

The Mechanic 101

Chapter 101: Believe in Science

As Han Xiao was repairing his vehicle, he was reflecting on the weaknesses that he had revealed in his previous battle.

His current fighting style heavily relied on his sniping abilities. The best tactic he employed was to use his shots to lure his opponents in. However, the speed of his movements was not yet up to standard; thus, he wanted to manufacture some small gadgets to increase his speed.

A mechanical leg seemed like a pretty good idea. However, Han Xiao felt that it was too bulky. Also, Han Xiao had gained new knowledge and experience to create gadgets that were more mobile.

Han Xiao was still trying to improve his fighting abilities. He wanted to create a robot army to provide him sufficient cover fire so that they could help mitigate his weakness, allowing him to fire at a relatively lower rate.

Since mechanical parts could be easily obtained by members of the mechanic class, Han Xiao could find the raw material and replace the missing parts easily.

Upon completing his repairs, Han Xiao drove the vehicle along the path, as directed by the radar coordinates, up to the entrance of Felonia. Instantly, he saw the trail of footsteps that disappeared along the edges of the cave. After a short moment of contemplation, he predicted that a group of wanderers had entered the cave.

If Han Xiao was an ordinary individual, he probably would have been worried that the valuables housed in the cave had been taken away by others. However, Han Xiao was also unique in his thinking. He felt that having others to explore the unknown territory first was in fact beneficial to him.

Han Xiao stood at the edge of the cave. He looked down and could see the distinct layers of rocks and cliffs. At the boundary between sunlight and darkness, Han Xiao could see a rusty metallic chain extending downward.

There are signs of mining on the rocks of the cliffs. There's a smell in the air... the smell of rust. I haven't explored this place before, so I should head down now.

Han Xiao grabbed all his gear, holding his torch in his mouth.

As he scaled down the rocky cliff, he shone his torch downward.

Nearer to the bottom, the sunlight gradually disappeared, and he could feel the curved edges of the rocks.

The sunlight disappeared quickly, and darkness enveloped the surroundings. The only source of light was the torchlight. The eerie atmosphere alarmed Han Xiao. He could feel a chill in his bones that was creeping toward his heart. He wanted to slow down his heart, which was thumping so quickly, so that he could ease the sense of nervousness within him.

After descending for about three minutes, the light from his torch finally hit the ground. At the bottom of the ravine was a dusty metallic floor. There were thick cobwebs in the tracks, and the place seemed like it had not been explored for a long time.

Han Xiao landed on the ground with a 'thud'. The pitch-black environment made the sound especially eerie and creepy.

The surroundings were specious and empty, and the light from the torch seemed like a lonely island in a sea of darkness. There was a mixture of sounds in the darkness, similar to the sound of his landing. That caught Han Xiao's attention.

After sweeping the area with his torchlight, Han Xiao found himself in a metallic corridor that had a design similar to a military base. There were reinforced concrete structures everywhere, and the walls were also caked in rust. There also seemed to be some weird bugs moving about on the walls.

The metallic flooring on the ground was covered with dust. A trail of fresh footsteps could be seen extending into the darkness. The footsteps probably belonged to the pilgrims who had arrived at the spot shortly before him

There probably some more compartments and spaces beneath the metallic floor.

Han Xiao pointed his torchlight in another direction and shone at his foot. He saw what was beneath him.

Below the hollow metallic flooring, there were countless dense red lights that seemed like they were emitted by the eyes of insects.

Holy shit!

Han Xiao could feel the tension in his head. He immediately dimmed the torchlight and marked out the bottom layer as a prohibited sector.

With that in mind, Han Xiao carefully followed the footsteps of the pilgrims forward. It was dead silent apart from the occasional faint sounds of crawling insects. However, if one tried to pick out these sounds individually, they would just disappear. It was very creepy and made Han Xiao uncontrollably nervous.

After walking for long while, a junction appeared in front of him. The footprints of the pilgrims led toward the path on the right.

While Han Xiao was in a dilemma over which path to take, he heard footsteps from the path on the right. He could see many people running toward him hysterically.

Han Xiao immediately moved to the other side of the junction. He switched off his torch and put on the night vision visor that Fabian Company had provided.

"Run, quickly run!"

"A monster!"

The frantic pilgrims ran out of the junction as if they were escaping from some creature. Their clothing had many blood stains. Also, the size of the group was much smaller.

What are these guys hiding from? Han Xiao was puzzled.

Suddenly, from the nearby path, there was a deep growl that originated from a beast. The growl was raspy and deep, like the sigh of a giant. The instant he heard the sound, Han Xiao felt his pulse running wild, and an uncomfortable sensation began to build up in his heart.

This is a threat from a high-level beast. It is definitely above LV 40!

The pilgrims looked fearful. It was as if they had seen something unimaginable. Using their hands and leg, they were crawling hysterically backward.

However, the beast never walked out of the dark. The pilgrims fell to the ground. They were relieved that they had managed to escape from the clutches of the beast.

There were no sounds of footsteps made by the beast.

“Joel was eaten by the beast...”

“This place is too scary.”

The pilgrims were shivering, and shock was clearly written on their faces. It was as if all their energy was being drained away. They said, “This place is not Felonia. We will not find the things we want here. Let’s leave and continue the hunt for the real ruins.”

According to legend, the magical ruins were supposed to be mysterious and archaic. There were supposed to be countless incomprehensible carving. The ruins were also a city made from rocks and boulders. However, they were in a man-made metallic base. On the walls, there were symbols that looked like the coat of arms of the ancient kingdom. The place was probably the secret military facility of the ancient kingdom.

The pilgrims calmed down. A young pilgrim said, “Maybe this place is indeed the Felonia we have been searching for. Our former country found the ruins of Felonia and decided to build a facility to study the treasure of the ruins.”

The treasure of the desert was the treasure mentioned in the legend of Felonia. As long as one possessed the treasure, one would be able to control the Somar desert.

The old pilgrims shook their heads and said with a bitter laugh, “Impossible. If the ancient kingdom had the treasure, why would the regime be destroyed?”

“This is not the place we are looking for. The real ruins of Felonia must be hidden in some other corner of the desert!”

The old pilgrims sounded assertive and firm.

The pilgrims helped on another up and left the place.

After Han Xiao heard their conversations, he was also confused. Based on his knowledge, there were no magical elements present on Planet Aquamarine. The so-called treasure of the desert was probably some advanced technological weaponry.

However, people would often overthink scenarios or incidents they did not understand. They would therefore create unrealistic stories. Furthermore, they would be very firm and confident that their unrealistic imagination was in fact the reality. Han Xiao thought of the story of a man who did not escape when his home was flooded. Instead, he waited atop the roof of his house for God to send him an ark.

He could not understand why the pilgrims were so adamant about linking Felonia with magic. However, that seemed to be none of his concern... unless it was the hint for another hidden mission?

Han Xiao regained his senses, and he revealed himself after the pilgrims left. He was also unsure which path to take at the junction.

The pilgrims said that there was a monster on the route at the right. However, the path on the left was unknown territory, and it could very well be more dangerous. How should he decide?

Based on my experience, these pilgrims are bait to lure me into the Instance Dungeon. They hinted that there was a monster on the right. There are two interpretations of their words. The first is that they are right. The second is that they are leading me to the path on the left on purpose.

Han Xiao ground his teeth firmly and chose to walk the path on the right. The unknown was definitely scarier than the monster. He then remembered the bugs he had seen during his descent and their dense red eyes. If he was to run into those creepy crawlies, his skin was bound to shed from all their bites.

Han Xiao wore the thermo-electrical incisor gloves. He was not using any torchlight; he only had his night-vision visors on. After entering the path on the right, there was dark green filled his vision. He could barely see the road ahead.

There were abnormally large footprints on the ground. The footprints were the work of the monster. Like humans, the monster had two legs and five toes on each foot. The monster was estimated to be three meters tall.

Han Xiao walked for a while, and he came across a room its door wide opened. The footprints of the monster stopped there.

Han Xiao nudged closer to the door, and he could smell a disgusting stench that seemed like rotting meat. There was also a faint odor of blood.

He raised his head and looked inside of the room.

A pair of eyes, which were as large as bronze bells, was staring at him. He was only half a meter away from the monster!

Han Xiao was both shocked and frightened.

Chapter 102: The Serum

The magnetically controlled retractable armor was ready to be activated. Han Xiao was either going to fight or escape.

However, the monster was merely staring in the direction of the door. It was as if the monster had not noticed the existence of Han Xiao. It was standing there without moving.

Night-blindness?

Han Xiao felt a tinge of elation in his heart. Luckily, he did not switch on his torch, else he would have suffered the fate of the pilgrims before him.

Standing three meters tall, the monster had a human shape, and layers of muscles could be seen on his body. The muscles stacked together like little hills. However, the muscular body did not look aesthetically pleasing. Instead, the elongated muscles turned people off. The muscles were also rotting. There were even holes at certain areas, and plump maggots could be seen crawling around the rotting meat.

Compared its massive body, the head and neck of the creature were especially small. The skin of the monster was stretched tight by the muscles. The face of the creature also looked disproportionate. Looking at his face, one would automatically think of other abnormal individuals, like the Deformed Devil and the Sun Knight.

Han Xiao scanned the layout of the room. There was a bunch of medical equipment and four pods that were probably used for experiments. Two of the pods had been crushed. One of them was closed. There was only one free pod available for use.

There were liquid-delivery tubes on the pods. They were attached to a transparent container that only had stains of the neon-like liquid left.

Han Xiao moved backwards carefully. When he realized that the monster was still not moving, he heaved a sigh of relief. He walked down the corridor and quickly reached the second and third metal gates. The rusty gates were all locked up tight by another metallic barrier. The card-reader was so rusty that it could no longer be used.

Han Xiao did not give up because of that. He took the card-reader apart to check out its model.

Hmmm... I can't tell.

That's not important!

This place was a secret military facility decades ago. However, the facility was abandoned a couple of years back, and it was probably a site used for biochemical experiments. The experiments probably failed... or could they have succeeded? The muscular creature really doesn't look like a normal biological organism. Wait, the corridor can't be so long. How big is this base exactly?

There was silence throughout the dark corridor. The deeper one ventured into the corridor, the darker it got. Even the night-vision visor only had a visibility radius of five meters. The surrounding environment beyond that was a mystery to Han Xiao. Fortunately, he was lucky to not have claustrophobia or a phobia of darkness.

Han Xiao felt like he was walking on the edge of a knife; danger seemed imminent. Although Han Xiao was no chicken, he could feel cold sweat breaking out from all areas of his body. That was the innate reaction of any living being that was going to face an upcoming, unknown danger. Han Xiao knew that being too nervous would affect his ability to make good decisions quickly at stressful moments. He started chanting something under his breath to keep his nerves at bay.

“Stay calm even when the sky collapses. The breeze is so soothing. The waves are not choppy. The height of the mountain does not matter. There will be a fairy. A horse may be old, but it is still ambitious...”

In actual fact, Han Xiao was also unsure of what he was mumbling. However, after his chants, he no longer felt so nervous.

Along the way, he saw more than ten gates, but only the one leading to the room housing the beast was opened. The rest of the gates were all shut tightly. Eventually, he reached the end of the corridor, and a larger gate stood before his eyes. That was probably the main room. The metallic barrier was lower by a third of the distance, and he was able to enter the room.

That was the second room that one could enter. Based on the logic behind the Instance Dungeon, there was probably some useful information there.

The room seemed to be a gigantic lab. There were rusty machines everywhere, and experiment pods were sitting in the center of the room.

It seems like there is no danger.

The dust in the room choked him, and the pungent rotting smell filled his nose. There was a corpse on the table, and it was shriveled up. There were torn fragments of fabric on the body, and Han Xiao could faintly tell that the pieces of cloth belonged to a white lab coat.

Han Xiao found a book at the table near the body. He wiped the dust from the cover of the book in an attempt to find out some useful information. After taking a closer look at it, he realized it was a diary.

“13 July. The professor modified the Felonia serum for the 67th time and injected it into the lab rat. The effects are amazing and have exceeded our expectations. If there are no negative reactions, we can proceed with human trials.”

“17 July. The lab rat is dead. It is a failure. The cause of death is organ failure. The professor is disappointed. He locked himself up in his room. I could hear him smashing things in his office. The lab report for the experiment was missing.”

“20 July. The professor insisted on carrying out human trials. The higher ups approved the professor’s request. This is insane! Have they all forgotten about Experiment 000? The lab report for the experiment was torn and missing.”

“26 July. The base released a new set of regulations. All researchers are supposed to submit their electronic devices. We are not allowed to connect to any external networks. Are we going to be defeated?”

“5 August. This is the 7th day of experiment 008. The human subject is in a stable condition. There are no special changes in the subject. The professor is dejected.”

“11 August. The higher-ups sent out orders for us to retreat. The battle is not going well for our side, and we have to preserve whatever resources are left. Everyone is feeling scared. As usual, the professor is unwilling to face the reality that we have been defeated. I have prepared myself mentally for this outcome. I noticed that the guards protecting the base have become sparser over the past few months. That is probably due to the fact that most of them were being deployed to the frontline as reinforcements. Damn it, if I did not leave my post as a military doctor, I will not be stuck in this depressing facility. Everyone looks so gloomy here. There is no life! I hate his place!”

“14 August. We will be retreating tomorrow. We are heading to Base 03 to seek shelter. There is not much time. We backed up all data related to the Felonia Serum. The guards are so rough. They want to blow the entire facility up. The professor took some serums with him. The rest of the serums were all destroyed.”

The entries in the diary stopped there. Han Xiao flipped back to the front, but he could not find any more valuable information. Many pages were torn away from the diary.

The corpses at the side evidently showed that the people in the facility did not manage to escape. An accident must have happened between August 14th and August 15th that resulted in the deaths of the researchers and guards in the facility. Also, most of them had died in the basement. That explained the countless red-eyed Necro-worms active in the basement that Han Xiao had seen—the worms fed on the dead bodies!

What's a Felonia Serum? Han Xiao was intrigued by the serum. He suddenly remembered the dried-up liquid in the previous lab's experimental pod. That must have been what was left of the serum. The diary also noted that the “professor has the serum”. The body of the professor was most likely in the basement. Han Xiao had no interest in entering the restricted area. Therefore, it was probably impossible for him to obtain the serum.

Seems like there will be no interesting discoveries this time round. Han Xiao shook his head in disappointment. He then looked up and took a deep breath.

He saw a block box in the center of the table. He walked toward it hastily and opened the cover of the box. There were three tubes of a fluorescent serum in the box.

At that instant, an ancient saying flashed in his mind— *In times of desperation, there will eventually be light. What you search so hard for can actually be obtained so easily. In fact, it is just right before your eyes if turn back and take a closer look.*

Han Xiao looked at the body on the table. He bit his lip and wondered to himself, *Could the dead body be the professor?*

Han Xiao grabbed the three serums and scanned through liquid in the tubes.

Where on earth do you find a serum of such a weird color?

You gained [Felonia Serum (Incomplete)] x 3.

Felonia Serum (Incomplete): It is a serum with the medicinal ability to improve one's physical capability. The formula has yet to be perfected. After the usage of the serum, mutation is a distinct possibility.

Note, these are the last three remaining Felonia Serums.

Ah a biochemical serum. A serum without a tested and proven formula is highly dangerous. The serums I possess are incomplete products. It is highly likely for mutations to occur if I injected the serum into my body. I will probably become the muscular beast I just saw...

Han Xiao felt a cold shiver up his spine.

There is probably nothing else left here. I am going to leave this place as soon as possible. This place is very creepy.

Han Xiao turned around and met the gaze of the muscular monster standing there silently.

Chapter 103: Ahead of Us

The monster raised its muscular arm and slammed his hand down at Han Xiao as if he were a fly. There was a change in the air pressure from the immense force exerted by the hand, suffocating Han Xiao.

As the rotting stench filled his nostrils, Han Xiao quickly slid to dodge the attack like a mudskipper. The monster's strike missed him by a few millimeters, the strong wind blowing his hair into a mess.

When the monster's palm hit the ground, there was a huge boom. A dent was created in the ground, and dust could also be seen rising into the air. Han Xiao immediately held his breath and squinted to prevent the dust from entering his body.

He fired the Berserk Eagles violently at the rotting flesh of the monster, sending smelly puss spurting into the air.

You dealt 57 points of damage to Subject 002!

You have entered combat mode. Based on your current level, you will have access to the following information:

Subject 002:

Level: 42

Main Class: Low-level mutated organism (Endurance to HP conversion ratio is at 1:100)

Attributes: 65 STR, 20 DEX, 60 (90) END, 1 INT, ? MYS, ? CHA, ? LUK

Energy: 0

Energy Rank: 0

Health: 1854/7800 (Constant decomposition)

Status: Intense decomposition—Defense -25, Endurance -30—All traits are in serious decline.

Specialties:

- Physical Improvement: Strength +5, Endurance +10
- Mid-level HP Boost: Additional increase in HP from the conversion of endurance. The ration is 1:30.
- ???

Skills:

- Silent Movement LV 12
- Heavy Smash LV 8
- Collide LV 5
- ???

Although for normal players, the professional level was usually capped at LV 10, there were some professions that allowed for higher levels. Low-level mutated organism was one of such special cases.

As Han Xiao fired both his pistols continuously at the target, the large diameter bullets slammed into the body of Subject 002, forming holes in the monster's body.

With every shot, a bang resounded through the base.

The commotion is too much for me to handle. I need to end the battle fast. Han Xiao had a heavy heart. Luckily, Subject 002 was in a rather poor physical state. If the monster had full HP, it would have been tough for him to escape.

Subject 002 seemed to be unable to feel pain. It lowered its head and barged toward the target. Han Xiao felt like a steam train was barging at him!

Swiftly stowing his pistols, he took out his blade. He slashed the retractable machete hard at the skull of the monster. With a 'Dang', the blade pierced hard into the skull. Puss spilled out from the monster's head. Han Xiao was also hit by the monster's charge. He only had the time to put his hands before him, and it felt like he was facing a wild rhinoceros. He was unable to keep his balance and moved backward. While moving back, he crashed into two experiment platforms and could feel a sharp pain in his hip bone. There was also an acute pain in his chest that made him short of breath.

Multiple injuries suffered by Han Xiao flashed on the screen of the interface.

Han Xiao's blade was still stuck in the bones and flesh of Subject 002. The yellowish puss was flowing out of the wound seamlessly. The monster attempted to growl in anger, but it could only make shrieks since

its vocal chords were also decomposing. The monster's fists fired out rapidly, creating strong gusts of wind that brought the dust along. However, the motion of the punches thrown by the monster was easily discernable for Han Xiao.

The collision he had experienced previously was definitely a skill of the monster that could not be used repeatedly. Han Xiao also wanted to observe if the enemy had any specific weaknesses. The conclusion was clear. The monster really did not have a brain and could move its body even when its brain was being hacked.

Han Xiao dodged the fists of the monster. He quickly moved to the back of Subject 002 and activated the thermo-electrical incisor gloves. He pressed the gloves hard on the enemy, and a glaring pale-blue light was released in the darkness. The gloves were scorching, and the heat burnt through the rotten muscle tissues of the monster. There was an intense charred smell in the air.

Han Xiao managed to grab a sticky internal organ of the monster. He tried to rip it hard with his hands, and white smoke emerged in the air. Subject 002 was constantly trying to wave its hands and attack Han Xiao, but Han Xiao managed to evade the attacks.

The thermo-electrical incisor gloves were able to cause high damage to the enemy continuously. In less than ten seconds, it inflicted a total damage of around 800 HP. The heat from the gloves managed to scorch the body of the monster.

After flashing for a few times, the light from the gloves disappeared, indicating that the battery providing power to the gloves had been depleted. The battery powering the gloves could only sustain the gloves' activities for a few minutes. Su Li had used the gloves before Han Xiao snatched them from her, and Han Xiao had managed to deplete the last bit of energy left in the gloves' battery.

Han Xiao retreated quickly, and by utilizing his nimbleness and agility, he managed to evade the attacks of the monster. The monster was like a low-level creature with almost zero intelligence. Although it was physically strong, it was no match of Han Xiao's quickness and intelligence. Only the monster's charges were considered threatening.

Han Xiao made good use of the terrain and obstacles around to evade the monster's attacks and finally defeated the monster with his never-ending gunshots.

The monster swirled unsteadily on the spot like it was drunk before collapsing to the ground. The monster stopped breathing, and the puss flowed out of the monster's gunshot wounds.

You killed Subject 002 (LV 42).

You gained 32,000 EXP.

As you killed an enemy that is ten levels higher, there will be an addition gain of experience by 280%. The total experience gained will be 89,600. Your rate of contribution: 23.7%

You gained an additional 21,235 (23.7%) experience points.

A shuffling sound could be heard. It grew louder. The sound surrounded the entire area. Limbs started to protrude out of the cracks in the metallic flooring.

Han Xiao realized that something was wrong. His expression changed drastically, and he started fleeing toward where he had come from.

There was a huge boom from afar that sounded like the collision between metallic objects. There were also roars from a beast, and they sounded as if they were heading in Han Xiao's direction.

All signs indicated that although he had successfully wiped out Subject 002, he had triggered the activity of something else.

Han Xiao had managed to kill Subject 002. However, as recorded by the diary, the last subject of the series of experiments was Subject 008, and that meant that there were a couple more monsters like Subject 002. Perhaps, these monsters were even stronger and wandering about the various corners of the base. Since Han Xiao had already obtained what he wanted, it was time for him to flee.

Ignoring all sorts of creepy sounds, Han Xiao fled the base at the speed of light. He managed to leave the area safely and started crawling back up the cliff. The light from the sun hit his body, and he could finally relax his senses. The abandoned facility had an atmosphere that was too creepy. It was as if danger was everywhere. He had felt like he was walking along a tightrope in midair.

Fortunately, he had managed to obtain the three tubes of Felonia Serum, and Han Xiao could not imagine the value of these serums. However, he had no time to check out his loot. The different military groups in the Somar desert would quickly arrive after discovering the events that had occurred in the area.

With that thought in mind, Han Xiao left the area on his jeep.

About an hour after Han Xiao left the scene, the fleets of vehicles arrived at the entrance to Felonia. They all looked at the entrance of the cave in shock. They subsequently informed their wealthy sponsors about their discovery. The different military groups were all eyeing the hidden treasure of Felonia, and they were willing to fight it out to achieve their goal.

The leaders of these militias sent out orders for their troops to explore the facility.

The militants eventually put their battles on hold and sent reconnaissance groups into the facility. The huge amount of people entering the facility made it seem less creepy and frightening.

"There are Desert Necro-worms in the basement."

"Tell someone up top to bring the flame-throwers down."

The flamethrowers started spitting fire through the metallic flooring into the basement compartment where the worms were active. The worms squealed as they were engulfed in the flames. The mixture of the smell of the burnt worms and the rotting stench of the facility was nauseating.

The Desert Necro-worms were relatively short, less than ten centimeters, and they looked like centipedes with beetle-like shells. There were antennae on the worms' heads, and their red eyes could also be seen. They had pincers that could slice one's bones and could also be used for the ingestion of their prey.

There were tens of thousands of such worms in the facility, and the waves of worms started to retaliate. The worms crawled up and approached the militants from two directions. The various militias decided to team up in a defense against these worms. They used their flame-throwers and bullets to push back the waves of worms.

Just as the situation stabilized, the worms suddenly dispersed, and a few rotting creatures barged out. They did not care about the bullets or flames and penetrated the formation set up by the troops.

The militants were all astonished.

"What's that? They look so fucking disgusting!"

"Maintain formation."

"Fuck, the worms are invading our positions!"

"Kill the monster first... wait, there are three monsters!"

"We need back up. I repeat, we need back up!"

The gunshots went on for a while before the scene fell silent.

There were burnt worms and their shells everywhere. The monsters had been battered to death by the bullets and embers. The militants had also suffered substantial losses. The only consolation was that they had won the battle.

Couton kicked the corpse of the dead monster and muttered, "They look like experimental subjects of a series of biochemical experiments."

The troops started clearing the battlefield. They ventured up and down the base to explore the area. They blew up the gates to check out the locked rooms but unfortunately did not find anything. There was only rusty equipment and a couple of documents in the facility that the troops found valuable and kept.

The most valuable discovery were the last dregs of the dried-up neon-colored serum left in the experimental pod and the dead body of the experiment subject. These items led to the secret that the leaders of these militant groups were looking for. Perhaps they could test the effects of the serum in their own labs. However, looking at the monsters that the experimental subjects had turned into, it seemed that the serum was not yet complete.

The militants went into the lab that Han Xiao had discovered no long ago, and they found another dead experimental subject—Subject 002—with fresh wounds.

"Someone came ahead of us!"

Couton looked into the case that housed the three tubes of serum, and it was empty. There were signs that someone had tampered with the case.

His eyes instantly lit up.

Chapter 104: Strengthened Life

The trip to Somar Desert was concluded.

The allocated time for the quest was fifteen days, but Han Xiao took only six days to complete it.

As Fabian Company's carrier aircraft landed in Morning Wind City's airport, Han Xiao rushed to Hotel Victoria without a break to complete his quest at the Blood Pact Society's floor.

The server quickly reported it to the higher management level. Soon, the person in-charge came to receive Han Xiao.

In a private VIP lounge, Han Xiao was leaning comfortable on the sofa as he waited for the person in-charge to confirm his quest details.

On an unknown floor, a Dark Net recorder opened the bounty page for the Rose Militant and updated the activity log.

"688.4.1, Code Name – Mr. Black (Scorpion)

"Date: 688.4.7

"Assignment completed."

This report was sent to the database, so at the same time, all assassins of the Blood Pact Society received a text message about the removal of the Rose Militant assignment.

...

"Mr. Black, your bounty assignment has been verified. We will immediately transfer the funds into your account."

Ding!

Han Xiao looked at the computer—his Dark Net account had just received three million dollars, which amounted to five million dollars in his account. He realized that the rate of profit from doing bounty hunter assignments was way faster than making machinery.

It was a killing.

In the old days, this assignment was completed by a fifteen-member team, so the profit was divided equally between everyone. This time, Han Xiao took the profit alone, making it a colossal windfall.

You have completed the quest [Bounty Hunter (Rose Militant)].

You gained 15,000 EXP.

Hidden Quest Requirement: 'Discover the Felonia Plan' completed. You gained 25,000 additional EXP; you gained a special reward [Mid-grade gene-blending potion (4.37% Low Concentration) x 1

Reputation with the Blood Pack Society increased by 550 points. Currently Neutral (550/1000) – [Scorpion-level Assassin]

Han Xiao's eyes shimmered. Gene-blending potion was a very powerful game item—it was chiefly used to reduce the failure and mutation rate of biochemicals!

Biochemicals were a common type of drug for increasing character stats, but any use of biochemicals came with inherently risks, which included the possibility of a decrease in stat points and malignant mutations. Additionally, different biochemicals would have conflicts that resulted in further side effects. Gene-blending potion could remove these inherent risks of biochemicals to a certain degree.

No wonder. If I did not risk going into the abandoned base and discover the Felonia Serum, this special reward would not have been useful.

Han Xiao suddenly understood the crux of the matter. The rewards of this quest were linked closely to his actions. This potion was the extra reward for exploring the place, and Subject 002 was akin to a mini-boss that guarded the blood serum.

His cautiousness during the exploration helped him avoid many more difficult barriers. The footsteps of the pilgrims were secretly hinting the player in the correct direction. If he had ignored the hint and walked in the opposite direction, he would have been surrounded and attacked by a bunch of test subjects and Desert Necro-worms.

If he feared the monster and moved to the left side, he would have missed discovering the blood serum.

And if he had moved to the right side while using a torch, he would have triggered the battle with Subject 002 at the first gate. The small passageway would not have allowed him to evade and move forward properly. He was highly likely to have retreated.

Lastly, if he had continued exploring greedily after getting the blood serum, he would have suffered the same consequences as the first scenario.

The reward was really a pleasant surprise; Han Xiao could not wait to research it. After submitting the assignment, he got up and was about to leave. However, the person in-charge suddenly said, "Mir. Black. May I ask you to stay in the Morning Wing City for two days? An important guest wants to meet with you."

"Important guest?" Han Xiao was puzzled.

"An emissary from the Rothschild family, the client for the Rose Militant assignment. He hopes to meet up with you."

Could it be to do with Felonia? Han Xiao's eyes flashed before he said, "Please inform him that I will be glad to meet up with him."

The person in-charge was delighted. "Alright then."

Han Xiao left Hotel Victoria and went back to Antonio's base. He immediately entered his temporary workshop and took out the Felonia serum and the gene-blending Potion.

The Felonia serum had a yellow fluorescence. It was sealed nicely and thus did not go bad after so many years.

The gene-blending potion was as dense as mercury, and it had little shiny star-like sparkles that made it glitter.

To use or not to use? That was the question.

The Felonia serum was a secret game item that he had never seen before this. The gene-blending potion would greatly reduce the risk of using it, so it was rather safe.

After Han Xiao calculated his chance of success, he decided to roll the dice. With the help of the gene-blending potion, even if the serum failed, he would not become like the muscular and ugly-looking test subjects.

He took out a syringe and a catheter. He then poked the syringe into the vein on his arm, injecting the gene-blending potion first.

A cool and refreshing sensation was carried by his blood circulation and distributed throughout his body. He felt as if he had just taken a refreshing bite of ice-cream in the blazing summer heat. His mind was simultaneously calmed. The gene-blending potion was not harmful to the body, and if it was not activated by a biochemical, its effect would gradually disappear.

Han Xiao took a deep breath before he started injecting the blood serum. The fluorescent serum passed through the catheter and entered his bloodstream.

The feeling of his body swelling was instantly felt!

"Hiss..." Han Xiao gritted his teeth. He was spasming due to the overwhelming pain he felt throughout his entire body. He felt as if the interior of his body had been blown up into a paste—bones smashed into ashes, blood vessels broken apart, and muscles melted. The insufferable pain hit his brain without a stop, and he almost fainted!

'Real' players had only needed to rely on progress bars for using in-game items and making machinery. Therefore, the maximum pain they could feel was limited.

But Han Xiao had to experience the pain in reality!

Of course, being able to experience the reality was more advantageous to him. He had already gained a lot of benefits from it. True pain was just the required cost of the deal.

After some unknown amount of time, the overwhelming pain gradually subsided. Han Xiao's eyes were filled with blood vessels, and he exhaled a heavy heap of murky air. He felt his nerves had suffered a horrifying torture.

He took a look at his body and was glad to find that it did not change. He did not become a muscular monster. It was still the same old handsome-looking body.

He did not have the energy to read his interface during the process, but now that it was over, he realized that it was flooded with lines and lines of information.

You used a Felonia Blood Serum (Incomplete).

Mutation Progress: 12%.

Mutation succeeded! (Failure rate was reduced by Gene-blending Potion)

You used a Felonia Blood Serum (Incomplete).

Mutation Progress: 46%; Mutation succeeded!

You used a Felonia Blood Serum (Incomplete).

Mutation Progress: 73%; Mutation succeeded!

You used a Felonia Blood Serum (Incomplete).

Mutation Progress: 100%.

Mutation Completed! Compatibility: Good

You gained 3 Strength and 5 Endurance!

You gained the ability [Basic Strengthen Life]!

Han Xiao was dumbfounded. He glanced at his stat board with a look of disbelief as the new ability [Basic Strengthen Life] appeared.

I possess a Molding ability! Han Xiao was utterly shocked.

There was a special type of ability called a Molding ability. As far as he knew, he had not heard about any 'real' player obtaining this type of ability as it belonged exclusively to NPCs and Bosses, and it had very powerful effects. It was even rare for NPCs to have it.

Just by looking at its effects, one would immediately realize how powerful this type of ability was. [Basic Strengthen Life] would turn Endurance into extra Health Points with a conversion ratio of 1 to 15. This meant that with the 60 Endurance Points that Han Xiao had right now, he instantly gained 990 more Health Points to reach more than 2000 Health Points, almost doubling his existing HP.

Furthermore, the effect of this ability would increase as his Endurance increased further, providing him even more HP.

Han Xiao was only LV 30, and his HP had broken the 2,000 mark. The LV 38 Pugilist Pan Kuang did not even have as much HP as him.

If a 'real' player used the Felonia serum, they would probably only gain stat points, without the Molding ability.

This ability, my magnetic armor, and all the future mechanical armors will together make my tank ability so powerful that my enemies will vomit from trying to kill me.

Han Xiao was pleasantly surprised; he was very satisfied with the new ability as it gave him additional insurance.

He had benefited greatly from this quest.

From quest rewards, rewards from killing the enemies, and rewards from producing machinery during his free time, he had accumulated over 700,000 EXP on his interface!

He then counted the number of blueprints he had—19—just one more away from finishing the job advancement quest. Han Xiao contemplated for a moment and decided to produce some equipment that would boost his movement speed.

Do you wish to proceed with talent fusion?

(Lv. 4 Basic Electromagnetism + Lv. 4 Basic Energy Theory + Lv. 4 Basic Mechanical Engineering + Lv. 2 Basic Bio-engineering)

This fusion will cost you 20,000 EXP!

The range of blueprints he would get from this fusion was quite large. Han Xiao was uncertain whether he would get the equipment he wanted or not. He prepared himself to fuse three times, and if he did not succeed after three attempts, he would try to invent it by himself.

On his third try, Han Xiao obtained the blueprint for the item that he needed—the Skating Shoes.

Han Xiao scratched his head. He had saved the time needed to invent the shoes by himself by successfully obtaining the desired blueprint on the third try, but one of the two other blueprints was a totally useless blueprint. He was not sure whether he should consider himself lucky or unlucky.

The Skating Shoes, also known as the Electromagnetic Hover-boots, could be worn by an individual or armed on a small robot, and they could greatly enhance movement speed without hindering evading capability.

The other two blueprints were named Swarm and Heart, respectively.

You have completed your Job Advancement Quest.

Job advancement successful!

You gained a new job [Mechanic (Trainee)]

+50 Energy, +1 DEX, +4 INT; +1 END, + 3 Unassign Stats, +1 Talent Point

You learned [Meticulous Repairs]!

You learned [Medium Enhancement]!

Repair and Enhancement, the two core skills of a Mechanic, had finally evolved.

Mechanic (Trainee) was the third stage of a Mechanic's job, but the EXP required to reach Lv.1 was not much since the job had a maximum level of 15.

Han Xiao gained three stat points at once.

His total level was at 34, and as usual, he threw all the stat points gained into Intelligence.

Han Xiao still had some leftover EXP. He thought for a moment before he decided to upgrade [Continuous Gliding Shots]. This skill had helped him numerous times, and Mechanics lacked battle skills, so every single active skill was important to them. Additionally, he was not in a rush to upgrade [Overload] as its Lv.1 effect was powerful enough for now.

[Continuous Gliding Shots] was raised to Lv.4, and its effect was strengthened. However, at the same time, it would consume 8 Energy. Han Xiao now had close to 900 Energy, more than enough to spend on this skill.

He had once again spent all his EXP.

He had spent a large sum of EXP in exchange for an improvement in his fighting capability. His character's bare Energy Rank exceeded the 500 mark, and when he coordinated with his machinery, it would reach up to 700. He could now beat Pan Kuang easily if they were to fight again without the help of Norsa's Character Summoning Card.

Chapter 105: Rothschild

With a huge sum of money in his wallet, Han Xiao could spend extravagantly. He purchased a new batch of mechanical parts from Fabian Company.

In one day, using the skills from his job advancement, Han Xiao upgraded all his equipment and made blueprints for new items.

The Electromagnetic Hover-boots looked like a pair of metal boots. The heels and soles had a special device that could utilize the electromagnetic field to reduce surface friction. The power for which was generated by the high-energy battery inside the boots. The user could glide and coast on any type of

surface, as if ice-skating, at an extremely high speed that was comparable to that of a car. The battery could supply enough energy for the boots to run at maximum power output for twenty minutes.

Han Xiao then painted the boots in silver and black stripes, and they looked stylish. Also, he conveniently added breathable knitting, a spongy cushion, and leather exterior for the boots. The boots were now comfortable for every day wear. One did not need to change into them only during battles.

Soon, the Rothschilds' representative visited him.

In Hotel Victoria, Alphonsus was seated in the VIP lounge. He rested his hands on his knees while he waited for his guest to arrive.

As the door opened and Han Xiao walked in, Alphonsus got up and held out his hand elegantly as he said with a deep and magnetic voice, "I am Alphonsus from the Rothschild Family. I want to discuss some matters with you."

Han Xiao went on to shake his hand. He felt Alphonsus' thumb pressing firmly on the area between his thumb and index finger while he steadily shook for a moment. It was the type of handshake that was habitual for a person of authority, mostly used to exert dominance over the other person. This kind of handshake was easy to recognize for Han Xiao as his grandfather used to do it.

The principle was rather simple: just like how perverts would lightly scratch a girl's hand when they shook her hand, a person of different status, job, or identity would have different habits. Handshakes would differ greatly depending on the people executing and receiving it, such as a subordinate seeking a favor from his boss, a male trying to seduce a lady, a person meeting a stranger, or two people of high-status fighting against each other.

Alphonsus was clearly not just a simple envoy. Han Xiao could already guess at the Rothschild Family's purpose for meeting him.

As both were seated, Alphonsus said, "The assignment for Rose Militant has been on the list for nearly three years, and many assassins failed miserably. You, Mr. Black, actually completed it alone, much to my surprise."

"You flatter me. This was just a standard operation, nothing to praise."

Yet, your tone does not sound at all humble, Alphonsus quietly thought.

The two made some small talk before Han Xiao cut straight to the point. "Our relationship is only limited to that between a client and an assassin. Since the assignment is completed, we have no need for any further association. You clearly came to visit me for something else."

"You are right. I am here to ask you some questions." Alphonsus nodded. His body suddenly leaned forward, creating a hint of tension. He stared right at Han Xiao and said solemnly, "Did you visit an abandoned base in the Somar Desert?"

Alphonsus continuously observed Han Xiao's expression and eyes whilst he spoke. He would immediately know that Han Xiao was lying if he showed any hint of hesitation. The Rothschild Family knew about the research project from the experiment diary taken from the base, and they highly valued it. If they could obtain the Felonia serum, they might be able to produce unique items from it.

Much to his surprise, Han Xiao actually took out a tube of yellow-fluorescent blood serum and place directly on the table.

“Name your price,” he said nonchalantly.

Alphonsus was startled—he did not expect Han Xiao to be so frank.

“This item is useless to me. Since you want it, you can pay to buy it.”

Alphonsus glanced at the serum. He did not worry that Han Xiao was lying to him—those who dared to scam the Rothschild Family had all died.

“How much do you want?”

“It depends on your sincerity.” Han Xiao grinned and looked unfathomable.

This attitude gave Alphonsus a headache. He had been hoping that Han Xiao did not know the value of the blood serum, but based on his behavior, it was unlikely. He hesitated for a long while before he made an honest offer, but it was not a high price considering the item’s rarity.

“One million.”

Every negotiator would always start low. Since they were all civilized gentleman, there was no such thing as killing and robbing; therefore, Alphonsus was ready to spend a fortune on it.

Han Xiao stared at Alphonsus for a moment before he slowly moved his lips. “This price... you didn’t show any sincerity at all.”

Alphonsus was just about to prepare his negotiation speech.

“I accept.”

“This blood serum has been kept for a few dozen years, and I don’t even know if it still works. So, the value is greatly reduced, I...”

“Hold on. You agree with this price?” Alphonsus looked shocked.

Han Xiao pushed the blood serum toward Alphonsus and smiled. “This is for making a friend.”

Alphonsus started to take a liking for Han Xiao as he had originally planned to spend a fortune on this.

He tucked away the serum and recollected himself. “The funds will be transferred to your account as soon as possible. Also, you will gain the friendship with Rothschild and myself personally.”

You unlocked a new camp reputation!

Reputation with the Rothschild Family increased by 1,800 points

The Rothschild Family: Friendly (1,800/3,000)

Han Xiao smiled lightly; earning reputation points with the Rothschild Family by giving up some money was a very good deal for him. He could always earn money from other places, but the opportunity to unlock a new camp would be fleeting.

Some family conglomerates and corporations existed since the Old Age. After the baptism of war, some families died out while some became even more deep-rooted, for their influence could reach every aspect of their country, including the military, politics, economics, and mafias. Rothschild was one of such families, and Han Xiao knew that he could reap many benefits. To players, this was a support-type camp. They could buy rare items and services from such camps.

The Rothschilds were one of the Dark Net Organization's allies, and he could use their backing in the organization, which would yield him more advantages.

Without the gene-blending potion, the Felonia serum would not yield him benefits. So, he would rather sell it for some profits. Anyway, he held onto one last tube of the serum.

With another million dollars in his account, his current stash reached six million dollars. They might just be digits in his account, but to put them in context, LV 30 players in Version 1.0 were considered wealthy if they had more than twenty thousand dollars. Anything above a million dollar would be considered astronomical; only major guilds had that kind of money.

After the deal, the atmosphere became more harmonious.

"What exactly is Felonia?" Han Xiao was curious.

He was puzzled by the fact that a simple serum like this was eyed by so many different factions.

Alphonsus was in a happy mood, so he explained, "There was a country in the Somar Desert that was entangled in the wars of the Old Age. They initiated a large-scale research project called the Felonia Project. The name was taken from a legendary tale of the country, and the project involved building many military bases to conduct research in a dozen different branches of technological development. The serum was one of their research directions. "

"It turned out to be this. I really thought there was some sort of magical ruins." Han Xiao finally understood the whole thing.

Alphonsus chuckled. "There is no magic in this world. You thought too much."

Han Xiao laughed and touched his chin. *Planet Aquamarine should not have any magic, but why do I have a weird feeling about this?*

...

In a pitch-black cavern deep underneath the earth, fine sand dropped through the gaps of the rocks occasionally.

A gush of wind that came from nowhere echoed in the cavern, as if someone was exhaling it. Faint sounds of thunder-like thumps were heard in the background.

Suddenly, six large oval-shaped lamps lit up in the dark. They were golden in color and were divided into two neat and symmetrical rows. From the look of it, each lamp's radius was more than ten meters.

'Large lamps' started flashing rapidly, like eyes blinking.

Eyes.

Chapter 106: Second-Generation Rover Robot

Alphonsus passed his phone number to Han Xiao. "This is my number. If you need something, just give me a call."

Han Xiao knocked on the table for a few times before he said, "It just so happen that I have a question. I want to quickly raise my rank and authorization level in the Blood Pact Society. Do you have any good suggestions for me?"

Alphonsus pondered for a moment and decided to do Han Xiao a favor. He asked a sever to bring in the Blood Pact Society's laptop, and he opened a document to show to Han Xiao. The top of the document was clearly stamped with 'No Unauthorized Access'.

Han Xiao's brows furrowed as he read on.

"Internal Call-up (Not Public)

"Call-up Objective: Blood Pact Society Assassins (Dark-level and above), Contract Mercenaries (Two-star and above)

"Current Participants: 18 Assassins, 245 Mercenaries

"Assignment Location: East Stardragon, 20km North of Seagull City, River Valley Manor

"Assignment Details: Defend River Valley Manor, Protect (Redacted)"

"Internal call-up?" Han Xiao questioned.

"Only assassins of dark-level and above will receive this call-up. You are not supposed to participate in this assignment since you are only a scorpion-level assassin. However, I could give you backdoor access to this assignment, and upon completion of this assignment, you can immediately rise to dark-level. Once you arrive at the location, someone will brief you in more detail."

With so many participants, this assignment is definitely not a small-scale battle, Han Xiao thought silently to himself.

He remembered a reward-pool quest he could do in the Seagull city that was easy and yet could yield him high rewards. It was conveniently on the way.

I will go there and take a look first, Han Xiao decided. *Can't believe I am going back to Stardragon so soon. Luckily, I will not be identified.*

Han Xiao's brows knitted together. Although he left Division 13, the relationship status between Division 13 and him did not change on his Interface. This meant that Division 13 still did not treat him as an enemy.

There was still some time before heading off. He went back to the Fabian Company base and made some machinery that he had been planning to make for some time.

Second-Generation Rover (Combat)

Type: Robot

Grade: Dark Green

Basic Stats: 2,200/2,200, 37 Defense, 168 Power Output, 83 Max Speed, 640/640 Energy

Height: 2.1m

Weight: 300kg

Mode of Control: Low-Level Smart Chip (Programmed for automatic enemy identification)

Energy source: High-power energy pack (x4)

Energy Usage: 6/min (low output), 15/min (full output)

Power Capacity: 310/320 Ona

Brain Module: Intelligent Enemy-Seeking Firepower System (occupies 30 capacity units)

Eye Module: Electromagnetic Scanner-Scope, Obstacle-Penetrating Enemy Seeking-Vision (occupies 15 capacity units)

Arm Modules: Large-Caliber Triple-Barrel Machine Gun—70-85 Damage, 3.5 Fire Rate, 30 Magazine Capacity (+60 Belt Capacity), 75 Power Output (occupies 80 capacity units)

Skeleton Module: K600-type Mechanical Skeletal System—30 Strength (occupies 40 capacity units)

Legs Module: Triangular Wheel System and Shock-proof Suspension Frame—reduce impact of treacherous terrain, increase movement speed (occupies 15 capacity units)

Chest Module: Small-Scale Honeycomb Rocket Launcher—equipped with small-scale rockets (180-230 Damage, induces additional explosion damage), 6-round capacity (occupies 110 capacity units)

Abdomen Module: Magazine Storage—small-scale rockets x 12, additional magazine belt x 200 rounds (occupies 20 capacity units)

Skills:

- Furious Fusillade
- Titanium Armor: Reduces physical damage taken by 11%
- Self-destruct: Self-destruct to inflict 340-510 explosion damage in a 40m radius.

Note: A human-shaped tank.

This Rover was made with much better technology; it was equipped with a smart chip, titanium armor, a high-power battery, and a firepower that was much more fearsome. Han Xiao was a lot richer compared to when he first entered the Western Capital, so he no longer needed to budget carefully. The cost of the second-generation Rover Robot was more than 20,000 dollar—already a discounted price with his more specialized skills in making machinery. It was a price that players of the same level could never afford. The second-generation Rover could be used as a mobile fort. However, it could not be used to work on an independent task as the processing chip did not possess the ability to make independent judgment and tactical analysis.

With such strong firepower, the combat Rover could provide firepower support and area strike. Even after the ammunitions were entirely consumed, the K600-type Mechanical Skeletal System would allow the Rover to have ample close-combat capability. It could charge at full speed to knock down enemies and had the ability to self-destruct.

I can now scale up the production of the Rover, but I cannot carry them around, so I should find a secret base to hide them. Although this type of Rover has great firepower, it does not allow for a quick and rapid change of battlegrounds. I can only use it for stationary battles, so its function is rather singular. The problems lie in areas of movement, core power capacity, and chip processing. I need more advance knowledge, which I have no opportunity to obtain as of now. Hmm, I still have to fight as a sniper for now. I should perfect my sniping capabilities.

As Han Xiao lacked money and the necessary technology, the idea of a robot army could not be realized yet.

Han Xiao stored all his larger equipment in Fabian Company's warehouse to be transported by air. This time, he paid 50,000 dollars to use Fabian Company's aero-transport service again. He reckoned no one would spend money as extravagantly as him.

...

The Western Capital was the capital city of Stardragon, and Seagull City was an important city in East Stardragon. It had a large area, and historically, it encountered a beast tide and suffered a great loss as a result. However, it had the aid of the entire nation, which allowed it to rebuild into an important city in the East today.

A monument tens of meters high stood tall in the city center. It was engraved with the names of all those sacrificed in the battle against the beast tide.

In the battle of the Old Age, when Seagull City was met with numerous large-scale terrorist assaults by the Germinal Organization, it received assistance from everywhere again, which made it into an even more prosperous city. The phenomenon was rather peculiar; numerous misfortunes actually allowed the city to develop more rapidly. People in Stardragon believed it was a good omen because it meant that even if Stardragon faced setbacks, it would only bounce back stronger. 'The Seagull Spirit' was repeatedly mentioned in every year's national meetings and nationwide news.

The plane soon landed at the city's airport. Anyone going in and out of each city in Stardragon had to go through the respective checkpoint. Similarly, landing from air required a permission from the air-control

tower in advance. Fabian Company's planes had private parking spots in the airports of the various cities in Stardragon, and thus, they were authorized to land in these airports. Players could also purchase such spots when their camp reputation was high enough.

"So, why did you follow me this time?" Han Xiao turned around and looked at Antonio at his side.

Antonio inhaled a puff of his cigar and chuckled. "Unfortunately, Fabian Company does not have any assets in Seagull City. We have no choice but to provide the cargo plane as your temporary workshop and warehouse."

"I see." Han Xiao understood. Suddenly, he became frustrated because he realized it meant that Fabian Company had no cars for him to borrow. He was tens of kilometers away from the River Valley Manor. *Unless I should resort to some old tricks... Puh, do I really have to do the immoral and forbidden act of stealing cars?*

He still had his Thorns, but if he drove the car on the streets, a few dozen police cars and special-ops vehicles would follow him in less than ten minutes.

As the old saying goes, when you have a problem, look to the public for a solution.

Han Xiao soon 'borrowed' a car from a benevolent member of the public. After he passed through the checkpoint and left the city, he headed straight toward the manor.

It was a small forest with a river twenty kilometers north of Seagull City. Only mid to small size gentle wild animals resided in this forest, so it was not particularly dangerous. Han Xiao located the manor on his map. River Valley Manor was situated in the forest by a river.

It was afternoon when the car drove into the forest. The lazy afternoon sun shone its light through the gaps between the trees, painting the forest with a peaceful ambience. The engine sound scared away a few spotted deer that were asleep.

Han Xiao suddenly snorted through his nose. He detected a light pungent smell. After quickly filtering away the scents of decomposition and bird droppings in his memory, he arrived at his memory of a similar scent.

A light flashed in Han Xiao's eyes. This is the scent of gun powders. A battle occurred here not long ago.

To avoid a misunderstanding, Han Xiao parked his car and got out his equipment before he started walking toward the manor.

He appeared to be a depressed musician who was carrying a guitar case and wandering around, but in reality, his guitar case was storing his folded sniper rifle and lightweight mechanical arm. His Berserk Eagles and magazines were hidden inside his clothes, his magnetic-controlled armor around his body, his foldable machete under his shirt, the inactive thermo-electrical incisor gloves on his hands, and the silver Electromagnetic Hover-boots on his feet.

The boots looked like an ordinary pair of boots with its leather exterior—one would not discover the metal parts inside without pressing it with one's hand.

Although he was seemed armed to the teeth, he did not bring along his Wind-slicing blade, Thorns, or the second-generation Rover.

After walking for a while, obvious signs of battle appeared in Han Xiao's surroundings. There were explosion marks, empty cartridges, tire tracks, and even ashes of more than one burnt vehicle on the ground. It had been a devastating battle. Han Xiao could already see the manor.

Just as Han Xiao was ready to walk over, he suddenly halted.

At the next moment, a bullet hole appeared on the ground in front of him—it was made by a sniper rifle. If he had stepped forward before this, it would have shot his legs.

It was a warning shot.

The shot had come from the direction of the manor.

Chapter 107: A Strange Protection Assignment

Han Xiao bent down to dig out the bullet shell from the ground. It was an armor-piercing round.

The people in River Valley Manor were probably all friendlies, so this was just a warning shot. Otherwise, the sniper would have aimed for his vitals. As Han Xiao finished this thought, he took out an old brown coin, raised it, and waved it in the air. The sniper in the manor could definitely see it through their scope.

The coin had been passed to him by Antonio before he departed. He had said that it could be used to vouch for his identity.

After waiting for a minute or so, Han Xiao stepped forward again. Indeed, no one was firing at him this time around. He then successfully arrived at the gate of the manor and realized that the manor's outer defense had been greatly reinforced. The outer wall had many metal plates, which tightly shielded the inside of the manor. There were marks of previous explosions on those metal plates.

Han Xiao walked in after the gate opened. The layout of the manor was presented before his eyes—it occupied a very large space and was divided into inner and outer layers. The outer layer consisted of all sorts of defense structures, and armed mercenaries were busy patrolling around the area. They talked and gossiped loudly and fervently, unlike regular soldiers who were mostly silent. They were clearly lacking in discipline.

The inner layer was just the center of the manor—a mansion with a garden and a fountain. Black railings surrounded the mansion, clearly demarcating the areas between the inner and outer layers. One could see, through the railings, that no one was in the mansion or garden; it was as if no one lived there.

“Newcomer? You are an assassin, right?”

A buff black man yelled over to Han Xiao from the side. It was the person who had opened the door for him.

Without waiting for Han Xiao to reply, the black man shouted into his walkie talkie, “Chen Li, there is a new assassin here. Quickly come and pick him up.”

“Wait for me. I'll be there in a minute.” A person was swearing on the other side of the walkie talkie.

The mercenary named Chen Li soon arrived before the gate. He gave the black man a finger before he looked at Han Xiao to size him up. "Come, follow me."

Han Xiao followed Chen Li to the south-east side of the manor. He got a brief explanation of the manor's defense structure from Chen Li during this walk. The manor had three sides facing land, and the west side faced the river. Assaultants could potentially attack using speedboats, but they would become easy targets if they appeared on the river. So, the river front was the easiest side to defend.

The other two sides of defense were at the South-east and North-east sides. The whole defense structure was triangular. Chen Li oversaw all the mercenaries stationed in the south-east side.

"What kind of assassin are you?" Chen Li asked.

"Sniper."

"That's good. We need a long-range attacker. Previously, an assassin who only knew how to sneak attack from close-range was sent here. He could not be more useless."

Han Xiao turned around and glanced at the mansion in the center before he asked three key questions in his mind. "Who exactly are we protecting? How long will we defend here? Who are our enemies?"

Perhaps every newcomer asked the same questions; Chen Li answered quickly and smoothly. "Our boss did not say how long more we have to defend. In any case, if we cannot defend anymore, I will be the first to evacuate. I don't care how much they pay me, I will not be cannon-fodder. I am not sure who the enemies are. Sometimes, we will get attacked in the day, other times, at night; we get attacked every few days. There will always be new enemies attacking us.

"And as for who we are protecting, heheheh..."

Chen Li suddenly laughed coldly before he continued.

"I heard that the target hides in the mansion, but they have never appeared before. The assignment forbids us from entering the mansion. It could very well be that the mansion is just an empty shell, and we are protecting no one. Humph! Whatever the motives of the employer, as long as he pays me, I'm fine."

An empty mansion, protecting someone who had never appeared before, an ambiguous group call-up, enemies from unknown sources. All these factors, linked together, gave Han Xiao a strange feeling that could not be expressed in words. He felt a dense fog covering this whole situation.

"By the way, which level of assassin are you? Dark or Ghost?" Chen Li asked thoughtlessly.

"Mr. Black. Scorpion-level."

Chen Li jolted his head around and looked rather surprised. "Scorpion? Why would you be here? Only Dark-level assassins and above would receive the call-up. You are not qualified, right?"

"I'm already here. My level is not important anymore." Han Xiao had no interest in explaining himself to some mercenary. *I can do whatever I want and need not explain myself to you. Basically, act like you own it.*

“Although you are only scorpion-level, you are a sniper that we can make do with. As long as you can hit enemies with your sniper rifle, we are fine.”

Chen Li then frowned as he pointed to an area in the distance and said, “Can you see three fortresses there? You will go to the middle one. The Hornet Brothers will make arrangements for you.”

Han Xiao looked at the area. The three fortresses were at the intersection point of the south-east and north-east defense lines, and they were at the top point of the triangle defense structure. This position helped snipers maximize their field of vision and, therefore, sniping range. But the disadvantage was that the position was too conspicuous. When the enemy attacked, they would try to take down the sniper first. Fortunately, the walls of the fortresses were armed with numerous machine guns and rocket launchers; they were the most well-defended place.

Han Xiao did not object to the arrangement. Before he triggered any quest on his interface, he was quite indifferent to the whole thing.

Han Xiao walked to the middle fortress and climbed to the top floor. He then spotted two men who were carrying sniper rifles in their hands and snoozing by the wall. As they heard Han Xiao’s footsteps, they quickly open their eyes and looked over. One could tell that they were assassins from their ice-cold disposition.

One of them was tall while the other was short, and their faces looked similar. They seemed to be the Hornet Brothers as mentioned by Chen Li.

“Newcomer?” The tall one spoke nonchalantly. “Code Name, level, ability.”

Han Xiao’s brow furrowed. “Mr. Black, Scorpion, Sniper.”

“What is a Scorpion-level newbie doing here?” The tall guy frowned, and he became impatient. “Go to the left fortress and be the assistant sniper—you will be responsible for taking down all the small fries that escape our shots. Can you handle a simple task like this?”

“Sure.” Han Xiao nodded.

The short guy only gave him a glance before he went back to snooze. It seemed that he was prideful and not interested in talking to him.

It was only a dozen minutes in the manor, and Han Xiao had moved to three different locations. He had no choice but to walk toward the left fortress. This was the area he was in charge of, which meant that his job was to assist the Hornet Brothers.

There was already a person in the left fortress—an assassin with a large beard. He looked Han Xiao up and down, and after Han Xiao introduced himself, he cut to the chase. “Scorpion-level? You will take the left side while I take the right side.”

The left side had the most limited field of vision, and therefore, it was the easiest job. The bearded assassin did not trust his ability, which was normal. Han Xiao did not give it a second thought. He was fine with taking care of his own area.

You triggered a chain quest, [Call-up (Protection)].

Quest Summary: “First, do not probe for the identity of the protection target; second, do not leave your post; third, do not let enemies infiltrate the manor; forth, try your best to become useful.”

Hint: This is a chain quest—please act according to instructions.

First Round: Beat off the first wave of enemies.

First Round Reward: 20,000 EXP

Other Causes for Quest Failure: 1. Unauthorized entry to the mansion; 2. Leaving the manor for more than two hours.

Chain quest? Interesting, Han Xiao thought to himself.

A chain quest was the type of quest where the player had to complete the previous quest requirement before they would receive the next requirement. The difficulty and reward would get higher and higher with each round. Upon completing all the rounds in the chain, the player would receive an extra reward. Chain quests were usually a lot more tedious than normal quests.

I will see the reward for the next round of the quest before I decide to continue or not. If it isn't great, I will just retreat from here, Han Xiao thought. He did not feel that he had to complete the quest no matter what; he would only continue if the rewards were substantially high.

After wandering around the manor for a few hours, he deciphered the manpower allocation in the place. The mercenaries were armed with heavy firearms and vehicles. There were also Superhumans around. Mechanics were in charge of repairing the equipment, providing ammunition, and rectify defense structures; assassins were the more elite force.

By casually chatting with the people there, Han Xiao learned that they had been stationed there for more than ten days. More capable personnel, such as the Hornet Bothers, Chen Li, Volcano, and Moonlight, had already made their reputation known in the place.

...

The sky slowly darkened. Leaves were gently swept by the night wind in the evening forest, making shushing sounds. Perennial water streams flowed in the river. The whole scene was rather peaceful.

An imminently-approaching engine sound broke the serenity in the forest.

Ohmmm!

Stationed at the fortress's sniper position, Han Xiao looked through his scope. There were many headlights in the distant forest quickly approaching the manor. The mercenaries started to shout, prompting each other to quickly go back to their posts to get ready for the upcoming battle. The concentrated footsteps sounded like peas being fried.

Han Xiao stretched out his arm, and a crisp cocking sound was heard on his rifle. He was preparing himself, too.

“Here comes the first wave.”

Chapter 108: Round Three

Just by looking at the headlights, Han Xiao figured out the enemies’ military composition—all armored vehicles, and they were fast-approaching. Troops armed with heavy firepower were running close behind.

The next moment, the mercenaries in the manor began firing. Heavy machine guns were blasting and roaring continuously. Flashes of flames on muzzles became an attention-grabbing source of light among the darkness of the night. Han Xiao glanced over for a moment, and soon, his mind was put at ease. The enemy had limited numbers and average firepower, so they would not be able to penetrate the curtain of machine gun rounds made by the mercenaries.

Pong!

Sniper shots were heard from the central fortress; they came from the Hornet Brothers. The two shots were extremely accurate, hitting right on the targets.

Han Xiao looked over at his area and realized that it had a limited range of vision and tough angles. Most likely, only those enemies who slipped through the net would accidentally barge into this area. However, it just so happened that a small team of enemies had infiltrated this place. He raised his Red-Falcon before he aimed through the scope and fired. The shot pierced through multiple enemies’ necks at once, pumping out masses of blood fog.

Big beard guy was initially skeptical of Han Xiao’s ability, but after taking a few looks at him when he was not occupied, he was secretly shocked and knew that he no longer had to worry about this Mr. Black... because Han Xiao had made every single shot. Therefore, he stopped turning around to supervise Han Xiao and left that area entirely to him in comfort.

The battle only lasted for half an hour, and the enemies suffered great losses. They did not even manage to get within two hundred meters of the manor. Han Xiao managed to take down nine enemies in total.

First round completed. You gained 20,000 EXP.

Change in Quest Requirement

Second Round Requirement: Defend the River Valley Manor.

Duration: 3 Days

Reward: 80,000 EXP

The first wave was too simple, and the EXP rewarded seems to be very little. But the increase for the second round is not too bad.

Han Xiao rubbed his chin. *The first round gives 20,000 EXP; the second round rewards 80,000 EXP. Based on this increment, the third round may yield me 320,000 EXP, and the fourth round would be more than a million EXP. Stop, I am just dreaming here.*

But honestly, the third round would at least reward him more than 150,000 EXP.

Han Xiao felt it was a waste of time to do the second round, which would last for three entire days, but he quickly changed his thought. He could stay there and earn some EXP by borrowing the facilities and workshops from the Mechanics there to repair the mercenaries' equipment for free.

Han Xiao had always been a doer. Once he made up his mind, he immediately went to the logistics area to find the local mechanics. They were mostly pseudo-mechanics who had learned some repair skills for their secondary job. There were only two proper Superhuman Mechanics there.

"You want to help us repair equipment?" One repairman was startled. "You are a Mechanic?"

Han Xiao began proving himself directly through actions. He took a pistol on the worktable and disassembled in just a few movements before he assembled it rapidly, like he was performing magic. The whole process flowed smoothly, lasting less than two seconds. He was no longer the newbie in the Germinal Organization who took forty seconds to assemble a pistol. With the add-on effect of his various skills, his ability in making and assembling machinery had reached a level beyond that of an ordinary person.

The group of repairmen agreed to Han Xiao's request without hesitation—they were even slightly eager to welcome him.

The repair jobs were dreary and tiring, and they did not even get extra pay for it. When someone unexpectedly wanted to take on this tough job, they were all too eager to throw all the work to this legitimate Mechanic that appeared out of nowhere.

...

Before dawn, Chen Li walked into the logistics area while carrying a spoilt machine gun. He was looking for a Mechanic that he was familiar with to repair his gun.

"Wang Xi, help me repair this machine gun."

Wang Xi was a skinny middle-aged male. He wore a vest and was napping at the side. As he heard the voice, he opened his eyes and gave Chen Li a glance.

"Leave the gun there. I will repair it when I am free," he said in a rather laid-back manner.

"Would you please hurry up with this? I may need to use it in the day."

Wang Xi was getting impatient. "Alright. Alright. I will repair it for you later."

Chen Li had no choice but to leave it to him. Although Wang Xi was ill-tempered, he was a legitimate Mechanic Superhuman with excellent skills. Only he could help him since he did not want the machine gun to malfunction again at a critical moment during the next battle.

After Chen Li left, Wang Xi shut his eyes again and returned to napping.

After five minutes, he heard footsteps approaching once more. He opened his eyes impatiently before he realized it was Chen Li again.

“What are you so anxious for? Once I have time, I will repair it for you, so stop bothering me.” Wang Xi was clearly irritated.

Surprisingly, Chen Li shook his head and said, “Return the machine gun to me. I will get someone else to repair it.”

Wang Xi frowned. Although he was annoyed by Chen Li’s repeated disturbances, he did not wish for the weapon to malfunction again. After all, he was also housed inside the manor.

“Other people’s skills are not good enough. Once the sun rises, I will repair it for you, okay?” he replied.

However, Chen Li was adamant in wanting to have his machine gun back. “It’s fine. The other guy’s skill is better than yours.”

Wang Xi was instantly infuriated by the comment. Everyone knew everyone else in a small logistics area like this. The other legitimate Mechanic was not even as good as him, let alone the bunch of repairmen.

Who are you trying to bluff?

But Chen Li was very insistent. Wang Xi had no choice but to return his gun. When he saw that Chen Li was walking to the other side of the logistics area, he deliberated for a moment before he decided to follow behind. He wanted to see who this Mechanic, who was supposedly better than him, was.

As he arrived at the scene, Wang Xi was shocked by what he saw—the bunch of low-class repairmen were crowding around a man in black, and they stared at him attentively with looks of amazement, jealousy, and curiosity.

Wang Xi was dumbfounded after he took a proper look at the man.

The man in black moved his hands at lightning speed, like a phantom, to operate all sorts of equipment rapidly. By doing so, he was repairing several weapons simultaneously in a natural and flowing style. It was so smooth that he did not even need to pause and think. Wang Xi had never seen any technique like this—he was definitely a higher-class Mechanic!

Originally, the repairmen had only the mindset of pushing their repair jobs to Han Xiao so that they could relax. But when Han Xiao started his repairing process, his technique, which was extremely speedy, quickly grabbed all their attention. They were intoxicated just by looking at it and wanted to note down his every single step. Many details of the technique were massively inspirational for them.

If they possessed an interface, the follow message would have appeared.

You gained insights from observing Han Xiao (LV 34) repair machinery. Repair skill proficiency increased.

The other Mechanic, who was of a similar standard as Wang Xi, was also observing Han Xiao with a look of obsession.

To Wang Xi, Han Xiao's technique was flawless; to be exact, his standard was not high enough to perceive any flaws in Han Xiao's technique. He felt somewhat dispirited and wanted to walk away, but he could not make himself do it. He could not resist the desire to stay there and continue watch Han Xiao's repair work. He was deeply conflicted.

Han Xiao was engrossed in his repair work and did not care about what others around him thought. As a result, his EXP increased speedily. The effect of [Meticulous Repairs Lv.1] was considerably better than ordinary repair skills—they were not skills from the same class. The more basic weapons and machinery could be repaired quickly and easily. Han Xiao could even have been more efficient if not for the lack of better equipment.

For the next three days, other than taking some rests in between, Han Xiao was continuously involved in battles and repairs. Four waves of enemies attacked the manor in this period of time through variety of methods, including a speed boat attack, an armored vehicle attack, and a stealth raid. One group of enemies wore frog-suits and attempted to infiltrate the place by diving through the river on the west side. They were spotted and killed by the snipers.

The enemy's attacks were gradually increasing in intensity. Han Xiao could sense, with his perspicacity, that the guards in the manor seemed to be getting too weak at defending against the enemy's attacks. Numerous days of continuous high-intensity battle were taking a toll on their psyche, and the effect of their accumulated exhaustion was erupting. As a result, errors and casualties started appearing on the battlefield.

The mercenaries' struggle did not have much of an impact on Han Xiao. He was feeling at ease with handling his small area by shooting down all the enemies that went into it. At the same time, he realized that there were more and more 'fishes that escaped the net' and entered his area. It seemed that the Hornet Brothers were slowly showing their incapability in handling attacks with such intensity.

Three days passed without any problems. When the first light appeared in the sky, a message was sent immediately to the Interface.

Round 2 Complete. You received 80,000 EXP.

Not bad, but the third round is probably going to get really tough.

Han Xiao was awakened from his nap.

He had received a grand total of 180,000EXP from completing the quest, working on machinery, and killing enemies. He was rather satisfied with the efficiency.

Change in Quest Requirement.

Third Round: Defend against the next wave of attack

Reward: 150,000 EXP

Han Xiao cursed; he had a bad feeling about this round of the quest.

The next wave of enemy was most likely very powerful, and there was a ninety percent chance that the mercenaries would not be able to defend against them.

Chapter 109: Turning the Tide

Boooooom!

It was a thundery shower. The dark sky was repeatedly torn apart by streaks and streaks of glaring lightning. Rain was pouring down in torrents.

The curtain of rain was limiting everyone's field of vision, which in turn reduced their shooting accuracy. The mercenaries had to cover the weapons and equipment with waterproof covers against the violent storm as they were not waterproof, and they also sent their ammunition reserves to sheltered areas.

Heavy rain flooded the entire world, and its sound filled everyone's ears. The fortresses were saturated with moisture. Han Xiao placed himself far away from the window to avoid getting soaked. He looked at the weather outside and frowned. *Terrible weather like that is clearly generated by the system purposefully. I bet the next wave of heavy attack will come at this time, otherwise...*

Han Xiao was only half way through his sentence before stopped that thought. How could he joke around like that and risk jinxing himself?

Ohmm!

A series of engine sounds were heard in the rain. The enemy was coming at them viciously this time. Hordes of armored vehicles were driving toward the manor in the storm. Countless rain droplets smashed onto the ice-cold metal armor.

"Fire!" The mercenaries in the manor yelled furiously, and the sounds of machine guns and grenade launchers followed.

The next moment, even greater firepower erupted from the enemy's motorcade. More than a few small-scale missiles landed on the outer wall of the manor, which blew up the two machine guns and the gunner there.

Whilst Han Xiao was shooting his rifle, he heard Chen Li and the black dude yelling over the walkie-talkie.

“The enemy has rocket launchers; we must evade! Go and hit them hard with our machine guns and grenades!”

“Snipers hurry up and fire. Don’t make me prompt you! Hurry up and do something!”

“More than twenty speedboats just appeared on the river. Those stationed on the west side, quickly go and intercept them. Don’t let them get near the shore!”

“Shit. Helicopters!”

The sound of rotating wings was heard in the sky. Two Y5-Snake helicopter gunships were attacking from above. Flashing lightning in the dark sky highlighted the ferocious features of the helicopters. The gunner, wearing wind-shielding glasses, controlled a large-caliber six-barreled machine canon on the side of the helicopter and unleashed astonishing firepower.

The size of the canon rounds was almost like that of a small-scale missile. Their penetration capability and damage power were unmatched by the rounds of ordinary machine guns. They were even fired at a very high rate.

Da da da da da da.

The continuous canon rounds connected to form an orange line and swept the manor from above. The outer defensive walls of the manor were less than useless against enemies from the sky.

The mercenaries’ casualty number surged!

The sounds of swearing, yelling, crying, raining, guns firing, and engines roaring formed a symphony of battle—as grand as it was horrifying and as messy as it was fevered.

The helicopters were their biggest threat. Some machine gunners quickly aimed their guns at them.

However, by simply flying higher, Y5-Snake helicopters easily got out of the range of the machine guns. Those stray rounds that managed to touch the helicopters could not penetrate their armored exterior.

“Snipers! Kill the pilots!” Chen Li was yelling in exasperation.

“We will handle the helicopters. Other snipers, go and stop the ground troops from coming in!” The Hornet Brothers gave an order in the communication net from the central fortress. Thereafter, they started shooting at the helicopters.

Even with the dense curtains of rain, Han Xiao could see the sparks generated when the sniper rounds landed on the exterior armor of the helicopters. The pilot’s window was made high-grade bullet-proof glasses. It would require at least seven to eight rounds to penetrate.

Han Xiao suddenly felt something was wrong. He swiftly shouldered his gun and moved away from the sniping window.

“How dare you leave your post without authorization...” Big beard guy was infuriated by what he saw. However, he was only half way through his words when the sound of a violent explosion stopped him.

The fortress wall exploded violently, and big beard guy was instantly struck flying by the shockwave and landed on the other wall. His arms were completely broken, and he cried in pain.

The two Y5-Snake helicopters were equipped with four airstrike missiles, which were used to directly blow up the three fortresses. The central fortress was hit the heaviest—it exploded into complete ruins, and as a result, the Hornet Brothers were killed instantly. Their flesh, together with dust and shattered bricks, was tossed out of the place by the shockwave.

The three fortresses had been blown up!

Without the threat of snipers, the helicopters became much more aggressive, like a horny wild dog. The massive firepower had the mercenaries hiding under cover, and they dared not even expose their heads.

Although Han Xiao successfully dodged the explosion, he was hit by the shockwave. He did not suffer much damage. However, the roof over his head was completely blown up, and the heavy rain poured directly into his area. As a result, he was directly exposed in the enemies' field of vision. He was in a terrible situation.

The enemy had land, air, and sea superiority. The manor was being attacked in three different ways!

He turned around and glanced at the horrifying scene of the battle.

The mercenaries cannot hold on anymore.

His eyes were looking worried.

...

"The people outside cannot withstand the attack anymore."

Two men were looking out the window at the battle from the living room of the mansion in the center of River Valley Manor. One of them had both of his hands pressing on the windowsill; he was a bald old man. He wore black-frame glasses, and his eyebrows and beard were complete white.

The other person stood behind the old man at an angle with folded arms. He appeared to be a middle age man. His short jet-black hair was slicked-back, and there was only a slight graying on the hair near his temples. The only unordinary thing about him was probably his disposition. He wore a gentle smile on his face, which made him look rather friendly.

The man with the gentle disposition chuckled. "Seems like it's time for me to act."

The bald old man nodded. "We have defended for so long. Xena should have eradicated all the traitors in the organization. My life depends on you now, my old friend."

The gentle man nodded and prepared to walk out. Suddenly, he stopped his footsteps and noticed a sudden change in the battle situation.

"Seems like there is an interesting guy who just appeared. They don't need me anymore."

"Hmm?" The bald old man was startled and looked out the window.

...

Hiding inside the defense structure, Chen Li shouted loudly into his walkie talkie, "Is there any sniper who is still alive? Without taking down the two helicopters, we are all going to die here!"

Suddenly, a crimson bullet penetrated through the rain curtain and shot the ammunition belt on one of the helicopters' machine canons with extreme accuracy. The crimson round then cracked, and a flame erupted from within it in the heavy downpour.

High-explosive round!

Homm!

The orange high-explosive gas filled every single gap it touched, and it travelled through the split between the armored exterior and ignited the ammunition belt. The helicopter, which had been acting all triumphant a moment ago, exploded in that instant as all the canon rounds exploded at once. The high-explosive round was not powerful by itself, but it ignited the fatal large-caliber canon rounds, which were as powerful as land mines. Those in the helicopter were all killed. The flying ball-bearings pierced through the pilot's neck, and the blood splashed onto the side window.

The helicopter span out of control before it dropped from the sky onto the ground. Both parties could feel the violent vibration on the ground.

In the half ruins of the left fortress, Han Xiao, who fired that shot, cocked his sniper rifle to unload the cartridge that was still smoking hot. His eyes were serious and calm. In that critical juncture, he had pumped a large amount of EXP into [Sniping] such that it rose to Lv.9! This was the reason he had managed to shoot a round with such accuracy. He had hit the canon rounds on the helicopter's ammunition belt from an extremely obscure angle!

However, this shot had also caused several bad consequences. The other Y5-Snake helicopter aimed all its firepower at the left fortress. In addition, the enemy ground troops knew that the helicopters were their trump card; therefore, they all cooperated and fired at the fortress together. A terrifying number of rounds smashed the rain curtain and exploded on the left fortress!

Big beard guy's face turned ghostly pale as he thought he was going to be blown up in pieces. How could he run faster than the canon rounds with his two short legs? Right in his moment of desperation, he suddenly felt a large hand picking him up by the scruff of his neck and a great force that dragged him along to run away at lightning speed. The next instant, the entire left fortress blew up into ruins.

If it had been a second earlier, big beard guy would have been blown to smithereens.

After escaping from danger, big beard guy felt his collar being released. His butt landed right on the ground. He quickly turned around and looked at the person who saved him. The sight of Han Xiao, who was dressed in black, standing in the heavy rain appeared in his eyes.

Big beard guy did not bother with thanking Han Xiao for saving his life before he asked in shock, "How did you run so fast?"

"Because I am as free as the wind."

Big beard guy was completely dumbfounded. *What kind of crap are you talking about?*

As soon as Han Xiao finished quipping, his both feet landed on the ground. His Electromagnetic Hover-boots then lit up with a dark blue glow, and electromagnetic force blasted out of them, causing Han Xiao to slide out swiftly as he was skating on ice. He was moving faster than a car, and so, with two to three slides, he reached the top of the raft of the outside wall. Much to the mercenaries' astonishment, Han Xiao was dashing left and right rapidly like dark-colored lightning on the wall raft—no enemy could accurately lock onto him. He dodged all enemy fire.

“See my majestic skill!”

Han Xiao started sniping whilst he was moving around at high-speed. The field of vision for sniping was a few times greater there than that in the left fortress. His Snipe skill, which had just reached Lv.9, could control the entire battlefield. The movement provided by the hover boots was smooth and steady, so Han Xiao did not spend much of his effort controlling the boots. The difficulty in controlling the boots was only as high as those commercial electronic skating shoes; therefore, the high-speed movement did not affect the accuracy of Han Xiao's shots significantly.

Rounds after rounds were fired at the enemies. High-explosive, Hayme, Flash, and Penetration rounds took turns to be fired from the sniper rifle. The most useful bullet was always used at the most appropriate time and place. For instance, when a vehicle was attempting to fire a grenade at one of the manor's machine guns, a Flash bullet appeared at the most opportune time and made the enemy fire at the wrong angle.

You are currently sniping while on the move.

You learned a [Moving Snipe] technique (1/100).

Triggered the learning of a new skill? Han Xiao's eyes brightened—this skill could only be triggered when the Snipe skill was above Lv.8. He fired a few more shots and realized, when he successfully shot a target, he gained a progress point. He immediately became more enthusiastic in sniping the enemies.

Han Xiao evaded the majority of attacks from the enemies with the help of the hover boots. However, the enemies recognized his area-control ability as a sniper. They would have much difficulty taking the next step without bringing him down.

Thus, Han Xiao soon felt their 'intense enthusiasm', and he once again received concentrated fire from the enemies. The pressure on him increased sharply, and he was frequently shot by stray rounds. He had no choice but to shield his body with his magnetic armor.

The last Y-5 Snake helicopter swayed left and right to prevent Han Xiao from sniping its vital parts. The machine canon fired consistently, causing much trouble for Han Xiao. Even with the magnetic armor, it was painful for him to take a few canon rounds.

To make matters worse, the canon rounds had a push-back effect, which already made Han Xiao miss quite a few of his shots.

The armor on his chest received three more large-caliber canon rounds. Han Xiao felt his chest tightening; he was pushed a few meters back and almost fell off the wall raft. However, the damage was not significant to him—his current HP count was more than 2000, and with the help of the magnetic retractable armor, he could suffer through much greater damage.

At this moment, the mercenaries in the manor started fighting back and actively complement Han Xiao's battle tactics.

"Oi, sniper, stop daydreaming. Continue fighting like before; we will coordinate with your attacks!" Chen Li shouted in the communication device.

Chapter 110: The Main Character of Planet Aquamarine

Someone once said that if one reviewed one's previous life, one would realize that one's wrongdoings in the past would come back to haunt one.

If those words were true, Han Xiao felt that he was bound to become a haunted house owner, surrounded by hateful specters, since every enemy that he killed stared hard at him with vengeful, angry eyes.

At the most critical juncture, Han Xiao used his amazing sniping skills to stabilize the battle situation. He gave the mercenaries time to regroup, and the rest of the surviving snipers also made use of the opportunity to head to new hideouts.

The mercenaries made Han Xiao the main fighter, and all of them provided support for him. The enemy's plan to suppress Han Xiao with heavy fire failed badly. The troops working with Han Xiao managed to relieve his stress and pressure. In turn, this brought out the best of his strength and made his fighting easier.

You are currently sniping while on the move.

You learned a [Moving Snipe] technique. (100/100)

You successfully grasped [Moving Snipe]!

Moving Snipe Lv.1 (0/4,500): Reduction of the loss of accuracy from shooting in motion, +2% explosive firing accuracy, +1% fire rate when equipped with sniper rifles.

Han Xiao realized that [Moving Snipe] did not require large sums of EXP points. He channeled his additional EXP points into the skill and raised the skill to Lv.4. He became more comfortable with operating a sniper rifle and could use the weapon to the best of its ability.

After the enemy's initial strong push, the situation was back in the defenders' favor. The incoming enemy troops were fatigued. They wanted to use explosives to blow a hole in the exterior walls of the

garden and follow-up by driving their vehicles into the compound. However, the tough steel plates and concrete with the urgent repairs going on made the exterior impossible to blow up.

The enemies then changed their plans and wanted to wipe out the guards of the base directly, but instead, they were stopped by the powerful Han Xiao, who suddenly emerged before their eyes. The enemies realized their assault was going down hill. They started their retreat and left piles of dead bodies.

The Y-5 Snake helicopter turned back and flew away from the site. The helicopter did not have the audacity to fly close to the ground. The pilots were afraid that Han Xiao could fire at its fuel-tank and ammunition storage, which would limit the helicopter's fighting ability, making it less of a threat.

The battle is finally over. Han Xiao heaved a sigh of relief. His HP had dropped by over 600 points. The endurance level of the magnetically-controlled retractable armor was reduced by a great deal, but he had brought some mechanical parts with him, so he could conduct repairs on the damaged item.

The mercenaries by his side were all exhausted. They collapsed to the ground in fatigue. Chen Li walked toward them. He was curious about Han Xiao's abilities. He wanted to find out Han Xiao's full fighting capability and asked, "Mr. Black, are you alright?"

Han Xiao waved his hand to indicate that he was doing fine at the current moment.

Although Chen Li appeared relieved, he was in fact slightly shocked. He did not expect the Scorpion-level assassin to be more reliable than the Hornet brothers.

Shooting the enemies under such powerful concentrated enemy fire was not a feat that was attainable by a Scorpion-level individual.

Chen Li suspected that Mr. Black was a new member of the Dark Web, which would explain his rather low level. Based on his performance in the previous battle, as long as he survived, he could easily attain 'Ghost' level.

Third round completed. You gained 150,000 EXP.

Change in Quest Requirement

Fourth Round Requirement: Defend against five waves of attacks.

Reward: 40,000 EXP per wave (Accumulated EXP will be kept if the mission fails.)

Special Reward: 100,000 EXP

Han Xiao felt helpless. *Why is it another defense mission? Can there be more variety?*

Three forts have been destroyed, and many mercenary troops have also perished. Is the whole mission going to be an endless defense against enemy attacks?

The only consolation is probably the experience and the special reward. Perhaps the special reward is the reason behind all the hidden requirements for the mission. What special tactics are they going to run this time round?

Han Xiao made his way to the logistics zone to start the repairs of the damaged equipment and replenish the exhausted ammunition. On his way there, he was met with looks of respect given by the mercenary troops. Their looks seemed like they had given the 'green light' to let Han Xiao be the leader of all the snipers in the force instead of the Hornet brothers.

Those troops with injuries spent the night having themselves treated while the troops who were not injured had a peaceful night of sleep.

The rain stopped at twilight. The ground was muddy, mixed with blood and bullet shells. A strange pungent smell was also emitted by the ground.

Han Xiao was prepared to close his eyes to take a short nap when he heard a commotion emerging out of the communication device.

"The targets have appeared!"

Han Xiao opened his eyes and looked toward the mansion.

The bald old man and a fine-looking gentleman appeared behind the fences of the mansion. All the mercenary troops were alarmed, and they stared curiously at the targets that they were supposed to protect.

When all the mercenary troops and assassins arrived before him, the bald open man started speaking. "Thank you for the protection you guys have offered for the past few days. I will now call out the names of some of the guys whom I want to speak with."

The bald old man chanted out a list of names. The names belonged to the commanders of the mercenary troops and assassins with outstanding performances in the mission. Mr. Black, which was Han Xiao's code name, was also mentioned.

"... please enter the mansion in ten minutes. I have something to discuss with you guys."

The condition for the mission to fail has changed.

The condition of no entrance into the mansion, which would directly lead to mission failure, was no longer there.

The appearance of the two mysterious characters created an intense discussion between the curious and puzzled troops.

Waves of unease could be felt in Han Xiao's heart instead. He managed to recognize one of the guys.

It is him, Bennett Anderson!

No flashy adjectives were required to describe Bennett. In fact, one simple sentence was enough.

Bennett was the main character of Planet Aquamarine!

Amazing, right? There was something even more amazing.

Bennett was another main character on Planet Aquamarine's main storyline that could lead the players to access missions only available on the main storyline. With that said, it meant that Bennett was an important character that many players wanted to curry-favor with.

Furthermore, Bennett... was a hidden General Skills trainer.

Han Xiao's eyes glittered. In less than ten minutes, he made a phone call to the Rothschild family.

"Alphonsus, I want to exchange for some items..."

"Er? Aren't you on the deployment mission? What do you need?"

"The Silver Defender Leaders' Saber and the Lock HOC Sniper Rifle."

"... Alright, I did not imagine that you would have such a hobby. I'll get someone to help you find the items. They will be sent to you in two days."

You requested to exchange for the [Silver Defender Leader's Saber] from the Rothschild Family.

Minus 300 affection points. Current relationship status – Friendly.

You requested to exchange for the [Lock HOC Sniper Rifle] from the Rothschild Family.

Minus 300 affection points. Current relationship status – Friendly.

Han Xiao nodded and hung up on the phone. All the troops were looking at the selected individuals as they entered the mansion.

The interior of the mansion followed a minimalistic classical style. Other than a chandelier hanging from the ceiling, there were no signs of extravagance in the other parts of the room. The bald old man sat on his sofa, and the friendly gentleman was standing behind him.

"Sit anywhere you want."

The selected individuals took their seats on the sofas and chairs in the different corners of the room. Han Xiao remained standing. He leaned against the glass cabinet that stored all the bottles of wine. He stared intently at the friendly gentleman. That was indeed Bennett. He might have looked like a middle-aged man, but he was in fact over sixty years old. He was a powerful superhuman; therefore, he looked younger since he aged at a slower pace.

The bald elderly man pushed up his spectacles and said in a deliberate manner, "Let me introduce myself; I am Wang Yuan, and I will require the protection of you guys for an extended period of time. Today, I called you guys here so that I could meet you all. Also, the mansion will be open for you guys to visit. If you guys want to, you all can even rest in the mansion."

"Wang Yuan... Never heard of the name before." Everyone looked at one another in confusion. They were in fact puzzled by the fact that the two mysterious guys decided to seek refuge in River Valley Manor as Seagull City seemed like a much better place to do so. Also, who were the enemies that relentlessly hunted for them?

They realized that Wang Yuan had no intention the queries they had in their hearts, therefore they could not be bothered to ask these questions. Also, asking sensitive questions was not a good practice of their profession.

"You guys are the central force defending River Valley Manor, and once the mission is done," Wang Yuan said, "I will hand out additional rewards to you guys in private."

The eyes of many mercenary commanders lit up. The stipulated reward from the mission was supposed to be shared with all the fellow troops. However, an undeclared reward privately handed out to the commander need not be shared with their men. The commander could use the reward as they wished.

The meeting was a short one. The commanders moved back to take care of their fellow troops. Some ammunition supplies were also transferred into the mansion for storage. The mansion was very big with many empty rooms that were available for the troops to rest inside.

The hustle and bustle moved into the mansion, and soon, people began moving in and out of the mansion endlessly. Wang Yuan and Bennett stayed for a while before they made their moves.

Han Xiao moved quickly up to the two of them.

"Mr. Black, what's the matter?" Wang Yuan gave a slight grin. He remembered the stunning performance by the sniper last night. It was still fresh in his mind.

Han Xiao looked at Bennett and said, "I want to speak privately with him."

Wang Yuan and Bennett both looked shocked. They looked at each other for a moment. Wang Yuan smiled and made his way to another side of the room so as to give Han Xiao and Bennett their personal space.

"Why do you want to speak to me?" Bennett was puzzled. "Have we met before?"

Han Xiao took a deep breath and spoke softly at a volume that only both of them could hear. "Bennett Anderson. You are the legendary guy who was active back in the times of the old warring period. You previously trained in the Misihorot Training Camp, which was directly under the Ordina Intelligence Agency. You were one of their best agents and a cold-blooded killing machine. Halfway through the warring period, you became the captain of the elite team of Ordina agents that went by the code name [Blue Devil]. You carried out hundreds of infiltration, sabotage, assassination, and covert operations. You left Ordina and became a traitor eventually. Your head is now worth a bounty of 15,000,000!"

“After you defected, you disappeared for two years. Legend says that you were undergoing some tough training in the harsh terrain of the northern continent. You were supposedly hunting beasts in the Caroso mountain range. When you appeared once again, you became the strongest man on this planet. You entered the war again, but you did not help any of the parties involved in the war. Instead, you assisted the refugees in their escapes, and through that, you built a strong organization that was the predecessor of the existing Dark Web Organization.

“You appeared countless times in the war-ravaged regions, and as more people were saved by you, you gradually became known as the hero by the people of your time. Also, you left your mark by having an amazing and almost unbelievable battle record. As the war ended, you left the world stage. You covered your tracks and disappeared. From then on, you never appeared in the eyes of the public.”

All these words were the official description of Bennett that was given in the game. Han Xiao could no longer remember the nitty-gritty details and could only give a rough overview.

There were a couple of main characters on every planet. They were like the shooting stars in the sky, leaving bright trails for the people of their time and impressionable marks on the history of the planets.

Bennett was the ‘main character’ of Planet Aquamarine. Even Hila could not be compared to Bennett at an equal standing. The rise of the goddess of death belonged to later versions.

After listening to the words of Han Xiao, Bennett was astonished. Han Xiao was the first out of all his guards to actually point out his true identity.

Even after decades, someone could still recognize him. Bennett had looked really cold, like a block of ice, in the past, and he looked completely different now. He really did change a lot, so how was it possible for his true identity to be recognized?

The most probable speculation appeared in Bennett’s heart. He asked hesitantly, “So, are you my fan?”