

Full Time 571

Chapter 571: Followers of Number 9

In the room, besides the woman in black, there was another person. She remained motionless, hidden in the shadows. When the woman in black passed by, she gave a slight bow as a sign of respect.

Only after the woman in black had left did she slowly open an interstellar network account and type a line: "Number 9, I must leave now."

There was no response. She opened the screen, looking out at the area beyond the base.

En route, the woman in black issued an order: "Black Crow Fifth Squad and Red Bear Sixth Team, accompany me."

As the woman in black exited the base's main gate, the first row behind her consisted of four bald spiritual power wielders. They wore yellow officer uniforms, their cap visors embroidered with a lifelike black crow.

The second row comprised twelve burly warriors, fully clad in deep-red combat suits. Their chests were embroidered with a fierce and intimidating image of a flaming giant bear roaring at the sky.

These warriors all exceeded three meters in height. They were covered from head to toe, wearing gloves and breathing helmets—judging by their builds, they could hardly be considered normal humans anymore.

Their weaponry was also distinct. The bald spiritual power wielders had laser swords hanging from their waists, while the burly warriors carried energy assault rifles and had a pair of katana-like longswords strapped crosswise on their backs.

The leader of Black Crow Fifth Squad asked en route, "Lord Darkmang, who is the enemy we are facing?"

Darkmang, the woman in black, gave a cruel sneer. "Just a bunch of brats."

BZZT—

A thin energy beam lanced out. In front of Darkmang, a web of blue electrical energy materialized out of thin air. The energy beam shot into it, and with a sizzling and crackling, both the electrical web and the energy beam were annihilated.

However, Red Bear Sixth Team behind her lacked such powerful capabilities. Two more energy beams flew in, accurately pierced their massive heads, leaving clean holes right through them!

Three kilometers away, hidden in cover, Shang Qingye raised an eyebrow and whistled. However, she quickly saw through her scope that the two burly warriors whose heads had been pierced didn't fall!

They staggered for a moment, clutched their heads, then, as if nothing was wrong, continued to advance rapidly with the team!

Shang Qingye exclaimed, "What kind of monsters are these?!"

Wang Chengqian's expression was grim. Chen Gu had already thought of a possibility: Bio-side illegal human modifications! They can use the Insect Race's secretions to produce spiritual power wielders, and they can also use Insect Race genes or organs to create physically powerful warriors! These people, like certain members of the Insect Race, don't have vital points in their heads.

He said to Shang Qingye, "Switch to explosive rounds. You take care of these warriors; Master Wang and I will handle the rest."

This group of enemies was extraordinarily strong, beyond what ordinary students could handle. Chen Gu didn't treat it as a typical practical training exercise and immediately pulled Wang Chengqian into the fight.

Wang Chengqian looked at Darkmang and said slowly, "A Sixth Energy Level 'Charge Dominator'! I'll handle her. You need to deal with the four spiritual power wielders."

Chen Gu nodded firmly. "May Master Wang achieve a swift victory!"

Wang Chengqian leaped from his hiding place. Letting out a roar like that of a giant beast, he charged at Darkmang. As he ran, his body continuously expanded, instantly shredding his clothes.

By the time he reached Darkmang, he had transformed into a six-and-a-half-meter-tall black giant. His muscles were gnarled and bulging, and thick, sharp bone spurs protruded from his back and joints. A vertical slit appeared between his eyes, as if a third eye was about to open.

He roared, slamming his fists toward Darkmang. She, however, merely sneered and said with contempt, "Barbaric and foolish."

Suddenly, two huge electric serpents shot up from the ground. They crackled as they coiled around Wang Chengqian's legs, flinging him dozens of meters into the air.

Then, a vast thundercloud formed in the sky. A massive bolt of lightning, as thick as a bucket, struck Wang Chengqian with precision.

BOOM!

The lightning bolt exploded, and Wang Chengqian crashed miserably to the ground, his body emitting wisps of acrid smoke.

As Wang Chengqian attacked, Chen Gu also emerged from his hiding place. He bypassed Darkmang, moving to ambush the four spiritual power wielders from behind.

Yet, in an instant, Master Wang, who had launched his attack with such 'grand momentum,' was miserably blasted by the lightning—Chen Gu winced just watching. His earlier wish, 'May Master Wang achieve a swift victory!' was a sincere blessing. Why did it now sound like a sarcastic jibe?

Darkmang, wreathed in bright electrical light, swiftly pursued Wang Chengqian, while Chen Gu had already reached the spiritual power wielders.

He unsheathed the Father-Son Sword. Its light flashed, but CLANG! It was blocked by four laser swords.

Chen Gu instantly saw their strategy: the four spiritual power wielders were incredibly well-coordinated, clearly the result of frequent joint training.

After parrying Chen Gu's strike, they immediately counterattacked. Two laser swords locked down his Father-Son Sword, while the other two, controlled by spiritual power, shot towards Chen Gu from cunning angles.

At such close range, their spiritual power allowed them to manipulate the laser swords with perfect precision and no delay. Two laser swords, quick as lightning, pierced Chen Gu's body.

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But before the two spiritual power users could revel in their joy, Chen Gu's body slowly phased out. The twin laser swords stabbed into a mass of multi-colored gas, thrusting at nothing.

Before they could react, two silver liquid tendrils suddenly whipped out from the gas. They effortlessly twined around the handles of the laser swords, turned off the blades, and then tossed them into the Dimensional Prison Ring—Chen Gu was now adept at this maneuver.

The two spiritual power users were shocked. They had never faced such an unpredictable enemy before. While they were still stunned, Chen Gu had already appeared behind them, his body swelling in size in an instant. He reached out with two large hands, grasped their necks, and lightly squeezed—CRACK! CRACK! Cervical vertebrae shattered!

The two spiritual power users slumped down weakly.

It wasn't until this moment that Shang Qingye and Shangguan Yuqing, leading their group of five students, burst out from behind. Wielding the powerful firepower of their advanced mechas, they laid down suppressive fire, pinning down the Red Bear Sixth Team.

The remaining two spiritual power users frantically wielded their laser swords, striking at the Father-Son Sword in hopes of knocking it down first.

The Black Crow Fifth Group's four spiritual power users possessed spiritual power roughly equivalent to that of a Third Energy Level Brain Domain Hacker. The four working together barely reached the standard of the Fourth Energy Level. They were no match for Chen Gu.

Chen Gu focused his thoughts. The Father-Son Sword rose like a venomous snake, tracing elegant curves in the air. It dodged the pursuing laser swords and returned to Chen Gu's hand. Standing with sword in hand, he suddenly accelerated, moving so fast that the two spiritual power users could hardly see him clearly.

Nuclear Furious Kill!

Wild electricity and radioactive energy burst forth like a breached flood. Before the two spiritual power users could discern Chen Gu's movements, the world spun around them. By the time they realized what was happening, their heads had already been severed...

After Chen Gu struck with his sword, he paid no more attention to the so-called "Black Crow Fifth Group" and instead dashed towards Darkmang.

The moment Darkmang sent Wang Chengqian flying, Chen Gu knew that Teacher Wang alone was no match for the Sixth Energy Level Charge Master. At best, Teacher Wang can only stall her, Chen Gu thought. I need to deal with my own opponents quickly and go help. Otherwise, if Teacher Wang is defeated, our whole team will be in dire straits!

Wang Chengqian roared repeatedly, his voice filled with anger and... helplessness.

Darkmang's body flickered with lightning. Around her, countless fine threads of electricity were continuously drawn from the surrounding void, infusing her with the environment's electrical energy.

Darkmang moved lightly and swiftly. In the midst of her relentless pursuit, she continuously flung clusters of lightning, bombarding Wang Chengqian.

Wang Chengqian kept retreating, crossing his arms in front of him to fend off the lightning's might. However, his arms were already charred black. If it weren't for the inherently powerful defense of a Sixth Energy Level Hell Titan, he probably would have collapsed already.

Wang Chengqian, who had been constantly on the defensive and taking hits, saw Chen Gu's quiet approach. He felt a wave of relief, quickly followed by a sense of shame. He was here to protect these students, yet in the end, he needed one of them to support him.

When Chen Gu was still tens of meters away, Darkmang sensed him. Without looking back, she pointed behind her, and a bolt of lightning struck down from the sky towards Chen Gu.

But Chen Gu was no longer there.

Quantum Teleportation had instantly whisked him away, and he reappeared two meters to Darkmang's left.

Darkmang's body was wrapped in dense threads of electricity. These threads acted like tendrils; anything within their range could not escape her senses.

The instant Chen Gu appeared, she detected him. Darkmang exclaimed in disbelief, "What in the world are you?!"

During his fight with the Black Crow Fifth Group, Chen Gu displayed the abilities of a Multistate Special Agent—manipulating the Father-Son Sword, Darkmang recalled. I thought that was a property of the item itself. Then he enlarged his body, which seemed like a skill from a Hell Titan or an Abyssal Blacksmith. But this Quantum Teleportation... that's unlikely to be an item's ability. Entanglement Control combined with Quantum Teleportation—that's a genuine Quantum Wizard!

As a professional, I know that no one can hold multiple classes, Darkmang thought, but Chen Gu has completely shattered my understanding.

Although shocked, Darkmang's attacks didn't pause for a moment. She thrust her palm towards Chen Gu. The dense threads of electricity around her swiftly began to transfer energy, constructing a lightning prison around him.

Around Chen Gu, large, crackling arcs of electricity tangled and linked together, trapping him inside.

But his body suddenly became elusive, transforming into a mass of multi-colored gas that drifted away.

Darkmang gave a cold laugh. "You fell for it!"

BOOM—

An endless surge of electricity exploded, causing the cloud of gas to tremble uncontrollably. Even while maintaining his gaseous state, the electrical energy permeating the space made Chen Gu dizzy and numb. He struggled to maintain his gaseous form.

Wang Chengqian seized the opportunity and aggressively charged forward. If I can just get into close combat with Darkmang, he thought, one burst of strength will be enough to tear this damned woman in half!

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Yet Darkmang suddenly turned her head and threw a punch at him.

In the dense network of electric filaments, a basketball-sized ball of lightning emerged and exploded on Wang Chengqian with a BANG.

With a miserable scream, Wang Chengqian was sent flying, crashing down dozens of meters away, his whole body shuddering non-stop, with lightning still erupting from him.

Darkmang sneered in disdain, then turned to face Chen Gu. With a wave of her hand, countless fine electric threads converged from all directions. The power of the electric charge flickered, intending to force Chen Gu out of his gaseous state.

From the colorful gas that Chen Gu had transformed into, a hexagonal gemstone pendant suddenly appeared.

The pendant rotated slightly, one of its faces pointing toward Darkmang. She suddenly felt an intense stabbing pain in her head. Her vision darkened, her body swayed, and she nearly fell to the ground!

An item!

It stored a certain professional skill from the Brain Domain Hacker.

Darkmang quickly realized this, and fury rose within her. What background did these guys have, to be so wealthy?

The Mecha suits those kids were using were expensive custom models, incredibly powerful.

The Crimson Bear's sixth team were super soldiers, created through genetic modification with Insect Race genes. They were formidable enough to tear an ordinary army to shreds. Yet, under the barrage of these youngsters' endlessly emerging high-powered weapons, more than half of them had already perished. The fall of the remaining ones was merely a matter of time.

And this youngster in front of her was even more bizarre. He used different professional skills one after another, leading to continuous misjudgments on her part. Even she, at the Sixth Energy Level, found herself somewhat caught off guard.

Chen Gu took the opportunity to break free from the electric net. He then pinpointed Darkmang's location and suddenly activated the Dimensional Prison Ring, using Quantum Teleportation to send the Combat Rooster over.

Darkmang had just recovered from the mental attack of the Brain Domain Hacker when a massive creature suddenly descended upon her head with a THUD, pinning her to the ground.

The Combat Rooster was also completely baffled. Why did the master suddenly summon me here?

HUH? It feels like I'm stepping on something.

The Combat Rooster moved its foot back and forth, grinding and rubbing. Then, suddenly, a huge current surged from beneath its foot. Being an Energy Gathering Mechanical Species and completely metallic, it let out an agonized SQUAWK! Its body went stiff before it fell backward, eyes rolling up.

But it still pinned Darkmang down.

As a master of the Sixth Energy Level, Darkmang certainly wouldn't be crushed to death by an Energy Gathering Mechanical Species. However, her specialty as an "Electric Charge Dominator" was not brute strength. Being pinned down like this was quite uncomfortable. She struggled desperately to push the Combat Rooster off and crawl out, digging a hole in the ground in an attempt to escape.

Such an embarrassing plight!

Darkmang seethed with hatred, vowing to char these two despicable bastards with lightning!

Wang Chengqian, the Hell Titan, was headstrong as ever. A rare opportunity! he thought, howling as he charged in. However, Darkmang pressed her hand on the ground, summoning four enormous electric serpents from beneath, which viciously slammed him flat onto the ground.

Meanwhile, Chen Gu silently sent out the Father-Son Sword, using Quantum Teleportation to send it directly into Darkmang's body.

But the moment the Father-Son Sword appeared, Darkmang suddenly contracted. She was no longer at her previous position. With a push of her palm, countless electric lights tightly ensnared the Father-Son Sword.

"I killed a noteworthy Quantum Wizard before. This move won't work on me!"

Yet, before Darkmang's smug voice could finish, she suddenly felt something thick piercing through her from behind!

The sensation is too clear, too real—as if my entire body is being torn apart!

Through her chest, a massive claw emerged—it was the Combat Rooster's.

Chen Gu's Secret Nest rotated. While he was the Quantum Wizard, he had used a professional skill from the Brain Domain Hacker to secretly take control of the Combat Rooster. He used the attack from the Father-Son Sword as a diversion, hiding his real trump card—the Combat Rooster!

A Sixth Energy Level professional had an extremely tough body. If it weren't for an Energy Gathering Mechanical Species, this strike might not have been able to pierce Darkmang's body directly.

Darkmang felt all her strength rapidly draining away from the massive wound. As she reached out to Chen Gu, the light from the electric charge in her palm flickered twice but ultimately failed to gather for one final blow before extinguishing completely.

Darkmang's arm fell limp. She lay motionless on the ground, filled with regret. Teacher, I regret that I cannot follow you to continue that great dream...

「In the room deep within the base.」

The shadow had just received a response from "No. 9": Affirmative.

The shadow left silently. Bizarrely, almost no one in the entire base noticed her presence or departure.

...

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

After a series of shoulder-fired missiles, the muscular warriors of the Crimson Bear's sixth team were finally all blown to bits.

The students relaxed their grip on their weapons, still shaken. The fragmented corpses of the warriors on the ground showed that they could no longer be considered "human."

Their skin had grown Insect Race-like carapaces, some had sprouted compound eyes, and their internal organs were completely different from those of humans.

These special warriors possessed incredible vitality and were more than ten times stronger than ordinary humans.

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Relatively speaking, these warriors were the easiest enemies to deal with in this battle. Everyone rushed to check on Chen Gu. He was fine, having only received an electric shock while in his gaseous state.

He waved to everyone. "I'm fine. Go check on Wang Chengqian and give him some treatment."

The classmates swarmed around Wang Chengqian. Their Mecha were equipped with a plethora of healing and detoxification medicines.

Almost simultaneously, they pressed a button. HISS, HISS, HISS! Mechanical arms holding syringes extended from their mechs, poised to inject Wang Chengqian.

Wang Chengqian looked truly miserable. His entire body was blackened, and parts like his arms—often used for "taking blows"—had even formed a hard crust.

His hair was a messy tangle, most of it singed. It was likely that by the end of this practical lesson, he would be both bald and stronger.

Seeing so many syringes pointing his way, Wang Chengqian was startled. "No need, no need!" he said hastily. "I can recover on my own."

He quickly jumped up and shook his body. A shower of charred flakes fell to the ground, revealing that all the wounds underneath had already healed.

Then his body slowly shrank back to its original size.

Wang Chengqian deftly hid behind a rock, then awkwardly called out to Qiao Shuangyi, "Chubby, lend me a set of your clothes."

The two girls blushed. This was a common professional embarrassment for those of Wang Chengqian's profession—after his body enlarged, his clothes would inevitably be torn to shreds.

Some companies produced clothing from high-polymer materials with excellent elasticity to avoid this problem. For example, Chen Gu had donned this type of "combat attire" beneath his regular clothes before the battle.

However, these clothes were expensive due to low sales volume.

As for Wang Chengqian's salary... it was a long story. Of that special material, he could only afford a single pair of underwear.

Chen Gu pulled a set of clothes out of his Dimensional Prison Ring and threw them to Wang Chengqian, who started getting dressed behind the rock.

He might have looked pitiful, but he wasn't seriously injured. That was just the combat style of a Hell Titan: rely on a sturdy build and bulldoze through.

Once past the opponent's fire suppression, the battle was essentially over—with a single pull on any two protruding parts of the opponent's body, victory was theirs.

Most of the time, they were able to bulldoze through.

As for the few times they couldn't... best left unsaid.

So, while it seemed like Chen Gu had played a crucial role in the battle, it was actually because Darkmang's attention was largely focused on Wang Chengqian. She was fully aware that one slip would mean her doom at the hands of the Hell Titan.

And though Wang Chengqian appeared to have been beaten badly by Darkmang, it didn't necessarily mean he was losing. A Hell Titan habitually "sold misery" at the start of a battle, making the outcome unpredictable.

The Combat Rooster was only just regaining consciousness. It hummed and grumbled, lifting a claw. "Why is there still a person hanging up there?"

I, Rooster, don't even remember killing anyone.

See? I, Rooster, am truly wicked—I kill in my dreams!

Chen Gu patted it. "Follow us and storm in!"

It was unknown how many warriors like 'Red Bear' remained in the base. Considering everyone's safety, they decided against sneaking in and opted to charge straight in instead.

Moreover, Chen Gu inferred from various clues that this was likely the headquarters of George's Warrior Team. It was potentially a purely military base, with no Insect Race slaves being bred there. Therefore, they didn't need to worry about collateral damage from a large-scale battle.

The Combat Rooster was excited. It hadn't fought alongside its master in a long time—the giant beast league matches were just scuffles, not real combat.

It stepped 'lightly,' bouncing and hopping ahead, its movements shaking the ground and nearly toppling Bai Zhijin.

At the base entrance stood a well-camouflaged rock wall. Beneath a few dozen centimeters of stone lay a half-meter-thick, composite-armored gate.

Shang Qingye shook her head; her Mecha couldn't penetrate such a defense.

Lin Xiaochen's eyes sparkled, sensing an opportunity to shine. She leaned forward, and a short, stout, single-soldier missile rose from behind her.

But the Combat Rooster merely glanced over, opened its great maw, and with a WHOOSH, unleashed a brilliant blue energy beam. With a deafening ROAR, the rock wall shook and crumbled, and the composite-armored gate behind it melted away.

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The "Sky Thunder IV" was the model of the single-soldier missile mounted on Lin Xiaochen's back, renowned as the "strongest single-soldier missile in the Star Sea." Officially released to the market six months ago, it boasted 17 patented technologies and carried a hefty price tag of seven million Starshields per unit.

Many mercenaries risked their lives completing missions, yet their earnings often fell short of affording even one such missile.

Furthermore, due to its considerable size, even Lin Xiaochen's mecha was equipped with only two.

Now, as the Combat Rooster effortlessly unleashed a fiery torrent that blasted open the base's gates, Lin Xiaochen sheepishly retracted his missile.

Behind the gate lay a scene of chaos, with plumes of white smoke billowing upwards—melting the gate had been an incidental benefit of the fiery blast.

Originally, four armed vehicles had been positioned in a line behind the gate, supported by dozens of rebel soldiers who had established defensive positions around them.

The vehicles exhibited the distinctive rebel style: minimal armored protection, with three rapid-fire weapon stations welded onto each chassis—one on each side and another on the roof.

The rebel fighters wielded a motley assortment of weapons, ranging from short blaster pistols to longer electromagnetic and pulse rifles.

But now, the vehicles were wrecked and the fighters scattered. The dead lay still, the wounded writhed, and screams echoed through the air.

These individuals had committed numerous atrocities. Shang Qingye felt no pity as mechanical arms extended from the mecha's shoulders, unleashing a barrage of energy ammunition with a series of CLANGS AND BANGS.

The base was expansive enough for the Combat Rooster to enter. Chen Gu had it take the lead, while everyone else used its bulk for cover, firing continuously from behind, methodically eliminating rebels as they pushed deeper.

However, Chen Gu found himself wondering why the Combat Rooster had suddenly awakened this spitting ability.

The terrifying heat of its breath brought something to mind. He hastily checked his Dimensional Prison Ring, his eyes widening in fury. "Damn it! Who told you to eat my two laser swords?"

The Combat Rooster feigned deafness, continuing its valiant fight at the vanguard. With a single swipe of its claws, it demolished a fortified bunker within the base, silencing the rebels firing from inside before they could even utter a sound.

"Don't think you can get away with this!" Chen Gu roared from behind.

The Combat Rooster turned, an expression of utter "bewilderment" on its face, and CHIRPED a few times. You didn't say I couldn't eat them when you threw them in...

Chen Gu, seething with anger, was about to unleash a tirade. Then he recalled giving specific instructions not to eat the researchers from the white lab when he'd tossed them in. But the laser swords... He'd been in the heat of battle and probably hadn't had time to give any such order.

Chen Gu was speechless, still fuming and thoroughly displeased. Four laser swords were of little practical use to him, and the Combat Rooster developing a pulse-breath ability after consuming them was, objectively, a good thing. Nevertheless, Great Actor Chen was simply not happy.

This stemmed from an obsessive-compulsive mindset. To him, four becoming two—a loss of half—was simply imperfect.

Noticing its master had fallen silent, the Combat Rooster surreptitiously turned back to its slaughter, a quiet wave of relief washing over it. Actually, it couldn't quite remember whether its master had explicitly said "do not eat" when he placed those items inside. It felt like it had just gotten away with something.

They fought their way deeper. Halfway through, the passages became too narrow for the Combat Rooster. Chen Gu recalled it to the Dimensional Prison Ring. He had hoped Teacher Wang would then step up, utilizing his "Hell Titan" ability to spearhead their continued advance.

Yet, at this juncture, Teacher Wang once again performed his "vanishing in place" act. Left with no alternative, the students had to rely on themselves.

Chen Gu pointed at Qiao Shuangyi. "You're up. Your turtle shell is the toughest."

Qiao Shuangyi's legs trembled with fright. "Brother Chen—" he whimpered.

Chen Gu just shook his head. You're such a failure! he thought. Shangguan Yuqing is watching. How could you possibly win the fair lady's heart with such a cowardly display?

He shot Qiao Shuangyi an exasperated look, thoroughly disappointed, then snatched up the two remaining laser swords and charged to the front.

He flipped open "Histories of Four Hundred," allowing the memories of Derek Kun Shen Ken to possess him. Under "Entanglement Control," the two double-ended laser swords rose beside him with a ZZT—WHIRR— sound.

This rebel base, Chen Gu immediately felt, is the "ugliest" place in the world! It must be thoroughly cleansed, made to disappear from this world!

Severe academic stickler Derek Kun Shen Ken was firmly convinced that only centrality and symmetry constituted "beauty." In his eyes, the rebels' style—prioritizing power above all else—was a desecration of "beauty."

The two laser swords shot out, slicing rapidly through everything in their path. Amidst a series of BANGS, armed motorcycles, rebel soldiers, modified mechas, and heavily fortified bunkers alike were all cleanly bisected!

In this type of combat, where attribute-enhancing props were unnecessary, laser swords proved far more suitable.

After advancing several hundred more meters, they encountered the "Crimson Bear Warriors."

Hundreds of these formidable warriors stormed out from a dark gateway, roaring ferociously. But the two double-headed laser swords spiraled and danced, ZIPPING AND BUZZING as they performed crosscutting sweeps. The Crimson Bear Warriors were carved up like watermelons.

Without needing heavy fire support from his classmates behind him, Chen Gu single-handedly dealt with these illegally modified fighters.

This was the last significant wave of resistance the base could muster. After that, they advanced unhindered, pushing all the way to the central control room of the entire complex.

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But all that remained here were some civilian military personnel. They had small pistols clipped to their waists, offering little to no defense—a mere psychological comfort, really.

Upon seeing the enemy, they immediately surrendered without resistance.

"Where is Deng Puer?" Chen Gu grabbed a civilian officer by the neck, lifting him high into the air. He could clearly see the terror in the man's eyes.

Chen Gu's body had become enormous. As he held the officer by the neck, the man's feet dangled over a meter off the ground.

"In—in his barracks..."

Chen Gu frowned, sharply aware of something odd.

"Why isn't he here commanding?"

The civilian officer stammered in reply, "He—he has already been—been stripped of his command and has been under—under house arrest ever since."

Wang Chengqian and the others were shocked, and Chen Gu frowned again. "Who stripped him of his command?"

"It was—Lord Darkmang."

The [Charge Dominator]? Chen Gu mused, feeling that the situation was far from simple. He asked again, "Does the leadership of the [George Warrior Group] know about this?"

"They should know," the officer replied. "Lord Darkmang came with orders from headquarters, removing Lord Deng Puer from all his duties."

This only made things more confusing. After some thought, Chen Gu said, "Take me to Deng Puer."

This base harbored deeper secrets. Chen Gu fought his way in, dealing with many Crimson Bear Warriors, but encountered no more "Black Crow".

「...」

After all, Deng Puer was a high-ranking member of the [George Warrior Group]. Although he had been stripped of his authority and placed under house arrest, his treatment was not poor, and his barracks were the best-furnished in the entire base.

It was just that outside his barracks, an entire platoon of warriors from the [George Warrior Group] kept watch over him.

As Chen Gu and his team arrived, these guards put up a symbolic resistance. However, after two dual-ended laser swords flew through the air and severed four heads, the remaining guards obediently knelt. They surrendered with their weapons held high above their heads.

Chen Gu kicked the door open, finding a man inside calmly brewing tea.

The man had a centipede-shaped metal scar on his face, an unkempt beard, and a fierce appearance. However, he seemed thinner than in the photograph Chen Gu and his team had seen previously, and his beard was also graying.

"Deng Puer?" Chen Gu asked, noting the restraints Deng Puer wore.

They were not the kind used by the Bureau of Mystic Security; he wondered which Star Nation they came from.

Deng Puer chuckled. "Who are you? You don't look like mercenaries." He had already heard the sounds of battle outside.

Chen Gu walked over and sat opposite him, forcefully pushing aside the tea table. The teapot and teacups crashed and shattered on the floor.

"I'll ask, and you'll answer," Chen Gu asserted.

But Deng Puer didn't get angry; instead, his fierce face now appeared sly.

He raised his hand, signaling Chen Gu to proceed.

"Who exactly is Darkmang, and why would the other high-ranking members of the [George Warrior Group] support her?"

Deng Puer was cooperative. "What you really want to ask about is the 'Black Crow' and Crimson Bear, right?"

Chen Gu didn't respond, waiting for him to continue.

"You all must believe it was my idea to abduct people as slaves, forcing them to rear the Insect Race to obtain the raw fluid for phantom drugs. But when I first brought people to this planet, my real purpose was to build a complete munitions factory.

"I did capture those civilians. I took them because my munitions factory needed workers, and I also needed them as hostages. This way, if the Confederation discovered us, we'd have something to negotiate with.

"My original plan wasn't to turn them into slaves either. If they were working under me, they would have been mere laborers, and their treatment would have been far better than it is now."

Chen Gu sneered. "So, you know Darkmang is dead, and you want to pin all the blame on her?"

Deng Puer shook his head. "I have too many sins to count; what difference would a few less make? You can check the base's records. Darkmang and her people arrived early—just three years after I had landed on this planet.

"My command was revoked soon after that. From that moment on, I kept hoping the Confederation would notice something amiss here and send troops to wipe this place out."

Deng Puer continued, "I was involved in the large-scale trade of phantom drugs before. I know it's a grievous sin, but what does that matter? We need military funds to succeed. As long as it makes money, what's wrong with selling a little phantom drug?"

"However, the phantom drugs I sold are different; I wouldn't rear the Insect Race. The Insect Race is the common enemy of all humankind. If we successfully established a nation, we would also be fighting the Insect Race.

"Rearing the Insect Race... only fools like Darkmang would do that.

"But they somehow brainwashed the Group Leader into agreeing with this.

"I refused to carry out such orders and resisted for three years. So, when Darkmang and her people came later, they captured me, and they took control of this planet.

"It wasn't until I later saw the 'Black Crow' and Crimson Bear that I understood why the Group Leader would agree to such a thing."

Chen Gu nodded. For a rebel faction, such powerful 'warriors' would indeed be a dream come true, he thought.

"But these 'guys' are made from materials taken from the Insect Race," Deng Puer said, his expression turning serious. "I've always felt they're just a bunch of monsters.

"I've always been extremely wary of them. I fear that once their numbers reach a certain level, they could become a threat to humanity, just like the Alien Insect Race."

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Deng Puer took out a badge from his bosom and tossed it to Chen Gu. "This is my personal authority badge. Although I've been put under house arrest, none of my official duties have been revoked on the surface, and my permissions remain valid. With it, you can quickly obtain all the experimental data on Black Crow and Red Bear from the base's mainframe."

"Breaching the mainframe would take you time. This item can save you that time."

Chen Gu threw the badge to Shang Qingye outside, and the girl immediately rushed to the central control room. Before long, Shang Qingye's voice came through Chen Gu's communication channel, "He's telling the truth. Chen Gu, you should come and see this data. It's utterly monstrous, unbelievably shocking!"

Chen Gu looked at Deng Puer. "What do you want?"

Deng Puer said, "That depends on who you really are." There was a probing look in his eyes. "If you are officials from the Confederation, I fear I can only ask for a comfortable prison with lenient conditions."

Chen Gu cursed under his breath, Sly old fox. Deng Puer certainly lived up to his reputation as a high-ranking dissident who could stand against the government forces for so many years. Beyond the ferocity and cunning that met the eye, he harbored schemes and patience.

Deng Puer had been under house arrest by Darkmang for many years, all the while hiding his brilliance and biding his time. Upon meeting Chen Gu, he immediately presented a cooperative facade, eagerly offering information Chen Gu supposedly wanted. In reality, however, he hadn't disclosed any truly key intelligence.

The information he provided was all something Chen Gu would have eventually discovered after taking over the base anyway.

For instance, the Black Crow and Red Bear projects.

Chen Gu was well aware that, due to his youthful appearance, Deng Puer must have been concealing significant intelligence. Deng Puer was likely waiting to identify the "real power" behind Chen Gu before beginning any serious negotiations.

Coincidentally, Chen Gu was also growing tired of dealing with such an old fox. Having completed his field training and apprehended Deng Puer, he simply turned around and said to Wang Chengqian, "Deng Puer is inside. Our field training here has come to an end."

Wang Chengqian felt as if he were in a dream. It's over? Just like that?

Before this field training, the school had anticipated the course would last for three months. If the military undertook infiltration and assassination missions like this, they could usually conclude them in a matter of days.

However, that relied on the military's extensive intelligence network and their formidable precision in deploying forces.

The most challenging part was actually the preliminary intelligence gathering. Factoring that in, three months didn't seem too long; it might not even have been sufficient.

According to His Excellency the Principal's plan, this field training was designed to train students from scratch. They were to complete an entire espionage cycle: infiltration, undercover investigation, intelligence collection and assessment, and finally, action.

In his view, even three months was a tight schedule. Completing it would be ideal, but if not, gaining experience was the main goal. He would arrange for the teachers to handle anything left unfinished.

Yet, they had accomplished in just three or four days what was planned to take three months!

At that moment, Wang Chengqian had a profound realization: this cohort of students was extraordinary. He resolved to pay closer attention to them and offer assistance at school whenever possible. After all, who could tell? One day, these very individuals might ascend to the highest echelons of power within the Confederation.

Wang Chengqian nodded to Chen Gu, his expression amiable. "Well done. I'll go in and confirm."

After Wang Chengqian came out and confirmed everything, Chen Gu told him, "Teacher Wang, you should probably contact the Principal. Deng Puer has a lot of secrets, and I'm not qualified to negotiate with him."

In truth, Chen Gu couldn't be bothered to wrangle with Deng Puer. If negotiations were truly necessary, Chen Gu, as a senior operative of the Bureau of Mystic Security's Special Action Squad reporting only to Director-General Aviloya, was well-qualified. Given the choice, Deng Puer might even prefer negotiating with Chen Gu over the Principal.

Wang Chengqian nodded. "You're right. I already informed the Principal right after confirming Deng Puer's identity."

Chen Gu nodded, left everything there in Wang Chengqian's hands, and headed to the central control room himself. He planned to access the base's mainframe and view the experimental data on the Black Crow and Red Bear projects.

The experimental data was truly horrifying. Darkmang was utterly diabolical; she had used live human beings as test subjects from the very beginning of the experiments!

Only after more than 6,700 "slaves" had died did they accumulate enough experience to begin the second phase of experiments on the rebel warriors.

During this phase, the combined death toll of rebel warriors and slaves exceeded another 3,000 before they barely managed to increase the success rate to 30.11%.

From these experimental procedures, Chen Gu could easily see that Darkmang's primary focus was on "Black Crow." "Red Bear" seemed to be an afterthought, most likely a concession to appease the leader of George's Warrior Group.

For the rebels, powerful warriors were naturally the priority. Psychics were desirable, certainly, but they didn't offer the same sense of security as warriors.

What exactly is this person and her backers trying to accomplish?

Does this method of training psychic abilities have anything to do with Wei Jiangqi at all?

The experimental data didn't answer Chen Gu's questions. After a moment's thought, he returned to Deng Puer's barracks. "What is Darkmang's background?"

Deng Puer shook his head. "I don't know. But the Commander ordered me to trust them unconditionally."

This time, Chen Gu finally registered it. "Them?" He recalled that from the beginning of his conversations with Deng Puer about Darkmang, Deng Puer had indeed said "them"—a detail Chen Gu had overlooked until now.

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Deng Puer nodded. "Them. Darkmang isn't a single individual. When she arrived, a mysterious person was by her side—I suspect a high-Energy-Level Psychological Spy. I saw that person from the very beginning, yet I consistently failed to register their existence."

Chen Gu felt a chill in his heart. It must be at least the Eighth Energy Level! Their ability had even been mildly influencing me through Deng Puer.

"Later, when I refused to cooperate with Darkmang and they finally decided to act against me, I was at the Fifth Energy Level, and Darkmang was at the Sixth. It wasn't easy for her to subdue me. However, once that other person intervened, I obediently put on the safety collar."

Chen Gu nodded slowly. "What else can you remember about them?"

Deng Puer gave a bitter smile. "That person is a high-Energy-Level Psychological Spy. Do you think I could remember anything?"

Chen Gu let out a quiet sigh.

「...」

The subsequent operations went very smoothly. Darkmang was killed, Deng Puer was captured, and without unified command, the rebels on the planet became a scattered force.

Following the students, the Confederation army surged in like a tide, attacking the underground bases. Internal strife erupted within several underground bases due to conflicting opinions, leading to their 'smooth' collapse.

Large numbers of slaves were rescued. All the Insect Race bred within the underground bases were killed by the enraged soldiers, and all breeding facilities were utterly destroyed.

After the military operation concluded, Chen Gu met the headmaster on the transport ship during their return journey.

"I'm somewhat envious of Zhong Yuanbei," the headmaster said, his lips twisting. "Back when we were in school, that fellow was never as good as Shentu Lu or me. But that damn lucky dog—it's infuriating! Despite his rotten habit of constantly putting students in the hospital, he somehow still managed to recruit a good student like you."

Chen Gu was at a loss for words. You're such a great master, an otherworldly expert; shouldn't you be a bit more refined? And you're calling my teacher a 'damn lucky dog'... It's fine if you two are close, but how am I supposed to respond to that?

He cautiously offered some flattery, "I believe my teacher's greatest fortune in life was making such loyal friends as you and Director Shentu, friends who would go through thick and thin together."

"Heh heh!" The headmaster chuckled, stroking his chin. "That's true enough."

Chen Gu truly didn't know what to say next.

Finally, the headmaster got down to business. "Do you know what Deng Puer's biggest bargaining chip is for negotiating with us?"

Chen Gu had actually guessed it long ago. "The secrets of the George Warriors."

The headmaster nodded, then asked, "If it were up to you, what would you do with Deng Puer?"

Chen Gu had considered this too. "I would let him go back."

The headmaster nodded in satisfaction. "No wonder Bai Yunpeng values you so highly. Correct, I'll let him go. In four days, a transport ship will take him away. Then, due to 'lax supervision,' he'll seize an opportunity to escape while refueling at some port. As a Fifth-Energy-Level professional, he'll rescue a group of his diehard warriors, hijack the ship, and flee back."

"Once he returns, we'll choose an opportune moment to eliminate the original commander and some high-ranking members of the George Warriors. With Deng Puer's abilities, he'll eventually gain control over the entire rebel force."

The headmaster then paused, looking at Chen Gu with a gaze that seemed to be testing him.

Chen Gu thought for a moment. "The Ekmalon Star Nation is very close to the Star State. It would be quite reasonable for them to slip into Star State territory and stir up some trouble, wouldn't it?"

"Hahaha!" The headmaster roared with laughter, pointing at Chen Gu. "You kid, you really suit my tastes!" Then he added, "Anything else?"

Chen Gu opened the star map. This was an impromptu test, and he hadn't prepared at all; he could only make a desperate, last-minute attempt to prepare.

Soon, he said in astonishment, "The Ekmalon Star Nation once had a very peculiar national policy: to take in indigenous populations from various planets and offer them political asylum!"

During humanity's conquest of the Star Sea, friction with indigenous populations was inevitable. However, humans, priding themselves on their civilization, would often seize territories and then allocate a 'reservation' for the natives, leaving them to fend for themselves.

Until now, this situation has remained a 'secret.' Consequently, this policy of the Ekmalon Star Nation was also kept confidential.

However, Chen Gu knew very well that this secret couldn't be kept for much longer. Indigenous rebellions were becoming increasingly frequent, such as the recent uprising by the Subterraneans.

With so many soldiers involved in suppressing these rebellions, the truth couldn't be hidden forever.

In fact, many civilians were already aware of this secret. Once it's officially revealed, these indigenous people who were granted 'political asylum' would become very useful.

When the Ekmalon Star Nation initially introduced this policy, it was actually the major Star Nations pulling the strings behind the scenes. If the indigenous resistance on certain planets was too strong,

they would arrange for the leaders to be 'sent' to the Ekmalon Star Nation for 'political asylum'—which, in reality, meant placing them under house arrest.

The day the secret about the indigenous populations is revealed, having the Ekmalon Star Nation under Confederation control will be highly significant. If any power has a conflict with another, they could release the indigenous leaders from that power's territory, sending them back to incite planetary independence movements—guaranteed to cause immense trouble for their adversaries.

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Chen Gu had noticed this policy, which showed that he had already understood the deeper significance of controlling the Ekmlon Star Nation. The principal couldn't help but smile before continuing, "Besides what you've thought of, there's an even deeper reason. Our war with the Alien Insect Race—if we really reach a last resort, we might need to rely on the power of these natives."

Even in this era, wars still hinged on the economy, resources, and population.

In terms of population, the human reproduction rate definitely couldn't compare with that of the Alien Insect Race.

Chen Gu showed a look of concern. "If it really comes to that, even if we ultimately win, the problems afterward will be endless."

The principal said, "That's why it's a last resort."

If the human race's population suffered excessive losses in a war, they would need to arm these natives—after the war, these natives would inevitably use the weapons in their hands to vie for rights from humans.

Chen Gu asked, "Why are you telling me so much?"

The principal gently pressed a button, and two holographic projections appeared beside Chen Gu: Bai Yunpeng on the left, Aviloya on the right.

With the principal also in front, the three heavyweights were now surrounding Chen Gu.

"Uh..." This formation made Chen Gu feel a bit uneasy.

Bai Yunpeng said, "Deng Puer is cunning and ruthless. While we're sending him back, we must find a way to keep him firmly under our control.

"He agreed to our human body modifications, having a capsule bomb implanted in his body. He also took our high-tech poison, which requires us to regularly provide the antidote.

"But he's a Fifth Energy Level professional. After being confined for these years, he must have accumulated significant resources. Once we let him go back and he takes control of the entire George's Warriors, he will gain access to substantial resources and will likely advance to the Sixth Energy Level.

"The higher the professional level, the less effective our control methods become."

Chen Gu hurriedly interrupted him, "Marshal Bai, you can't screw me over. You can't expect me to follow him around and monitor him, can you?"

Bai Yunpeng cursed, "Nonsense! Even if the principal is willing to sacrifice such a good student, I don't want to lose a tactical genius like you.

"Our plan is to use both carrot and stick. On top of those control methods, we'll give him a military advisor."

"Me?"

"That's right, you," Bai Yunpeng continued. "The rebels' standards are extremely poor. Don't be fooled by Deng Puer's craftiness; their tactical and strategic levels, at best, are equivalent to one of our division commanders.

"You'll be advising them, remotely of course, to let them see the Confederation's comprehensive military strength.

"But at the same time, you must also take care not to teach them everything during this 'advisory' process and make them truly powerful—striking that balance is difficult. You need to be constantly vigilant and observe them. If Deng Puer's ambition swells and he indeed becomes unmanageable, alert us immediately. We'll then send an assassination squad to eliminate him and replace him with someone more compliant.

"This task is difficult; I wouldn't trust anyone else with it.

"But you don't need to feel too much pressure. We have other arrangements, like the undercover surveillance you mentioned.

"We will also cultivate an opposition faction within George's Warriors. If Deng Puer disobeys, we will have the opposition take over."

Chen Gu finally felt relieved. It made sense. Given the Confederation's consistently shrewd operational style, how could they possibly release a formidable figure like Deng Puer without complete precautions?

After pondering for a moment, he said, "If that's the case, I can do it."

Bai Yunpeng laughed heartily, pointing at Aviloya. "You see, I told you Chen was a responsible man. Explain the stakes to him, and he will definitely cooperate with us. You just lack confidence in Chen, always looking at people with old views."

Aviloya said nothing. Chen Gu could guess that the three must have had their differences regarding him.

The principal had previously tested him intentionally. It was only after Chen Gu provided a satisfactory answer that the principal decided to support this decision.

The principal said, "Then it's settled. Don't worry, you won't be working for nothing. During your tenure as military advisor, the military will cover 10% of the materials for each of your promotions."

Chen Gu's heart leaped with joy. The Bureau of Mystic Security will cover 60%, and with another 10% from the military, I'll only need to manage the remaining 30%. That makes things much easier!

But this is only during my time as a military advisor—Deng Puer, you really need to hang in there!

The matter of the military advisor was settled. Chen Gu returned with everyone to the Capital Star, only to discover less than a week had passed.

Deng Puer's actions had not yet started, and Chen Gu didn't need to contact him for the time being. The school was calculating credits, and without a doubt, Chen Gu would still top the list.

Chen Gu had thought he would get some downtime to seriously reflect and summarize his professional gains, but suddenly, he received a call from Deputy Director Ding Zhou—the film was about to start shooting!

???

Ding Zhou had acted as Director-General for a while, experiencing the thrill of wielding great power. However, immediately after Aviloya returned, she kicked him out, relegating him to manage this film project...

The project's positioning was a bit awkward.

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To sweet-talk Chen Gu into acting, Ding Zhou had promised it would be a major production. However, the funds from the Bureau of Mystic Security and the military didn't grow on trees. This project was most likely going to flop—or, if one were confident enough, they could drop the "most likely."

Five hundred million invested, just to go down the drain?

Ding Zhou figured that even with utmost frugality, at least two hundred million Starshield would be needed; otherwise, he would have trouble explaining things to Chen Gu.

Moreover, if the budget for special effects was reduced further, a sort of visual 'break' would become apparent.

That segment of the live broadcast was real and would definitely be used in the movie. If the special effects in other parts were too poor, it would look jarringly inconsistent and arouse suspicion.

Ding Zhou and Bai Yunpeng explored many avenues for securing sponsorships.

They promised certain benefits and managed to secure a total of one hundred million Starshield in sponsorships from various families and businesses. As for the remainder, the Bureau and the military had no choice but to split the cost.

Now that the funding was finally in place, Ding Zhou could at last push the project forward.

Chen Gu wasn't busy with anything lately, so he went to the filming location using the address Ding Zhou had given him.

What's that? You say he's still a student and needs to attend classes? That's not important. Matters concerning the military and the Bureau of Mystic Security were vital to national security!

Yu Mozi was a new-generation director. After graduating from an obscure film academy, he'd spent over a decade working his way up through various film crews, finally earning his stripes as a director.

However, he was very talented and a quick learner. Consequently, several of his low-budget films had performed well.

He had won a few minor awards, and the box office returns were considered quite successful.

Then, out of the blue, industry magnate Gao Mengjiu approached him to direct a "five-hundred-million major production." Yu Mozi was overjoyed, feeling he was finally on his way to joining the ranks of top-tier directors.

However, he soon found out the actual budget totaled only two hundred million Starshield.

Out of this, at least fifty million had to be set aside for post-production promotional costs, leaving only one hundred and fifty million Starshield for production.

This was only because the live broadcast had saved the bulk of the promotional expenses; otherwise, the production budget would have been at most one hundred million Starshield.

One hundred and fifty million... Well, it would have to do.

In this era, investments exceeding one hundred million Starshield were considered major productions.

However, as the crew was being assembled, he grew increasingly uncomfortable. He had no say in casting; all the actors were foisted upon him due to various connections.

He complained to Gao Mengjiu, who responded by showing him the entire investment plan and pointing them out one by one: "This actor is that investor's sister-in-law; that actor is another investor's godson," and so on.

Yu Mozi had often encountered such situations. When people invested money, it was common for them to insert one or two of their own people into the project.

But for such a large investment, wasn't it too frivolous to cast a star from the Giant Beast League as the lead?

However, that live broadcast footage made it impossible for him to replace the lead actor.

It's over... Yu Mozi was ready to give up. Although it was a major production, if it flopped, it would be a heavy blow to his career. He might not land another major production for decades.

Gao Mengjiu still wanted to retain Yu Mozi, as he believed in his abilities. "Just start filming," he said. "We won't shortchange you a single Starshield of your director's fee. If, in the end, you genuinely feel the film isn't up to par, you can relinquish your director's credit, and we'll simply put someone else's name on it."

Yu Mozi hesitated repeatedly. He was no longer an unknown, small-time director; how could he allow something he shot to carry someone else's name?

Gao Mengjiu then said, "How about this: in your future films, if you need it, I can have my stars—including Man Suling—make a guest appearance for you, free of charge. How about that?"

Yu Mozi finally, reluctantly, agreed. "Alright."

But today, upon arriving at the set, Yu Mozi regretted his decision once more. What kind of monsters and freaks are these?

Yes, they all looked good—after all, in this era, as long as you have money, you can be as beautiful as you want.

But they didn't look like actors!

Had he ever seen a minor cast member arrive in a multimillion-Starshield luxury van, escorted by bulletproof maglev cars, and then join the set with three assistants and six bodyguards?

The lead actor hadn't arrived yet, but Yu Mozi had already lost all hope. He even decided that after filming began, he would direct a few scenes, then throw a tantrum, smash the clapperboard, and storm off.

Gao Mengjiu, on the other hand, had arrived early with Chen Qingyu. He introduced her to Yu Mozi, and the young woman, understanding her position as a newcomer, showed great respect for the director.

When Chen Gu arrived, Yu Mozi looked him over and commented begrudgingly, "His looks... are passable, I suppose."

Huh? Chen Gu was taken aback.

Excuse me? I'm an idol actor too, alright? In my previous life, I was the heartthrob of many film crews!

Looking around, he saw the other actors had all undergone genetic modification, each more sultry and delicate-featured than the last... Chen Gu felt a wave of nausea. What kind of aesthetic sense is this?!

Yu Mozi was furious too. He's the lead actor, how dare he question a director's aesthetic sense?!

Gao Mengjiu quickly tried to smooth things over, "Alright, alright, everyone's here. Let's have the opening ceremony first, then we'll start shooting as soon as possible. Everyone's schedules are tight."

Throughout the opening ceremony, the cast members who had gotten their roles through connections were visibly excited, but Yu Mozi's expression remained cold, without a hint of a smile.