomfortable.

After living on Mars for a while, Travis was quite resistant toward outdoor missions. He demanded his work be moved indoors.

Johnson decided to approve his demands.

Instead, Julia was transferred to outdoor missions.

Fortunately, these missions didn't require many people. Most of the pieces of equipment were highly automated, so most of the time they didn't even need to get off their rover.

Before sending the life support system to Mars, NASA considered the case where none of the colonists would want to leave the cabin.

To put it bluntly, their main mission was to test the life support system, and most of the other scientific activities were just supplementary.

"Okay, bud, everything will be okay. We flew for two months just to get here, the fun is just starting to begin."

Johnson didn't know how to respond to his teammate's complaints, so he could only try to comfort him.

Regardless of whether Travis was comforted or not, this was the only thing Johnson could do.

However, what Johnson didn't know was that tens of millions of kilometers away, the NASA ground command center was in chaos.

That's right.

There was nothing scary about a Mars sandstorm.

However, a Mars sandstorm could last more than six months. Even if they used the methane generator as a backup power source, they might not last six months...

## Chapter 785: Global Sandstorm

NASA ground command center.

The president's roar echoed through the building.

"F\*ck!

"A bunch of idiots!

"If you knew there were going to be sandstorms, why did you choose this time to send our colonists there?"

The people in the conference room looked at the angry president, and they stayed dead silent. None of them wanted to be called out.

Especially Director Carson.

He looked down awkwardly.

He didn't expect something like this to happen.

After all, he wasn't God, how could he have expected this to happen.

"Mr. President... We don't have a weather observatory on Mars. I understand what you're feeling right now, but there was no way for us to know what the climate on Mars would be like..."

Director Carson paused for a second and spoke.

"Generally speaking, most sandstorms occur during summer, and global sandstorms rarely occur outside of summer... What is happening now is completely out of our expectations. Although we do have countermeasures..."

The president stared at him and asked aggressively, "What are the countermeasures?"

"But a small accident occurred," Director Carson said with an awkward expression. "Originally, our plan was to set up methane and groundwater resource collection points so that we could use the resources on Mars to

survive. As long as we had these resources, the sandstorms blocking the sunlight wouldn't be a problem, but..."

"But?"

Director Carson gulped and said, "But our colonists had just landed on Mars and hadn't set up the methane and water collection points. The methane reserves on board... won't last very long."

Simply put, they did not take into account that the weather would be so horrible two weeks after landing.

Even though the global Mars sandstorms were difficult to predict through astronomical observations, one could make rough estimations. According to historical data, it occurred on average every 3 Mars years, which was 5.5 Earth years.

The last global sandstorm was in 2018, only 3 Earth years had passed since then. Not to mention there was also another Hohmann transfer orbit happening soon, which they could use to send resources to the colonists.

However...

No one expected Mars to have such harsh climates. This sandstorm swept the entire planet. Looking at Mars from a ground astronomical observatory, Mars looked like a dusty ball, blocking all sunlight...

Not having solar power wasn't the worst part.

The worst part was that they had just planted their crops, and the plants needed sunlight to grow.

There were only two options left for the colonists, either to dispose of all the crops that had just been planted or waste electricity and use artificial sunlight.

Neither option was optimal.

"Why didn't you think about this before?" The president said to Director Carson angrily, "I spoke clearly in the White House! If we can't guarantee that our colonists will be 100% safe, I'd rather not send any colonists at all!"

Carson: "Sir..."

The president said, "What? Do you have a question, Mr. Carson?"

"Yes, you did say that." Director Carson gulped and said, "But you also said during a closed-door meeting... To win the space race at any costs, as quickly as possible."

The president's face stiffened, and he awkwardly rubbed his nose and spoke.

"Did I say that?"

The vice president standing beside him nodded silently.

"I remember you saying it... We can find it in the meeting notes."

The vice president was just a puppet, and he didn't have any reason to suck up to the president. Furthermore, he was the head of the reorganized National Space Committee, and he didn't want the blame to be on him.

The president replied, "That's not the main point! Regardless of what I said, I want you to immediately take countermeasures! Director Carson!"

Carson suddenly stood up straight.

"Yes, sir!"

The president gave him orders.

"I need you to come up with a plan in 24 hours, then implement it over the next 72 hours. I don't care what method you use! We must ensure the safety of our astronauts and keep them alive!"

"If this fails, you know what will happen."

Carson broke out in cold sweat as he replied nervously, "Yes, sir..."

...

[New Virginia!]

"These people are so optimistic."

Lu Zhou looked at the popup window on his computer screen and shook his head with a smile.

Lu Zhou was spending his lunchtime at his Jinling Institute for Advanced Study office. He drank coffee while reading some theses.

Coincidentally, he noticed this popup.

“It seems like Space-X is really spending a lot on advertising. They’re even advertising on academic forums.”

The public opinion regarding New Virginia was one-sided.

Ever since the BFS spacecraft successfully dropped the capsule, New Virginia seemed to be the place of dreams. Because of the “Mars Diaries” program, everyone wanted to live on Mars...

North American media outlets gradually stopped talking about the space race. Instead, they focused on interviewing friends and families of the colonists.

Lu Zhou was also a “fan” of the “Mars Diaries”. He didn’t miss a single episode.

After all, if he wanted to defeat his opponents, he had to understand them first.

Even though he felt like Musk seemed too cocky at times, there was no doubt Musk was an accomplished person.

The BFR rocket was the leading chemical propulsion rocket in the world, yet there was still room for improvement.

And he also had his life support system...

In addition to watching the “Mars Diaries” through the Lunar Orbit Committee, Lu Zhou requested electromagnetic wave signals data from the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Telescope. He then sent the data to Xiao Ai for analysis and cracking.

Not all of the transmission data could be cracked, but this was another way to obtain more information on “New Virginia”.

If everything went well, he might even obtain crucial information.

For example, the Mars resource survey data...

Lu Zhou closed the webpage and was about to get back to work. However a pop-up window appeared on the lower right corner of his screen.

[Master, file number 0001 has been decrypted! Do you want to look at it now?  
ψ ( ` ∇ ) ψ]

Lu Zhou looked at Xiao Ai's devil emoticon and smiled.

“Okay, send it to my desktop... Oh yeah, how are the other files going?”

[Not done yet. They used different encryption methods for each communication, so it is going to take a long time to decrypt... (; ㄟ `) ლ]

“No worries, take your time, I'm not in a hurry.”

[Okay! Xiao Ai will try its best!(≥∇≤) ლ]

Even though Xiao Ai was smart, it still had its limitations.

Even supercomputers couldn't immediately crack encryption.

File No. 0001 was the first communication signal between the Heart of Gold and the NASA ground command center. The data was collected by the FAST project team two weeks ago.

Lu Zhou opened the cracked file and skimmed through it. Just like he expected, it was all messages such as “everything is fine” and “mission approved”. He didn't find any juicy content.

Lu Zhou was about to copy the file onto a USB drive when he suddenly heard knocking sounds on his door.

Lu Zhou closed the file and cleared his throat.

“Come in.”

The door opened, and Hou Guang came in.

Hou Guang had a serious look on his face. He skipped the small talk and went straight to the point.

“There is news from the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Telescope. They found something unusual.”



Lu Zhou leaned in his chair and said, “What?”

“There’s a global sandstorm on Mars!”

...

Chapter 786: Era Of Space 4.0

### *Global sandstorm?*

After hearing Hou Guang’s words, Lu Zhou subconsciously looked at the calendar at the corner of the table. He saw that the year was indeed 2021.

Hou Guang guessed what Lu Zhou was thinking, so he spoke.

“I know you are surprised... In fact, the observers at the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Telescope are also surprised. On average, a global sandstorm occurs on Mars every five to six years.”

Hou Guang sighed.

Even though it was a good thing for their opponents to be in trouble, they didn’t want NASA to be completely obliterated. It wasn’t in their interest for the Ares program to go sideways.

After hearing Hou Guang, Lu Zhou contemplated for a bit.

“Is there a reason?”

Hou Guang smiled and replied, “What reason could there be...”

The climate on Mars was a complex system. Because of the thin atmosphere and extreme terrains, there were no reliable methods that could accurately predict climate change.

The only inference people could make was that global sandstorms occurred every five to six years. Each sandstorm lasted for months or even an entire year. This was often accompanied by lightning and tornadoes.

If someone wanted to make accurate Mars climate predictions, they would have to send at least a few weather satellites into Mars' low-Earth orbit.

Lu Zhou: "If a global sandstorm happens, what does that mean for the colonists on Mars?"

Hou Guang: "Generally speaking, the sandstorm will affect the solar power generators, but they should have a backup power supply. It shouldn't be a big problem... Of course, only NASA knows how bad the situation is."

The life support system embodied the most advanced technology of many space companies such as Space-X and Blue Origin. Even though the Ares program was executed hastily, Elon Musk had been making preparation to colonize Mars for decades. There was no way he didn't take sandstorms into account.

Musk might have even practiced sandstorm drills on Earth.

Of course, these were just Lu Zhou's speculations.

Like Hou Guang said, only the Mars colonists and NASA knew what the true situation was like.

Lu Zhou nodded and went silent for a while.

"Ask those at the Five-hundred-meter Aperture Spherical Telescope to continue observing Mars... I guess we'll wait for NASA's announcement."

Lu Zhou's focus was still on the Moon. He only paid a little attention to what was happening on Mars. It would be a good thing if this sandstorm revealed to Lu Zhou how advanced NASA's Mars technology was.

Hou Guang left the office and closed the door on his way out.

Lu Zhou looked at the door and remembered he had a meeting with the director of the European Space Agency. He stood up and was about to prepare for the meeting.

However, he suddenly stopped and spoke to his computer.

"Xiao Ai, change the file decryption order. Crack the most recent files first!"

The computer signal light flashed, indicating that Xiao Ai had heard him.

Lu Zhou nodded and left the office.

...

The controllable fusion negotiations had come to an end. China and the rest of the world were at the honeymoon stage, and they had started to work closely in both academic and industry fields.

China's entry into the International Space Station program and the European Union and China cooperation on the moon space station were the best examples of this.

Inside the command center at the Jinling launch site, Lu Zhou met Mr. Owens, the director of the European Space Agency.

Owens just came from a meeting in Beijing. He flew to Jinling mainly to see Lu Zhou. He wanted to meet the leader of China's aerospace industry, the chief designer of the Lunar Orbit Committee, a legendary scientist...

"Hello, Professor Lu, it's a pleasure to meet you!"

Owens was tall and lanky. He enthusiastically shook Lu Zhou's hand. Lu Zhou smiled politely toward Owens.

"It's nice to meet you too, Mr. Owens! Take a seat."

Officials from the European Space Agency and journalists from European and Chinese media outlets followed Owens' footsteps.

This meeting was open to the public. Both sides were going to talk about cooperation plans and portray an image to the international community regarding their cooperation.

Which was, that the negotiations between China and the European Union had been going smoothly.

Owens, while sitting on the sofa, explained his viewpoint in an interesting manner.

"If we look at the history of human space exploration, I think it can be divided into three stages."

Lu Zhou smiled and asked, "Which three?"

Owens smiled and said, “In the first stage, space 1.0, humans studied astronomy and astrology and cultural and religious factors played a big role. In the space 2.0 stage, we went into space and set foot on the Moon. This is the ‘Apollo’ era. In the space 3.0 stage, space became another area for human development. Commercial space launch missions were becoming more frequent. This is the ‘International Space Station’ stage.”

Lu Zhou smiled and said, “Interesting, so when do you think we’ll enter space 4.0?”

Owens thought for a bit and smiled.

“I think space 4.0 is the era of the Moon Palace.”

“Oh, really?” Lu Zhou smiled and asked, “Why isn’t it the era of Ares?”

Owens smiled and shook his head.

“Mars is too far away, and it takes months for a round trip. Europe doesn’t have the capability to participate yet. Maybe Ares will be the next space era, but so far, we are more optimistic about the Moon.”

Lu Zhou couldn’t help but think.

*He’s really thinking about this from all angles.*

*It’s not that they don’t want to join the Ares program, it’s that they don’t have the capabilities to join.*

*Is this guy really from Germany?*

Lu Zhou felt like Owens was different from his other German friends...

Owens smiled toward a reporter’s camera.

“We’re in a new era where civilization will become more and more integrated with aerospace. In the future, more and more countries will participate in aerospace projects, and people of different skin colors will all fly on spacecraft.

“I would like us to develop lunar resources together, to build a ‘lunar village’ together.”

Lu Zhou smiled and reached out his right hand.

“We are happy to cooperate. I’m glad to reach a consensus with you.”

Chapter 787: SOS?

Building a community with the same goal for the future was one of the fundamental philosophies of the Chinese. It was also the main principles proposed by the Chinese representatives at the 15th United Nations General Assembly.

China didn’t want to achieve world domination. Rather, they wanted the world’s future interests to align with China’s interests.

Of course, this wasn’t something Lu Zhou had to worry about.

As a scholar, he only had to focus on his own research.

However, as a scholar, he was still glad to see his motherland being integrated into the international community, which meant he could use his voice to influence this community...

The meeting lasted for an hour, and the two talked about a lot of things.

Owens was surprised at Lu Zhou’s vision for the lunar village. Lu Zhou was interested in some of Owens’ ideas on the development of space resources and business operation models.

Technology provided humans with tools to transform and manipulate natural resources. However, the way at which people should use these tools was a discipline in and of itself.

“The Living Planet seminar is going to be held in Prague, Czech Republic. If you have time, we’d sincerely like you to visit.”

“If I have time, I’ll think about attending.”

Lu Zhou smiled and nodded. He obviously didn’t give a clear answer.

Owens didn’t push any further. He shook hands with Lu Zhou and said goodbye.

...

The day after Lu Zhou and Owens finished their meeting, the news that China and the European Union reached a lunar resources development consensus swept across the Internet.

Everyone Daily posted a concept map of the lunar village.

On the other hand, Xinhua Daily announced in its latest newspaper issue the specific content that was discussed by the Chinese and the European Union on the development and exploration of lunar resources.

Surprisingly, the European Union recognized the bill signed by China at the beginning of last year, which was to control the profits of companies in the lunar resource mining field.

This bill caused a lot of controversies back then. It was even criticized by the Western media as a modern East India Company Act.

If it weren't for the western countries' desire to obtain China's nuclear fusion technologies, they would have kept silent...

But now, the European Union recognized this bill and stated that countries should compete fairly and cooperate on the development of lunar resources. This was able to shut a lot of people up.

The Americans were especially shocked. They couldn't believe this "betrayal" by Europe. The line that said "space 4.0 is the era of Ares" attracted a lot of discussions.

Even though Director Owens spoke euphemistically, some people were still offended.

The Ares program was heading toward the victory line, yet Owens still had doubts regarding the Ares program?

The Americans thought the Europeans were blind.

However, even though the Europeans seemed to be leaning toward the Chinese side, the United States had no time to take care of this matter.

While the China National Space Administration and European Space Agency were having their own discussions, New Virginia was stuck in a global Mars sandstorm.

Even Lu Zhou's favorite "Mars Diaries" program was suspended.

However, Space-X didn't state the true reason for the suspension of the Mars Diaries program. They said that the information transmission costs were too expensive and that they needed the bandwidth for scientific research.

After Space-X announced this on their website, a lot of people were disappointed.

The program was at its climax, and many fans were let down.

However, most people were understanding.

After all, scientific research was more important than creating an entertainment show.

Elon Musk stood in front of a camera and apologized to the "Mars Diaries" fans.

"It's a shame that this sandstorm might last for a long time. I assure you that everything is going fine. The atmosphere density of Mars is only 1% that of Earth's. Even though this sandstorm is tough, it won't do any damage.

"Also, I'd like to use this opportunity to talk about something exciting.

"The new BFR rocket is about to depart. This time, we are sending a 16-ton experiment module to Mars!

"If you have something to say to our colonists, please send us a written letter! We will choose 100 letters and send them to Mars along with our experimental module. Our New Virginia residents will read these letters out loud on Columbia TV!"

The reporters burst into excitement as they all rushed forward and reached out with their microphones.

Letter to Mars!

That is so exciting!

Musk is a genius!

However, Johnson, who was tens of millions of kilometers away, had no idea that this disastrous sandstorm was being downplayed on Earth...

The oxygen and methane resources continued to decline, and the situation was becoming increasingly dangerous.

Of course, the US authorities had been trying their best. NASA even held several meetings regarding New Virginia's rescue operation.

So far, Director Carson was presented with two solutions. One was to launch a new BFR rocket to Mars and send over resources that could help the colonists. The other was to find a way to get the colonists back on the BFS spacecraft, where they could continue living for a long time.

However, so far, it seemed like neither solution was realistic.

The distance between Mars and Earth was getting wider and wider. The best launch window to Mars was over. Even though they had BFR rockets available, it would take the rockets more than six months to reach Mars.

And it seemed like New Virginia could only survive for two more months.

Praying that the sandstorm would stop seemed to be the most realistic solution...

Inside the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study, a text bubble popped up on Lu Zhou's computer.

Xiao Ai: [Master, file 0021 is successfully decrypted!]

Lu Zhou, who was reading theses, looked at the text bubble and replied, "Send it to my computer."

Xiao Ai: [Yes, Master ~ (๑•̀ㅂ•́) ʘ✧]

In less than half a second, a folder appeared on his desktop.

Lu Zhou opened the folder and saw the file. Instantly, three letters caught his attention.



Lu Zhou raised his eyebrows and muttered to himself.

“SOS...?”

They sent out an international distress signal?

Things are becoming more and more interesting...