

Full Time 681

Chapter 681: Familiar Tactics (Part 2)

Balermo growled impatiently and manually operated the Mecha, rapidly charging the energy cannons mounted on its shoulders. As the artillery operator designated for the feint, he still had to put on a convincing show.

Two bright orbs of energy shot out, trailed by a radiant tail one meter in length, which was seventy percent thinner than the orbs in front.

Within the Star Sea, most explosive energy weapon projectiles took this form and shared the characteristic of having tremendous initial power that diminished quickly over distance.

As usual, a vast network of root tendrils rose around the spores to intercept. Just as the network had spread open, and before the explosive rounds could hit the root tendrils, Modric's eyes flashed blue as he shouted, "Now!"

The explosive rounds struck the root network. Almost simultaneously, Modric used Quantum Teleportation to bypass the root network's defenses, delivering four high-explosive individual missiles directly near the spores and detonating them immediately.

BOOM!

BOOM...

The explosions followed one another, lighting up the sky.

However, as Quantum Wizards, Chen Gu and Modric exchanged a glance. Quantum Divination granted them an extraordinary predictive capability, and both sensed that this assault might not have been effective.

What Chen Gu did not know was that this simple exchange of looks was what truly made the haughty Seventh Energy Level Quantum Wizard, Modric, regard Chen Gu as an "equal" partner in his heart.

This small detail in their exchange, a glimpse that revealed much, solidified Modric's recognition of Chen Gu's ability—their similar level of premonition suggested that their potential in the Quantum Wizard field was comparable.

Previously, any acknowledgments were merely to ensure cooperation; now, Modric's recognition was sincere.

But the others did not possess their predictive capability. They watched expectantly towards the direction of the spores, waiting for the light to fade and the smoke to clear.

"Unscathed!" Charles shrieked, his face a mask of disbelief as he punched the air in frustration.

It wasn't entirely accurate to say unscathed. The dual layers of explosions had indeed shattered the root tendrils. The remains twisted unconsciously on the ground, likely incapable of forming an effective defense network anytime soon.

Beneath the large spores, at some unknown point, a series of trumpet-shaped objects that also resembled pitcher plants had appeared. They unfurled and expelled layers of energy wave bubbles, firmly protecting the spores inside.

Modric said, "Those energy wave bubbles wrapped around my missiles. Encased in three layers, the missiles' power could not harm those spores."

Chen Gu asked, "Is there any hope left for this plan to succeed?"

Modric thought for a moment and shook his head. "I'm afraid not. They possess a certain intelligence. Even if I bundled several individual missiles together, teleported them, and then tried to detonate them sequentially to break through this defense... they would be able to discern that and deploy different energy wave bubbles to isolate the missiles."

Chen Gu nodded, trusting Modric's assessment. From the timing of Modric's missile teleportation, he had already discerned that the Seventh Energy Level individual was tactically adept.

Boluo's face was a picture of misery. "Captain... please no..."

Chen Gu deliberately kept his face stern. "Only you can complete this mission! I'll have you teleported there—Senior Modric can pull you back at any moment, so you don't have to worry about being trapped in that mist. You can continuously create alchemical bombs, breach layer after layer of defense, and get next to the spores to blow them up!"

Boluo stammered a few "buts," yet failed to produce a valid reason to refuse.

However, Chen Gu suddenly laughed and clapped Boluo on the shoulder. "Alright, stop looking so glum. I was just scaring you."

Before Boluo could understand what Chen Gu meant, the deputy captain had already approached Modric. They shook hands, and everyone sensed an intangible yet solid bond forming between the two men.

Chen Gu said, "Senior, I'm counting on you!"

Modric smiled faintly. "Be careful yourself! At the crucial moment, I will definitely pull you back without hesitation. Your life is more important than the mission."

"Alright, haha!" Chen Gu laughed.

Boluo immediately jumped up. "No, Captain, let me go instead..."

Chen Gu stopped him. Those kinds of risky tactics were something he'd only used against Boluo back when they were adversaries. Now that Boluo was his teammate, and he was the deputy captain leading them, how could he possibly let Boluo take such a risk?

Moreover, strategically speaking, Chen Gu, with his Biological Nuclear Explosion ability, was certainly more suitable for this kind of operation than Boluo, an Alchemist.

"Don't worry, I won't risk my life recklessly," Chen Gu said. "If it proves impossible, I will immediately use Quantum Teleportation to escape."

Moreover, he had a double insurance: the Seventh Energy Level Modric could also pull him back using Entanglement Control.

Chen Gu asked Balermo for two individual missiles. The powerful man handed them over silently and then suddenly asked, "I've heard that officers of the Confederation have a tradition of leading from the front. Is that true?"

Chen Gu shrugged, finding it a quite ordinary notion. "Yes. Our officers don't say 'Go for me'; they say 'Follow me.'"

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He grabbed two single-soldier missiles and nodded to everyone. Faint blue energy ripples then emerged around him. These ripples rapidly collapsed inward, and Chen Gu vanished without a sound.

Then, he appeared right among the spores.

Sensing the intruder, the horn-like plants immediately spat out energy-wave bubbles. However, Chen Gu's attention was not on them; instead, he fixed his gaze on the ground below as his "Radiation Field" activated.

The ground underwent slight "distortions." Hidden beneath it were special life forms—hybrids of plant and animal. Their animal component was a relatively large sac filled with a liquid secreted by the plant part. When compressed, this liquid was expelled and immediately vaporized into a mist that rose quickly.

Each of these creatures was small, but they were numerous. Under the detection of Chen Gu's "Radiation Field," the shallow underground throughout the mountain area was almost entirely filled with these life forms.

The thick fog rose rapidly, and Chen Gu shifted his focus to the spores.

He detonated the two missiles.

BOOM!

BOOM!

The spores were unharmed. As Modric had said, these plant-animal hybrids possessed a certain level of intelligence. They had produced three layers of energy-wave bubbles to encapsulate the two missiles.

Chen Gu had already drawn the "Father-Son Sword," and the "Taboo Nuclear Combat Technique" activated. Ba Wuqi's memories flooded him, unleashing the formidable power of a "Radiation Missionary" at the Sixth Energy Level. A massive, two-hundred-meter sword light erupted, shattering the three layers of energy-wave bubbles enveloping him.

Chen Gu swiftly retreated, sending the "Father-Son Sword" flying through the air toward the spores.

Ba Wuqi's memories faded. The pages of "Echoes of Four Hundred" turned to the one titled Ye.

"Quantum Wizard" logged in!

Clusters of energy-wave bubbles were spat out, enveloping the Father-Son Sword.

But Chen Gu's "Dimensional Prison Ring" opened, and two double-ended laser swords flew out. The horn-shaped plants began to struggle, emitting more energy-wave bubbles in an attempt to block the two laser swords.

The mouth of the "Dimensional Prison Ring" rapidly widened. The "Combat Rooster" poked out its head and spat out a huge laser energy wave, bombarding the spores!

The plants closest to the spores on the stems exerted their full strength, shooting out more energy-wave bubbles that completely enveloped all the spores, resisting the "Combat Rooster's" attack.

And it was at that moment Chen Gu suddenly vanished!

In the next instant, he appeared among the energy-wave bubbles, his hand pressing onto a huge spore!

The preceding series of powerful attacks was merely to deplete all defenses surrounding the spores, laying the groundwork for his sudden assault.

However, using plants for a "Biological Nuclear Explosion" was much more difficult than using animal bodies. Fortunately, these spores were also plant-animal hybrids, which greatly reduced the difficulty.

The moment Chen Gu's palm touched the spore, two lines suddenly split open on its surface. Like eyelids, they parted to reveal two ghastly white eyeballs that startled Chen Gu!

However, these two eyeballs had no means of attack. They simply watched Chen Gu coldly, as if seeking to record his appearance and convey it to some other entity.

"Biological Nuclear Explosion" initiated!

Chen Gu needed to ensure the 100% destruction of all spores. Therefore, the red glow of the "Biological Nuclear Explosion" spread out from the spore beneath his palm. It quickly infected the surrounding spores and rapidly advanced toward others in the distance.

On the ground, the already battered roots went mad, surging upward with all their remaining strength.

Chen Gu stood unmoved as roots stabbed toward him like spears, cracking as they penetrated his mecha.

A thick layer of combat armor emerged around Chen Gu: Heavy Nuclear Armor.

The roots continued their assault but were blocked by the Heavy Nuclear Armor. These peculiar and powerful roots could not penetrate the "Radiation Missionary's" Heavy Nuclear Armor at the Sixth Energy Level in the short time they had.

Finally, a red light blossomed in all the spores. Chen Gu gently pushed with his palm, pulling away from them. He then switched back to Ye's memories. With a faint flash of blue energy ripples around him, he was back by everyone's side.

Boluo let out a long sigh of relief. Just as she was about to step forward to check on him, Chen Gu urgently shouted, "Let's go!"

The power of this "Biological Nuclear Explosion" exceeded Chen Gu's expectations. These strange plant-animal combinations turned out to be excellent materials for it!

Although it was a bit slow to activate, its power was enormous.

The team immediately spurred their mechas to flee at full speed.

Big Rabbit helplessly carried Chen Gu on her back—not by her own initiative, but because Chen Gu had ensured that when he teleported back, he landed right on top of her!

And Big Rabbit couldn't protest, since most of the mechas had a rocket pack on their backs, spewing flames.

Only Dora, the little demoness Selena, and Modric had rocket thrusters installed only on the soles of their mechas.

Chen Gu surely couldn't expect Modric, the esteemed senior, to carry him. If he dared to land on Selena's back, the little demoness would undoubtedly scream and throw him off.

Poor Dora thought it over and over; it seemed the Team Leader could only turn to her.

But letting me carry you is one thing; why do you keep trying to climb higher during the flight? Do you really want to ride me?!

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Outrageous!

Dozens of kilometers after their escape, Dora suddenly realized: Why did I have to carry you? You could've just picked someone to carry you!

So frustrating! I should just drop him!

But Big Rabbit was a good girl who cared about a man's pride, so she merely turned back and whispered her complaint to Chen Gu, "You... stop rubbing against me."

BOOM—

Chen Gu had only heard the word "rubbing" when the intense explosion behind him drowned out everything else.

A massive mushroom cloud of black and red soared into the sky, and for a moment, the planet's surface interference with electronic devices faltered. The enormous force of the explosion swept over them like a hurricane at sea. The professionals tried to stabilize themselves in the midst of the blast but were scattered in all directions, flung far away like survivors of a shipwreck.

It took more than ten minutes for them to slowly regroup. Chen Gu was unharmed from the nuclear blast thanks to his Heavy Nuclear Armor.

Balermo commented with excitement and envy, "Ah, I always wanted to awaken as a Radiation Missionary, but alas, I didn't have the talent. TSK TSK, now this is what I call a fight. There's nothing that a nuclear blast can't solve. If there is, then it'll take two!"

Chen Gu nodded. A violence addict. One of us.

Modric looked back at the explosion site, where a new "valley" had formed in the mountains, leaving the surroundings bare. Several nearby peaks had been sheared off by a few dozen centimeters...

He nodded and said, "Those spores are taken care of. I can now confirm that inviting you all here was the wisest decision Chairman White has made in his position."

Modric, too, had the pride of a professional fighter and didn't think highly of office-sitters like White and Richard.

He pinpointed a direction and suggested, "Let's go, on to the abandoned fort."

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In space, Chairman White and others watched the entire battle process through military satellites. The nuclear explosion dissipated, and the huge spores vanished without a trace. It was as if a heavy stone weighing on everyone's hearts had been temporarily removed. They all cheered and whistled in unison; some clapped forcefully, others raised their fists high.

Chairman White also silently heaved a sigh of relief and nodded. That super lifeform had been worth the cost.

Only Richard pursed his lips and said, "But their real mission is to investigate the situation inside the military fort—what does clearing these spores accomplish? Our experts have already analyzed it; more spores will appear. In my opinion, they're just wasting our already limited time."

The cheering in the battleship suddenly quieted. Everyone understood the logic. This clean and decisive clearing of the spores not only clarified the defense mechanisms of these things—incredibly valuable experience. More significantly, it represented their first victory in the long battle against the moss virus!

It should have been a tremendous boost to morale, but Richard's words had turned it into something negative.

Finally, someone couldn't hold back and muttered privately, "You make it sound so reasonable, but when you were in charge of the mission, how did you fail so miserably and let the virus proliferate? All talk."

Richard, furious and embarrassed, shouted, "Who said that? Stand up!"

Chairman White coldly commanded, "Shut up! Richard, you'd better pray that this crisis can be perfectly resolved with Captain Chen's help. Otherwise, the mistakes in your past work will definitely incur even more severe punishment."

Richard's face darkened, and he silently moved aside, brooding unpredictably.

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Just as the group was about to set off, Chen Gu stopped everyone. "Wait a moment."

Modric misunderstood his intent. "Right, we can't keep having Ms. Dora carry you all the time. We should take turns..."

Shut up! Dora's face, hidden under her mask, burned red with embarrassment.

You shut up! Chen Gu was also quite displeased. I'm willing for Big Rabbit to carry me, and she's willing to carry me. What business is it of yours? Mind your own business!

"Not at all," Chen Gu quickly interjected. He took out a transparent sealed bottle with a few drops of liquid inside. "Who has a material analyzer? This is that mysterious fog."

Before using Quantum Teleportation to return, Chen Gu had casually grabbed some of the thick fog below and, using the ability of a Multistate Special Agent, converted the fog into a liquid for preservation.

Melincha reached out to take it. "My Mecha has one. Give me three minutes."

But three minutes later, Melincha gasped, "The material structure of this substance is very complex. It'll probably take ten minutes to get results."

While waiting, Balermo leaned over to Modric. Looking at Chen Gu, he told his companion, "When I did my military service, I understood how lucky it is to have a good superior."

"This group of youngsters may not have high ranks or great talent, but they have a good captain. Their future is much brighter than ours."

Modric sighed, and the two of them gently shook their heads together.

The plight on Sol Star was an open secret among the higher-ups of the Rights Association. Everyone was well aware but reluctant to discuss it further.

Why were those real powerhouses, those above the Eighth Energy Level, unwilling to come?

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Others have painstakingly climbed to the very top of their professions; why should they risk their lives for the Great Commander and a media tycoon without a conscience? If it were truly for some noble cause, surely some among these professional elites would be willing to step forward. But those two are clearly selfish. If you're going to be so despicable, why should I take the risk?

Extrapolating from Balermo's recent "superior officer" theory, it's clear that the entire Star State currently lacks a single qualified "superior officer."

Balermo and Modric had only come because Chairman White offered them benefits they couldn't refuse.

Both fell into a reluctant silence. Ten minutes slowly passed. Then, Melincha tapped her finger, and a light screen materialized between them, displaying the chemical composition of these liquids.

"This is a highly potent psychoactive toxin," she said. "It's somewhat similar to the moss virus. Once it enters an organism, it can use the host's proteins to self-replicate. This means that after poisoning, the toxicity will continuously intensify."

"It can penetrate the skin and is also corrosive. The seals on ordinary Mechas wouldn't last more than three hours in this dense fog."

Everyone listened, their hearts growing heavy. "All evolutions of the moss virus are clearly targeting humans!"

Chen Gu said, "Let's set out. Everyone understands the horror of that thick fog now, so be extremely careful not to fall into it."

"If you do get trapped inside, it's crucial that no one gets separated. Besides the fog's corrosiveness, I suspect the ambushes by those animal-plant hybrids, using the fog for cover, are the most lethal threat."

"A single small crack in a Mecha could be fatal!"

Everyone nodded repeatedly.

The recent nuclear blast had evidently destroyed something. Near the spore, the electronic interference that previously affected an area up to five kilometers above ground had sharply decreased to a one-kilometer radius.

However, as they continued flying toward the abandoned military fortress, this interference range gradually expanded. After they had flown a hundred kilometers, it had returned to a three-kilometer radius.

It then stabilized at that range, expanding no further.

"Strange," Modric said. "Those monsters haven't sent anything else to stop us?"

Chen Gu had already guessed this outcome.

The animal-plant hybrids on this planet possessed considerable intelligence. Once they confirmed the squad's target was still the fortress, they would likely cease attacks en route. The previous three teams had all perished on their way to the fortress, meaning something near it was powerful enough to eliminate any investigators. They had no need to waste further 'forces.'

What made Chen Gu uneasy now was that the three-kilometer electronic interference radius probably corresponded to the extent of the dense fog. This range far exceeded his Radiation Field's detection capabilities, preventing him from scouting the various deployments of the animal-plant hybrids on the ground.

He was a tactical mastermind who preferred to plan meticulously before acting, gathering as much intelligence on his opponents as possible before formulating a battle plan.

Yet now, regarding the foes they were about to face, he was almost completely in the dark.

Suddenly, Chen Gu tugged on Dora's reins—yes, Captain Chen was still riding Big Rabbit—and Dora, rolling her eyes behind her visor, came to a halt.

Chen Gu declared, "We can't just charge headlong into the monsters' ambush without any preparation!"

The team also stopped. After some thought, Modric finally made a decision. "The item I control, designated Heaven Position Number 2-13, once activated, can manipulate water molecules within a maximum radius of three thousand kilometers."

"With my current abilities, I can affect water molecules within a nine-hundred-kilometer radius without harming myself. If I risk serious injury, this radius can extend up to one thousand eight hundred kilometers..."

Before he could finish, Chen Gu's eyes lit up, and he interrupted, "That's a trump card, Your Excellency. There's no need to deploy it hastily."

He then looked towards Balermo. "And you, Your Excellency? Your item, Heaven Position Number 4-11, what are its capabilities?"

Since Modric had voluntarily disclosed the ability of his numbered item, it signified that the Star State officially acknowledged this cooperation and was demonstrating its full sincerity.

Although rumors about the abilities of numbered items circulated externally, the information regarding the higher-echelon ones was notoriously difficult to verify.

This was also a closely guarded secret. Chen Gu had previously refrained from asking about the specific abilities of these two items. Only after Modric volunteered information about his did Chen Gu inquire about the other.

Chapter 685: Heavenly Position Numbering

Balermo had recognized Chen Gu even earlier than Modric. He even harbored a feeling of wishing Chen Gu were his own superior. Since Modric had already "spilled the beans," Balermo naturally had no reason to hide anything.

"The main ability of the 'Heavenly Position Number 4-11' tool that I'm in charge of is the range-based adjustment of material structures, similar to a 'Microscopic Analyst'. Its power range is between two thousand kilometers and three hundred kilometers."

"If it's just causing destruction, the maximum range can reach two thousand kilometers. But if you want to finely adjust the internal structure of a material, the range is only three hundred kilometers."

"That would require a master of the Ninth Power Level to operate. With my level, the maximum destructive range is estimated to be only one thousand two hundred kilometers, and the range for fine-tuning... COUGH, COUGH, fifty kilometers."

Balermo was somewhat embarrassed, and Chen Gu understood that the same tool could have different effects in the hands of different professionals.

For example, in the hands of a 'Microscopic Analyst,' this 'Heavenly Position Number 4-11' tool might only need the Eighth Power Level to unleash its full power.

But Balermo was a 'Hell Titan,' focused not on insight but on strength, and thus not suited for manipulating such tools.

Give him an axe-type tool, and he could show you some flashy moves!

The abilities of these two tools indeed possessed great destructive power against biological targets, but neither had detection capabilities. Chen Gu felt somewhat disappointed, as he still had to go to that abandoned military fortress blind.

Deep under a vast lake on 'Sol Star', there was a server of considerable scale.

However, this advanced server was now enveloped in swathes of aquatic plants, which, like writhing worms, extended into the server.

If Chairman White and the others discovered this place, they would be extremely surprised. Electronic interference rendered devices useless across the entire planet's surface, yet this server still shimmered with faint light, continuing to operate.

But it was not a power plant providing the server with electricity; it was those aquatic plants!

Some "images" were transmitted through the network of roots that had spread across the entire planet into the server, and then through a special "node" connected to the interstellar quantum web.

The entire process managed to deceive the dozens of military satellites outside the planet and went undetected.

Meanwhile, on a distant and bustling planet, one of the few densely populated colony stars in the 'Star State,' these network data were quickly captured by a certain being.

His body glowed with blue light, revealing his "inner" excitement, and then these images were sent to a big shot on the planet.

This big shot had just finished a city government meeting and immediately sensed an anomaly in his secret account, promptly ducking away from the others under the pretense of going to the restroom.

Upon accessing the account, the images it contained were those seen by the two eyes that suddenly opened on the spores when Chen Gu was destroying them.

He almost jumped up, grinding his teeth. Haunting me like a malevolent spirit!

At the same time, in a secret online chat room, the numbers also saw these images, and one by one, they were furious.

"We have already avoided the 'Confederation,' and yet Chen Gu still pursues us, this is too much!"

"We must teach him a profound lesson."

"He has become the biggest stumbling block to our entire 'Purification' plan; we must remove him!"

"Number 21, make a plan, purify him first!"

As the group's excitement surged, Number 21 quietly released a line of text: "This is a heaven-sent opportunity! 'Sol Star' is different from other places; it's nearly completely purified and entirely our domain. This time, he will certainly come but not return!"

The numbers all laughed heartily.

Chen Gu lay on Big Rabbit's back, feeling that the position was uncomfortable, squirming and trying to climb further up.

Big Rabbit was annoyed, turned her head and said in a low voice, "Don't even think about it! There are so many people watching!"

Chen Gu's eyes lit up. "When no one's watching, can we..."

"Impossible!" Big Rabbit snapped, annoyed. She also secretly blamed herself for her poor phrasing, which allowed this guy to find a loophole.

"Keep messing around, and I'll hang you on my sniper rifle!"

Chen Gu finally behaved. He suddenly had a burst of inspiration and looked to Balermo. "Your Excellency, could you let me control the 'Heavenly Position Number 4-11'?"

Balermo hesitated for a moment. "This..."

Chen Gu said, "I'm not coveting your tool, but I need to try and use this tool to scout the situation on the ground. We currently know nothing about these creatures, and it's far too passive."

Balermo looked at Modric, who was also hesitant.

Chen Gu continued, "If you're worried, you can still maintain control. Just open up a mental channel for me, and I'll try to probe through you."

After a private discussion, Balermo and Modric approached and said, "We can do that, but please do not attempt to probe into Balermo's mind."

"Of course," Chen Gu smiled. Peeking into the mind of a Seventh Power Level being? Isn't that seeking death?

Chen Gu merely used his Fifth Power Level 'Brain Domain Hacker' power, releasing a mental tendril that landed on Balermo.

Balermo felt it and guided the mental tendril, opening access only to the parts of his mind related to the 'Heavenly Position Number 4-11' tool.

Chapter 686 Heavenly Position Numbering_2

Then, Balermo put on a steel helmet that seemed to have been through countless battles. On the front of the helmet was an egg-sized badge, engraved with mysterious patterns resembling atomic structures.

"I'm starting now," he said.

Through Balermo's "vision," Chen Gu saw an area of influence slowly expanding. Within this area, every piece of matter had its own "way of expression." This item could easily modify those "ways of expression." Without a doubt, once modified, the substances would no longer be what they were before. If used for attack—for instance, by slightly altering an enemy's brain or heart—it could kill the target.

At first, these "ways of expression" only covered his own teammates nearby, and Chen Gu even found himself among them. But what shocked him was that he hadn't noticed it at all before the item made any "modifications"!

Indeed worthy of a Heavenly Ranking Number! he marveled silently.

Later, however, he couldn't find Modric within these "ways of expression."

Chen Gu speculated, Is this the effect of Heavenly Ranking Number 2-13? Modric's item is a higher-ranked Heavenly Ranking Number; there's definitely a reason for that.

Under Balermo's control, the item's energy range continued to expand. As per Chen Gu's request, Balermo didn't need to activate its power, only focus on extending its range to the absolute maximum. Thus, Balermo, using Heavenly Ranking Number 4-13, pushed the range to a staggering 1,500 kilometers—far beyond his usual power limits!

Within this range, Chen Gu, "with a glance," saw the surface and subsurface brimming with a dense array of various "ways of expression." Although the item didn't provide a "view" as clear as his own Radiation Field, it did offer Chen Gu a point of reference. He continually analyzed the information, finally starting to grasp some of its principles.

These must be the creatures releasing the dense fog I noticed earlier.

Their numbers have become quite large, nearly filling the entire surface layer—meaning the fog's power has likely reached its maximum and won't spread any further. The controlled range is about three kilometers above the ground.

These appear to be networked root tendrils. They seem to do more than just supply nutrients and provide a protective net of roots in emergencies. They can probably also transmit some kind of messages.

These...structures are so strange. Could they be organisms that emit electronic interference?

Hmm, the big ones hiding down there are quite interesting; they seem to be concealed attack methods.

There are so many types of plant-animal hybrid monsters. However, it seems that the butterfly monsters encountered earlier are not essential to the planet's overall creature composition. Many other similar monsters exist, providing a sufficient basis for evolution.

Chen Gu analyzed everything bit by bit but couldn't be completely certain. Therefore, when developing tactics, he had to allow for a margin of error in case of misjudgment. The Heavenly Ranking Number 4-11 item was powerful, but it wasn't a reconnaissance tool. From its perspective, all information seemed to undergo a single "decoding," which couldn't guarantee complete accuracy.

Still, this was a significant improvement from being completely in the dark.

Chen Gu was satisfied, but Balermo was nearly at his limit. "Captain Chen, how much longer do you need?"

"Not long, just hang on for a few more minutes," Chen Gu replied, having discovered some "interesting" areas that he wanted to further decipher.

In the starry sky, the people of Star State on the battleships could only observe their actions through military satellites. They appeared to have mysteriously stopped mid-mission, just standing there, seemingly doing nothing apparent.

Richard complained, "Another half-hour wasted."

Chairman White stood with his hands behind his back, silently observing without uttering a word.

But Richard went on to say, "Your Excellency the Chairman, we all know that Modric and Balermo are two powerful individuals. With their Heavenly Ranking Number items, they are at least equivalent to the Eighth Energy Level on their own. With such capabilities, they could fully unleash their power, striking in and out without needing such caution. Even whether Chen Gu and his team go or not is inconsequential."

"That's enough," Chen Gu cut off the mental tendril and said to Balermo, "Sir, you may retract the item now."

Balermo stood aside, gasping for breath and exhausted. Modric stepped forward and asked, "Captain Chen, are you confident now?"

Chen Gu stroked his chin. "Indeed, we've made some gains. We'll have to play it by ear."

Modric felt an inexplicable sense of reassurance. "Good." He gestured with a broad sweep of his hand towards the fortress. "Let's move out!"

In the dimly lit underground fortress, a rickety metal platform held an emergency lamp emitting a faint blue glow. A short Caucasian young man with scruffy hair and a messy beard was furiously cranking a

lever. This device was connected to an emergency generator they had found in the fortress. The fortress had apparently been built to "destruction-level" war standards and equipped with many self-sufficient emergency devices. After it was abandoned, most valuable equipment was removed, but some items were overlooked. Normally, this generator could be driven by powered machinery, but now it had to be cranked by hand.

Before long, the young Caucasian man couldn't continue. "Melissa, take over for me for a while," he panted.

On the metal platform, another young individual was tinkering with an ancient quantum superbrain, the kind that stood over a meter tall.

Chapter 687 - Heavenly Position Numbering_3

He immediately called out, "Young Master, hold on a little longer. Melissa and the others don't have enough energy, and the power generation is unstable. I'm about to make the connection..."

Gascolin didn't dare let go. Using the last of his strength, he urgently worked the lever, impatiently cursing, "Murray, you said the same thing the last few times, and what happened? I worked myself to exhaustion, and we still couldn't connect! If it doesn't work this time, when I get back, I'm definitely going to hit on your sister!"

Murray chuckled dryly. "You don't like my sister."

Seeing that Young Master Gascolin was about to blow his top, he hurriedly added, "There's really hope this time. I have a premonition; you know I've had accurate instincts since I was a kid..."

"Bullshit," Gascolin cursed, but still chose to trust his lifelong companion and didn't stop his hands.

"What a pity, Young Master. I've been pampered since childhood, surrounded by beautiful women. If I'd been a bachelor for decades and developed a 'Kylin Arm,' it would be useful right now..." Gascolin's attempt at humor was out of place, even in this dire situation.

Murray dared not respond. I do have a Kylin Arm, but your electronic skills are subpar.

Melissa was a golden-haired beauty in her early twenties, and there were two other girls by her side—only three because Gascolin had considered his physical limits before this trip and felt that was as much as he could handle.

Murray quickly maneuvered the quantum super-brain while Gascolin continued to complain, "Why such bad luck? Such a huge disaster, and it just had to happen to us! The Star State military and those fools in the Rights Association—how could they let the disaster spread across the entire planet so easily? When I get back, I'll make sure our family's media slams them for wasting so much taxpayer money each year. They're completely useless in a crisis!"

He kept mentioning "when we get back," but the three girls, overcome with despair, started sobbing. "Go back? Can we really go back?"

Gascolin's face turned ugly. "Yes, we absolutely can..." he said, though he didn't believe it himself.

"We can!" Murray suddenly roared, startling the other four. Gascolin almost stopped, but Murray quickly urged, "Young Master, hold steady!"

"We're connected!" Murray was shaking with excitement. "We've got a connection to the interstellar quantum network!"

"Really?" Gascolin's eyes sparkled.

"Really!" Murray said. "I'm uploading the distress video we recorded earlier. It's a bit slow, probably because the lines here are old. It'll be done in another ten seconds or so. Young Master, hang in there!"

Gascolin, as if injected with a stimulant, moved his arm frantically.

After taking refuge here, they had been trying to contact the outside world. However, their private accounts couldn't connect to the interstellar quantum network, and all communication channels had been severed.

Later, they'd stumbled upon an old-model quantum super-brain connected by wires to the interstellar quantum network. They had been trying to get it online ever since and finally succeeded today.

The group of panic-stricken young people had actually found that many electronic devices had malfunctioned before they even entered this abandoned fortress.

But once inside the fortress, these devices could be used again.

Having no experience or wisdom related to such crises, they naturally didn't suspect that there might be something wrong with this scenario...

"Upload complete!" Murray raised his arms and shouted. Gascolin, spent, collapsed completely on the ground. "We... can go back now," he gasped.

In a place they couldn't see, a vast network of roots carried their uploaded distress video to a server surrounded by aquatic plants. It was then transmitted to No. 21. Soon, the video spread across the entire interstellar quantum network!

...

"We've arrived."

Several kilometers high in the sky, Modric looked down at a massive, shattered opening in the valley below.

Charles glanced at the valley, now teeming with various "plants," and couldn't help shaking his head. "Is there any chance of survivors here?"

Modric sighed. "Let's go down. Everyone be careful."

Chen Gu said, "All personnel split into two teams. One to go down for search and rescue, the other to stay airborne, ready for support."

Modric said, "This is Star State's affair. How can we always involve Captain Chen in such danger?"

Chen Gu looked at him earnestly. "This is now a matter for all of humanity."

Modric said shamefully, "We didn't do well. We've implicated the entire human race."

If they split into two teams, Modric was unquestionably suited for the team remaining airborne. As a Seventh Energy Level Quantum Wizard, there was a chance that, in a critical moment, he could use Quantum Entanglement and Quantum Teleportation to pull team members up from below.

That meant Chen Gu would have to lead the charge.

Balermo said, "We're one team now. Let's not pass the buck. Captain Chen, I'll go down with you."

Chen Gu nodded. "I suggest the search and rescue team consist of just the two of us."

Balermo nodded. "That's right. It's too dangerous down there; others going would just be a liability."

Charles and the others remained silent, but they all made a silent oath in their hearts: upon returning, they would train harder and strive for promotion as soon as possible. Recently, it had become increasingly obvious that their strength was falling behind Chen Gu's, making them a liability in operations! They were members of the Special Operations Squad too; they couldn't let the captain face every danger alone!

Chapter 688 - Heavenly Position Numbering_4

"Let's go." A mysterious Quantum Entanglement was established between the two men and Modric, then they flew toward the valley together.

To say they flew together... meant Balermo was carrying Chen Gu in one hand as he plunged downward.

BOOM—

The rocket pack on Balermo's back spewed high-speed flames as he plunged into the valley. However, his "ambush" seemed to have been anticipated by the monsters there.

Giant leaves unfurled, revealing huge floral mouths underneath, lined with sharp teeth.

CRACK! CRACK!

The floral maws opened and closed, their sharp teeth grating with a clang!

A thick fog quickly rose.

Simultaneously, the ground cracked open, forming huge black holes from which thick plant stems emerged. BOOM, BOOM, BOOM... Giant spikes shot out like missiles!

Swearing profusely, Balermo fired his energy rapid-fire gun, intercepting and blasting several spikes mid-flight.

The massive shockwave from the explosions blew both men hundreds of meters away. Balermo shouted, "The power of these things is comparable to ordinary land-based missiles!"

Chen Gu wasn't surprised at all; he had "seen" all this through the Heavenly Code Number 4-11 device. But what truly worried him was something else. "Your Excellency, please be careful," he warned. "I've always suspected that the SOS signal is a trap set by these monsters."

"The Digital Group behind them knows the power of the Star State very well, but I still can't figure out what methods they have to deal with high-level practitioners!"

Balermo laughed heartily, retaliating fiercely with various high-powered weapons that blasted large craters into the ground and shredded the plant-animal hybrids. He shouted, "That's for you to worry about; your brain works better than mine!"

As he spoke, the two landed. Immediately, the huge, toothed floral maws fiercely stretched out from all around, snapping viciously at them.

Balermo let out a long howl. The heavy Mecha encasing him suddenly loosened as his body swelled, instantly transforming him into a titan over ten meters tall!

The Mecha, though transformed, still enveloped him, but it had shifted from a heavy Mecha to a "light Mecha."

The large-caliber energy cannon had become... a small handgun.

Balermo, pulling a huge battle-axe from somewhere, brandished it and leaped hundreds of meters. He swung the axe, continuously chopping the toothed floral maws to pieces.

Upon landing, Chen Gu transformed into a cloud of gas with a PUFF and began to drift through the thick fog.

There must be some ambush, something capable of taking on an Eighth Energy Level, or even a Ninth Power Level practitioner! He searched covertly but found nothing.

Balermo roared, "Captain Chen, head for the fortress! The mission is urgent!"

He rushed toward the stronghold entrance, and Chen Gu had no choice but to follow.

The entrance was two hundred meters high and half-collapsed. Back when the fortress was built, such an entrance should have accommodated the landing and takeoff of heavy surface combat aircraft.

Just as Balermo reached the entrance, the ground beneath his feet suddenly collapsed with a ROAR. A hundred-meter-wide gaping maw surged up from below, swallowed him whole, and began to chew vigorously.

This gaping maw, unlike the toothed floral ones, was the head of a colossal beast. It had no eyes, resembled a toad, and was lined with layers of serrated teeth.

Connected to the back of this maw was an immensely thick, ancient vine. It writhed, flinging the maw into the sky as it shook and chewed frantically.

Chen Gu instantly appeared beside the ancient vine, ready to strike. However, he saw the plant-animal hybrid suddenly begin to tremble violently. Sharp silver light then burst from the gaps between the maw's teeth, followed by a loud BANG, and the maw completely exploded. Balermo, wreathed in smoke, burst out. He swung his axe forcefully, chopping the ancient vine to pieces. "Damn it!" he roared. "Trying to eat me? I'll smash every tooth in your head!"

Chen Gu breathed a sigh of relief, still maintaining his gaseous form as he drifted towards the fortress interior.

Just tens of meters inside, they encountered an obstacle: a rusty but still well-sealed alloy door.

THUMP, THUMP, THUMP... Balermo strode forward and, without a second glance, chopped at the door with his axe.

BOOM!

The entire cavern shook violently. Balermo was thrown back several steps, but this only ignited the ferocity of the high-energy Hell Titan within him. He pounded his chest, roared, and struck down hard with his axe again.

BOOM—

The axe pierced straight through the alloy door. With a few more swings, Balermo widened the breach enough for him to squeeze through.

Chen Gu praised, "Brilliant!"

Chapter 689: [The Steal Fire Plan]

In the military vessels of Star Sea, White and the others watched with concern the screen where Chen Gu and Balermo were rushing toward the ground, followed by a rapid rise of thick fog.

Everyone grew anxious, and Chairman White paced back and forth with his hands behind his back. Now, they could only wait helplessly.

Suddenly, his phone rang. Seeing the caller, Chairman White's face grew serious. "Your Excellency."

Then his expression turned increasingly ugly. After hanging up, he immediately waved his hand, directing the technicians to log onto the interstellar quantum net. A holographic projection screen then began to play a video of someone sobbing inconsolably in distress.

"We are citizens of Star State! We have the right to live! We want to go home! Boo hoo..."

The entire room fell silent. Without needing orders, the technicians quickly began to trace the video's broadcast route. After some effort, they said bitterly, "It's impossible to track, nor can we determine when the video was recorded."

White let out a long sigh. "This means we don't know if Gascolin Hondarei is really still alive, yet we are forced to search for them with all our might..."

He looked again toward the fog-engulfed mountain area, thinking silently, Captain Chen, it's all up to you now.

Sitting to one side, Richard's eyes were cold and calm. Secretly, he had already used the interstellar quantum net to quietly send an email to a reporter he had been in contact with for many years. The email read: 'Regarding Gascolin's situation, I can testify that Star State's inaction has led to the death of citizens. I can cooperate with all of Joseph's arrangements, provided that Joseph offers me protection.'

...

BANG! BANG! BANG!

A series of massive kinetic artillery shells came hurtling through the darkness toward Balermo. Piloting his Seventh Energy Level Hell Titan, he had just squeezed through the breach in the heavy alloy gate. Unable to dodge, Balermo could only roar, crossing his arms in front and using his battle-ax to block.

The terrifying kinetic artillery shells, each thirty centimeters in diameter and weighing five hundred kilograms, continuously bombarded him at high velocity.

His Mecha rapidly shattered, and the battle-ax in his hand soon deformed under the barrage, forcing him to stagger backward until his back pressed against the gate.

"AAAAH—" he roared, as bright flames blazed all over his body. From within, his massive physique grew thick, bony battle armor, which astonishingly withstood the powerful kinetic weapons.

The bright flames illuminated the surroundings. Directly in front of him, fifty to sixty meters away, stood four electromagnetic kinetic cannons, lined up side by side.

Behind them were four automated ammunition vehicles, continuously feeding them artillery shells.

From the shattered ground grew a patch of plants resembling aquatic weeds, entwining around the kinetic cannons and ammo vehicles. Some "leaves" extended like tentacles into the mechanisms of these machines, taking control.

The artillery shells kept coming incessantly, but upon hitting the fully powered Hell Titan, they were deflected, bouncing off the surrounding walls and sending stone debris flying everywhere.

Balermo stepped forward, leaving ten-centimeter-deep footprints with each step, and forced his way to the front of the kinetic cannons. He grabbed a cannon barrel, lifted the several-ton weapon, and used it as a warhammer, smashing wildly. THUD! THUD! THUD!

However, those aquatic weed-like plants silently retreated back underground.

Chen Gu crawled through the gap and witnessed this scene. He approached to examine the weapons, deep in thought.

"These weapons shouldn't be in an abandoned military fortress. They must have been brought here by those monsters from somewhere else," Chen Gu said. "This means that we may still face other advanced weapons of Star State."

"HUFF... PUFF..." Balermo panted heavily, casually tossing aside the deformed kinetic cannon. Alerted by Chen Gu's reminder, he seemed to realize something and said, "Follow behind me."

...

In the dim depths, Gascolin was groggily awakened by Murray. "Young Master, do you feel anything?"

Gascolin rubbed his eyes, feeling extremely fatigued. But Melissa and the two other girls beside him suddenly stood up. "Tremors!"

Gascolin focused. Understanding dawned. "Someone's come to rescue us!"

He excitedly ran toward the only door in the space, forcefully unlatched it, and pulled it open. In the dark, long corridor outside, a rumble sounded faintly in the distance.

Suddenly, ahead in the corridor, points of light sparked to life, growing more numerous. They were blue and green and were slowly approaching.

Murray stood beside him and called out tentatively, "Who goes there?"

Gascolin tossed an emergency flare. As the light fell, they clearly saw the bearers of those lights: they were walking, towering, dried-up trees.

Their bodies were as dry as skeletons, covered in huge, black thorns, looking as if they had emerged from the deepest abyss of hell. Though they seemed slow, their trunks were covered with those green eyes.

Underneath the eyes were gaping tree hollows that looked as if they could suck out souls!

"AAAAH—"

The group screamed in terror. Gascolin hurriedly slammed the door shut and dropped the latch. A Tree Person had already reached the gate, slamming into it with a loud THUD! The rusty alloy gate shook violently, and both Gascolin and Murray, bracing the gate with their backs, were thrown back.