

Full Time 81

Chapter 81: Feudal Patriarch

The next morning, Chen Gu returned to class after ending his leave and noticed something odd—why were all the girls in class stealing glances at him? Whenever he caught them in the act, they quickly blushed and turned away, like flustered little rabbits.

It wasn't until lunchtime that Chen Zili, with a tray in hand, plopped down beside him and exclaimed in surprise, "How did you get so handsome!"

Chen Gu smacked him on the head. "Don't talk nonsense. I was always handsome. You should be saying, 'How did you get even more handsome!'"

Chen Zili, rubbing his head, didn't dare to retort; after all, there was a very real problem... Grandpa was too formidable to fight.

"My sister got her second song," Chen Zili said with a hint of grievance. "Dad wants me to invite you to dinner tonight."

Chen Gu figured it couldn't be that simple. His older son was probably seeking him out again because of something to do with the Yinglong Star matter.

"Alright, wait for me after school."

Chen Zili stopped talking and sulkily ate his meal by himself. After a while, he noticed that Chen Gu showed absolutely no reaction, which made him feel even more wronged. He stabbed at his plate with a fork, clattering loudly.

Chen Gu gave him a strange look. "What are you doing?"

Chen Zili held back his words, looking down and taking his frustration out on his food. Chen Gu scoffed. "If you don't want to talk, then forget it. I'm not coddling your antics!"

Chen Zili was waiting for him to ask further, but instead, Chen Gu finished his portion, got up, and went to grab another!

When Chen Gu returned, Chen Zili finally couldn't hold back any longer and burst out, "You guys! All of you, you only ever think about my sister! I'm still part of the family too!"

"You have two children, two children! Not just a daughter!"

"Who has ever cared about me!"

"What's wrong with being a boy? Does a boy deserve to be bullied, neglected, and looked down upon?"

"It was like this with Dad before, and now you're doing the same!"

"Me, me, me, why am I so unlucky? Why did I have to have a sister!"

Chen Gu looked at him in astonishment... but didn't forget to continue eating.

Chen Zili watched this scene. The old man, his head cocked to the side, had his eyes fixed on him as though he were frozen in place, yet his cheeks were still happily puffing with food!

He swore that if it weren't for the fact that he couldn't beat him, he would have revolted long ago!

Holding back his tears, he turned and walked away.

This grandson is acting a bit strange today.

Hmm, the food in the school cafeteria today is quite tasty. It's far better than usual.

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Behind the flower beds to the west of the school, there was a small grove where Chen Zili was venting his frustration, kicking a landscaping rock fiercely. "So it's a grand dream if she wants to sing? The whole family supports her to make it come true; everyone revolves around her!"

"Has anyone ever asked if I have dreams? I too have my own ambitions. I'm not actually a fool who just wants to be a second-generation official..."

"What dreams do you have, huh?" A voice suddenly sounded, startling Chen Zili so much he shuddered and spun around, only to see nothing!

At that moment, the voice eerily rang out again. "Tell me your dreams. As long as you have desires, I can help you achieve them!"

Chen Zili kept spinning around, but there was no one to be seen. The voice seemed to drift ethereally as if it were echoing in his mind.

"Who, who are you?"

"Me?" The voice laughed wickedly. "HEH HEH HEH, you don't need to know who I am. All you need to know is that everyone abandons you and ignores you. Only I can help you fulfill your desires!"

Chen Zili was, after all, the son of Chen Jixian, and he had a vague knowledge of certain matters. He jolted in shock. "You are a demon shape from the Endless Realm!"

He shrieked hysterically, "Go away! Stay away from me! Scram..."

"HEH HEH HEH..." That voice laughed again. "Why do you think I appeared? Have you ever thought about it?"

"It's you! It's the desires and darkness within your own heart that drew me here. Without you, I couldn't possibly enter this reality..."

"AH!" Chen Zili collapsed onto the ground. Then, suddenly feeling as if the voice was closing in on him, he scrambled backward in fright until he hit the landscaping rock with a heavy thud.

He was terrified and panicking. Even though he kept cursing angrily, deep down, Chen Zili was still uneasy. He was unwilling to agree with the voice's words, yet worried they might be the truth.

Just then, a timid plea for mercy came from the side, "Boss Chen Gu, please, please spare our Brother Chen!"

Chen Zili was stunned for a moment. Chen Gu? As he looked back, sure enough, that old fellow was standing behind him, a sly smile flashing across his face!

"It was you?!" Chen Zili exploded. "You're playing ghost tricks to scare me?"

Chen Gu glared fiercely at Chen Zili's few followers. "Scram!"

When it came to playing the role of a bully, Great Actor Chen was simply in his element.

The followers' legs trembled. They were terrified of Chen Gu, yet they didn't dare to actually abandon their boss.

Chen Gu made a move as if to strike, and Chen Zili said through gritted teeth, "You guys go first. I need to have a good... talk with this gentleman!"

The followers hurried away. Chen Zili could no longer contain his anger. Leaping to his feet, he was about to roar, but Chen Gu gently raised a hand and pressed him down, asking, "What is your dream?"

Chen Zili panted heavily, trying to struggle. But the hand Chen Gu placed on his shoulder felt like a heavy mountain. Not only could he not budge the mountain, but he was also pressed down so hard he almost resembled a monkey trapped beneath one.

Both of his feet sank into the mud.

"What is your dream?" Chen Gu asked again.

Chen Zili felt even more aggrieved. Grandfather is bullying me!

Under these circumstances, what should I do? A typical grandson would have cried and gone to complain to Grandma, letting her deal with that awful old man!

But who do I complain to?

Maybe... the Valkyrie Aviloya?

"What's it to you?" Chen Zili snappily retorted. "After all, none of you truly care about me."

Chen Gu released his hand. Chen Zili, feeling resigned, didn't resist and plopped down onto the muddy ground.

Chen Gu spoke leisurely. "You're aware of the Endless Realm, so you obviously know about those things too. I didn't mean to scare you on purpose. I simply wanted you to understand through this experience that your identity is no trivial matter. You are Chen Jixian's son. You will become a prime target for those entities!"

"If you can't adjust your mentality, you'll give those entities the opportunity they're looking for!"

Chen Zili was taken aback and couldn't help but glance at Chen Gu. Although he had some of the bad habits of a rich brat, he wasn't inherently bad. Moreover, his intelligence was up to par, so he understood that everything Chen Gu had said was true.

He secretly felt that this old guy was somewhat profound and unfathomable.

But Chen Zili's pride wouldn't allow him to admit defeat. After looking at Chen Gu, he lowered his head again.

Chen Gu sensed the timing was right and, for the third time, asked, "What is your dream?"

This time, Chen Zili was silent for a while before he spoke softly, "I... I want to join the Tiangong Military Division." He paused. Upon seeing that the old man didn't mock him, he continued, "I want to be like my dad, to become a general, supreme on the battlefield, commanding with ease, and determining victory from miles away!"

Chen Gu silently nodded, understanding. It was because he felt neglected by his father and was desperately trying to achieve what his father had not, to garner his father's attention and recognition.

Chapter 82: Official Affairs and Family Matters

"Alright, I'll help you."

Chen Zili could hardly believe it. "Really?"

"I will talk to your father."

Yet, Chen Zili's confidence wavered again, and he said sadly, "But my physical skills scores are too bad..."

"Leave it to me," Chen Gu declared, taking full responsibility. "But you'll have to follow my arrangements."

Chen Zili clenched his teeth, ready to go all in. "As long as I can get into the Tiangong Military Division, I'll follow all orders!"

Chen Gu smiled. "Good!"

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The dinner Xiao Jiangxia had prepared with great care was sumptuous and delicious, and Chen Gu thoroughly enjoyed it. Chen Qingyu, like a joyful little swallow, flitted around "Grandpa," chirping happily. She was indeed overjoyed. Gao Mengjiu at Tiangong Records had immediately agreed to give her a new song on the spot. Now, a second one had arrived in short order and would soon be released, marking a solid step toward her debut.

Chen Jixian's attitude toward Chen Gu remained cool. After the meal, possibly due to post-meal drowsiness, his adult son's eyelids drooped even lower. "Come with me."

Chen Gu didn't mind the younger man's poor attitude and tone and followed him. Chen Jixian indeed asked about the events in Zhaojieze City and learned that Chen Gu had absorbed a precious piece of super-lifeform remains, showing no particular reaction to the news.

Finally, he said, "You are a professional now and expected to be on call at all times. The special service is always short-staffed."

Chen Gu nodded. Seeing that his son had nothing more to say, he brought up Chen Zili's situation. "Zi Li, the boy, wants to apply for the Tiangong Military Division."

Suddenly, Chen Jixian felt a sense of incongruity: We're discussing official business, and yet you're bringing up family matters?

But I don't want to talk to you about family matters!

Chen Jixian hadn't realized that, at over forty, he was experiencing a belated rebellious phase.

I have no intention of negotiating with him; I'm just informing him, Chen Gu thought. Besides, I, his grandpa, have already promised my grandson to help him achieve his dream! You all dote on your daughter, but I'm determined to support my grandson!

"This child has ambition. He's a true seed of our Chen family!" Chen Gu stated, his old-fashioned and authoritative tone instantly making Chen Jixian uncomfortable.

Just as Chen Jixian was about to object, Chen Gu added, "His physical skills scores aren't good, and there's not much time left before the college entrance exam. Get him some potions to enhance his physical fitness."

"And get the high-grade ones. Don't fob my grandson off with those inferior products!"

This was clearly not a discussion with Chen Jixian; it was an order, a display of typical authoritarian patriarchal attitude.

Chen Jixian was on the verge of erupting with rage at the constant references to "this child" and "my grandson," but Chen Gu's authoritative stance stirred a strange feeling within him: This is how fathers and sons from other families interact!

Chen Jixian didn't respond for a long time, so Chen Gu took it as an agreement and turned to leave.

Chen Qingyu sang her song for everyone, and Xiao Jiangxia applauded vigorously, her face beaming with pride. A hint of a smile touched Chen Jixian's eyes as well; the family shared a moment of joy and harmony. Only Chen Zili scoffed, "It's not that good."

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In a flash, it was Friday. Chen Gu had already prepared to go on duty at the Bureau branch over the weekend, but in the afternoon, he suddenly received a secret message: Report that night.

After school, Chen Gu went straight to the Bureau branch.

When there was a mission, the special service agents were highly dedicated. By the time Chen Gu arrived, the members of Squad Five had already begun their preparations.

Team leader Marcus casually flicked a file to him. Chen Gu opened it and exclaimed in surprise, "The target is a precinct chief?"

This precinct chief wasn't from the Bureau of Mystic Security but from the police department: Zhou Shenyu, chief of the City Police Department's 64th District Precinct.

Marcus, while checking his own equipment, said, "The last time we captured that Mutant..."

Chen Gu scoffed internally: It wasn't so much capturing a Mutant as it was you capturing the Mutant's brain!

"The department worked from both ends," Marcus continued. "They followed the deliberately released clue while also retrieving memories from the Mutant's brain. Ultimately, they cross-verified both to pinpoint this guy."

"We move at eight-thirty tonight. Everyone be extra careful and remember..."

In unison, everyone declared, "Safety first!"

Marcus nodded repeatedly. "Right, right, right! That guy is definitely a Mutant. He's been undercover for a long time and is not low-level. He could be Beta Level (2), or even Gamma Level (3). Chen Gu and Joseph, you're the new guys. Stick with me, and don't get hot-headed and charge in blindly."

As Marcus was giving the briefing, a young woman from the internal affairs team knocked and entered. "Chen Gu, the Bureau Chief wants to see you."

Chen Gu assumed there was progress on his grandson's request. This adult son of mine acts indifferent towards my grandson, but he's actually quite concerned, getting it sorted so quickly! he mused.

However, upon arriving at Chen Jixian's office, he saw that the Bureau Chief looked somewhat troubled. "Last night, in Kloya's fleet, a mothership mutinied and headed towards the Alien Insect Race they were engaged in combat with."

It took a moment for Chen Gu to recall who Kloya was, and he blurted out, "Another Mutant?"

"A Mutant contaminated a warrior, infiltrated a Close Range Attack Ship, and then the mothership. But the entire military is still clueless as to why they would defect to the Alien Insect Race."

Chen Gu thought for a moment and asked, "Kloya's fleet—weren't they originally planning to head to battle against the Alien Insect Race? Weren't they temporarily redirected to Yinglong Star to handle the Zhaojieze City precinct incident?"

Chen Jixian hesitated. "Your clearance isn't high enough."

He couldn't tell him these things, but Chen Jixian didn't deny it either.

Chen Gu sighed, looking skyward. "Mutants are too cunning! They probably targeted Kloya's fleet from the beginning! No wonder they launched their plan at that precise moment. Kloya's fleet was mobilizing nearby and could be readily diverted."

The entire incident was likely orchestrated by Mutants who, through a mole entrenched in the higher ranks, learned of this battle plan, Chen Gu continued to deduce. Their ultimate goal was to hijack a warship and take it to the Alien Insect Race, so they timed their move perfectly. The energy generator and the Energy Field were just decoys. But Mutants are inherently greedy; they might have been aiming for three birds with one stone. It's just that I thwarted their first two objectives.

Chen Jixian said, "Mutants are inherently devious, and with the support from those entities in the Endless Realm, each of those beings is a master of intrigue."

Chen Gu nodded, pondering some matters.

Chen Jixian had nothing more to say. He initially wanted to remind Chen Gu to be cautious during the night's operation, but his 'rebellious' phase got the better of him, so he refrained from speaking, merely gesturing for Chen Gu to leave.

Chen Jixian informed Chen Gu of these developments because he had personally experienced the incident; there was no need to tell the other special agents.

By seven o'clock, the internal affairs, operational, and cleanup teams were all ready for the mission. At half-past seven, they stealthily set out.

The Bureau branch building appeared to have only one entrance, but for operational secrecy, there were several tunnels underneath it, each leading to a different hidden exit.

The special agents, a team of six, left quite openly through the main entrance.

Chapter 83: Everyone Wants to be a Hunter

At eight o'clock, all personnel entered the designated ambush area.

Chen Gu followed Marcus, taking cover in a bamboo grove. This was a quiet, upscale residential district where Division Chief Zhou Shenyu even resided in a villa complex. The main road outside the bamboo forest was a private roadway for this area.

Marcus said, "The station has conducted a detailed investigation. Zhou Shenyu usually works overtime at his office until eight in the evening, and his driver typically brings him home around eight-thirty. Our plan is for the Special Operations Team to capture Zhou Shenyu on his way home. The Action Team is responsible for monitoring his home. Zhou Shenyu and his wife have two children, and we have largely confirmed they are all normal humans."

As he spoke, headlights appeared in the distance, and a luxurious maglev car approached rapidly. Marcus asked over the channel, "Can the target be confirmed?"

The outpost quickly responded, "Target confirmed, target confirmed. Proceed with the operation."

Marcus immediately ordered, "Release the maglev capture net!"

As the maglev car entered the ambush zone, four Action Team members carrying bazooka-like launchers fired four capture nets. WHOOSH! WHOOSH! WHOOSH! WHOOSH! The large nets pursued the maglev car, swiftly enveloping it. The vehicle, caught by surprise, flipped several times in mid-air before crashing heavily to the ground.

Marcus shouted, "Action!"

Mecha Warrior Melincha was the first to charge out. She held a heavy shield and, with a loud BANG, slammed it into the vehicle. The point of impact caved in massively, and the heavy maglev car actually slid several more meters. Then, the Mecha Warrior rushed forward. Her steel arm pierced through the car door with a HISS, and with a yank, the door flew off. Inside, the driver was bloodied and unconscious.

She casually lifted the driver out, set him aside, and was about to dive in to pursue Zhou Shenyu inside.

However, from a distance, Chen Gu saw Melincha suddenly jerk backward, executing three quick backflips. A pitch-black bone blade shot out from the car, grazing her body and nearly impaling her.

Silver Eagle, cloaked in silver, floated down from the night sky, his hands firing a particle stream that bombarded the bone blade. The particle stream swirled around the bone blade, consolidating into a particle vortex storm!

Then Charles opened his mouth and unleashed a blazing particle stream that struck the maglev car, rapidly melting its shell. The surrounding temperature soared.

The bone blade suddenly softened, turning into a liquid. Melincha, who had already charged back, thought it was Silver Eagle's doing and roared, "Well done!"

Charles, embarrassed, reminded her, "Be careful!"

The black liquid, which the bone blade had transformed into, surged out of the car like a ROARING flood. Upon hitting the ground, it solidified into a powerful Mutant covered head to toe in bone spikes and armor!

It roared, and bone spikes—PFFT! PFFT! PFFT!—shot out from its body, fast as bullets and dense as rain. Melincha was charging forward and was instantly engulfed, with nowhere to escape!

Chen Gu couldn't resist the urge to rush out, but Marcus held him back. "Trust your teammates. They're all battle-hardened; a small skirmish like this won't be enough to stop them."

Melincha suddenly declared, "Relative speed to zero!"

The 'Relative Arbiter's' signature ability: 'Relative Speed'!

After Melincha uttered these words, the relative velocity between her and the bone spikes indeed became zero, rendering them motionless in relation to each other. Since the bone spikes possessed extremely high speed, Melincha now also moved at that same speed. Then, with a casual twist of her waist, she effortlessly stepped out of the dire situation.

THWACK! THWACK! THWACK!

The bone spikes struck the surrounding pavement, liquefied once more, then solidified into black bone beads. They rolled back to be retrieved by Zhou Shenyu, who had transformed into a Mutant!

Chen Gu and Joseph both sighed in relief, nodding to each other. The veterans are indeed battle-hardened; they won't be defeated so easily.

However, this time the bone Mutant had learned its lesson. It no longer sprouted numerous spikes but instead retracted them all, condensing them into a thick layer of bone armor on its surface. Then, its arms slowly elongated, transforming into two disproportionate, three-meter-long giant blades. Chen Gu was astonished: I always thought the 'forty-meter-long greatsword' was just a meme!

Silver Eagle's and Melincha's abilities were suppressed by the bone Mutant's sturdy defenses. However, the two fought with perfect coordination, covering each other in a combined assault, leading to a temporary stalemate.

Chen Gu asked, "Team leader, what Energy Level is Zhou Shenyu as a Mutant?"

Marcus evaluated inwardly. Silver Eagle and Puppet were both First Energy Level. Generally, a Beta Level (Level 2) Mutant could fight a First Energy Level Professional but would be at a disadvantage. Since Zhou Shenyu could suppress both of them, he had to be a Gamma Level (Level 3) Mutant.

Marcus then immediately said over the communication channel, "Banshee, what are you waiting for?"

A piercing scream suddenly erupted. The bone Mutant's body quivered, and a fine network of cracks appeared on the surface of its bone armor!

Chen Gu's eyelids twitched. That little siren has such powerful lungs; I'd better avoid provoking her in the future...

A large amount of black liquid seeped out from its body, filling the cracks. It then solidified once more, and the external bone armor actually became even thicker and more resilient—though this repair process was clearly not easy for the bone Mutant, as it left the creature gasping heavily from the effort.

The Banshee emerged from the darkness nearby. Tonight, she was carrying a silver trident taller than herself, as thick as a child's arm and obviously very heavy.

Selena joined the fray. She no longer expected a single scream to cripple the Mutant. Instead, she relentlessly attacked with the trident—which was larger than herself—while emitting a low, chant-like song from her throat. These songs induced all sorts of chaotic thoughts in those who heard them. While the battle-hardened Professionals could resist this, for Mutants—creatures inherently chaotic—it often caused the bone Mutant to stutter or freeze momentarily.

All three were First Energy Level, but together they could firmly suppress a Gamma Level Mutant.

Professionals were rare, and high Energy Level Professionals even more so. In grassroots units like city precinct bureaus, the strongest Professionals were often only Second Energy Level. Their ability to handle higher-level Mutants depended on such teamwork. The abilities of different Professions were diverse, and when combined, they created a synergistic effect where the whole was greater than the sum of its parts.

Joseph sighed in relief, but Marcus kept his gaze fixed intently on the battlefield. He continually lectured the two rookies behind him, "As long as the Mutant isn't dead, you can never let your guard down."

"Only a dead Mutant is a safe Mutant."

Marcus hadn't even finished speaking when the situation on the battlefield suddenly shifted. A dark figure darted in at an angle. It was so close that even Marcus, despite his constant vigilance for the unexpected, didn't have time to intervene.

Chapter 84: Making the Enemy Die Frustrated

The dark shadow collided with Silver Eagle and then, PUFF! It burst into a cloud of black smoke that engulfed him. In the next instant, the living smoke sharply contracted, transforming into a giant octopus-like Mutant. Its tentacles tightly wrapped around Charles, while the remaining ones wildly lashed out at Melincha and Selena nearby.

It was the driver Melincha had cast aside! He had feigned injury and unconsciousness, leading Melincha to mistakenly believe he was an ordinary person. She never imagined he too was a Mutant.

Marcus cursed loudly and launched himself into action. Mid-leap, he raised both hands high, drawing the elements he needed from the ground, the bamboo forest, the wrecked cars, and the air itself. He synthesized two weapons in his hands.

In his left hand: a shoulder-launched missile! In his right: a massive... sushi knife!

The Alchemist's ability, Cosmic Furnace, allowed him to create anything whose structure he had studied and understood.

However, limited by his Second Energy Level, the most powerful weapon he could synthesize was far less potent than the Biological Nuclear Explosion of a Nuclear Explosion Nun or a Radiation Missionary.

WHOOSH! The shoulder-launched missile shot towards the skeletal Mutant. Marcus, wielding the giant sushi knife, unceremoniously slashed at a tentacle reaching for Melincha. SLASH! The tentacle was severed cleanly!

It turned out the sushi knife's blade was extremely effective against the octopus Mutant.

The octopus Mutant had eight dark-red eyes. As it stared at the giant sushi knife, a gleam of fear appeared, as if recalling some unbearable past memory. FWIP! It retracted all its tentacles and quickly balled itself up. Its tentacles writhed and then, POP! It squeezed Charles out.

Enraged, Marcus raised the giant sushi knife in a powerful 'Heavenly King Splitting the Mountain' stance, ready to charge. But just then, the octopus Mutant suddenly extended a tentacle, pointing it at Charles's eyes!

It was taking a hostage to confront Marcus!

Marcus froze, glaring at it while rapidly calculating his options.

The shoulder-launched missile had already exploded, blasting the skeletal Mutant over ten meters away. Melincha and Selena were in hot pursuit.

Chen Gu, watching from the shadows, suddenly sensed immense danger. He kicked Joseph away and used the recoil to roll himself into a ball.

BOOM!

A massive ship's anchor slammed down where they had just been hiding.

The anchor was a full two meters long, attached to a chain as thick as a water bucket! Something in the darkness shook the chain, and CLANK! The anchor was yanked back.

Meanwhile, screams echoed in the distance. Chen Gu's heart sank. Those are my teammates from the operations group!

Chen Gu dashed out, heading straight for the skeletal Mutant, yelling, "It's a trap! This is a trap!"

The panicked rookie had inadvertently stumbled onto the battlefield. The skeletal Mutant gave a cruel smile; a light slash of its enormous bone blade would be enough to kill this newcomer from the special operations unit.

But it saw the rookie's body float like a bamboo leaf, drifting with the motion of its own bone blade. He skillfully passed over the blade, his palm pressing against its side.

Then the Mutant felt something inside it change—an unstoppable force about to erupt!

Melincha saw a brilliant light burst from within the skeletal Mutant's body and cried out, "Get back! Quick!"

She grabbed Selena, and the Mecha's thrusters fired in reverse. WHOOSH! They vanished from sight.

Chen Gu had no sooner landed than he too scrambled for cover. The light inside the skeletal Mutant intensified to its peak and then, BOOM! It exploded. Shards of bone armor flew everywhere, and the black viscous fluid instantly vaporized.

But from the darkness, WHOOSH! A huge ship's anchor was thrown, heading straight for Marcus. The team leader, not daring to meet it head-on, leaped into the air. He tapped the anchor with his toes mid-flight and, like a large bird, landed over ten meters away.

Chen Gu sidled up. "Team Leader, are you familiar with magnets?"

Marcus glared at him. "Of course, I am! I graduated elementary school, you know!"

Chen Gu chuckled sheepishly. "That's not what I meant... Iron anchor, iron chain... we make a big magnet, and then we can ask the Mutant: 'Unexpected, right? Surprised?' How about that?"

Marcus understood immediately. There was a large rockery right beside them. He crept over and, gathering all his strength, began to modify the rockery using Cosmic Furnace.

Chen Gu, feigning an order from on high, barked, "Silver Eagle, the Team Leader wants you to hold off the enemy!"

Silver Eagle cursed inwardly. Why me? That Mecha girl Melincha would be far more suitable! But he couldn't disobey the team leader's order. As Star Wind Battalion Commander, he jetted all kinds of particle streams and cosmic rays. Under attack from the massive anchor, he darted about like a flea. It was supposedly 'holding the enemy off,' but in reality, he was just drawing aggro and getting thrashed around.

WHOOSH—

The enormous anchor whizzed past Charles's body, the fierce wind completely ruining his stylish haircut.

He was pale. After using his abilities repeatedly, even the Iceberg Prince felt weak and couldn't hold out much longer.

"How much longer do I have to keep this up?!" he yelled. VWOOM! The huge anchor shot straight for his head. Charles screamed; he was about to be hit and couldn't dodge! But then, the anchor suddenly swerved. CLANG! It was sucked onto the nearby rockery!

Charles sagged, letting out a long breath. His legs went weak, and he nearly collapsed.

JANGLE—

The chain behind the anchor pulled taut. From the darkness came the Mutant's furious roar.

Melincha unhesitatingly fired four shoulder-launched missiles towards the sound of the roar.

BOOM! BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!

Amidst the violent explosions, a colossal monster rose to its feet. Its skin was peppered with scars from the blasts, but it seemed unfazed. Grabbing the chain with its massive arms, it roared and tugged repeatedly, trying to retrieve its 'big toy.'

Chen Gu appeared beside Marcus, waving his arms and cheering. "Don't give up, Team Leader! A little more effort! Crank up that magnetic force!"

Marcus gritted his teeth, pushing himself to his limits. His Alchemist ability continuously amplified the rockery's magnetism.

This was a high-end residential area, so the decorative rockery was massive; the Mutant couldn't budge it.

The anchor was pinned to the rockery by magnetism. The Mutant, enraged, desperately tried to yank it free. Marcus, risking everything, continuously altered the rockery's internal structure to boost the magnetic force, determined not to let the Mutant retrieve its weapon.

The thick chain creaked and groaned under the strain of their tug-of-war, and a few links even began to deform.

The Mutant was furious. That anchor is mine! Give it back!

It gripped the chain with both arms, its four thick legs digging deep into the ground. With a tremendous roar, it unleashed its full strength.

"Team Leader, let go!" Chen Gu suddenly yelled.

This was the signal they had secretly agreed upon. Marcus instantly deactivated all his abilities. The magnetism from the rockery vanished. Propelled by the Mutant's terrifying strength, the huge anchor shot back like a cannonball.

THUD!

Caught completely off guard, the Mutant had no time to react. The anchor smashed heavily onto its head...

SPLAT! The Mutant's massive head exploded like a watermelon.

Chapter 85: Merit Settlement

This creature was exceptionally strong. If Team Five had truly besieged it, they would have paid a hefty price for the kill. But now, it had played itself to death.

Chen Gu grinned and casually flicked nonexistent dust from his clothes. "As long as you're willing to use your brain, defeating such an enemy is a piece of cake!"

Marcus glared at him ferociously. Piece of cake? I almost shit my pants, okay?

But then Marcus couldn't help chuckling. "You kid, you're full of sneaky tricks!"

Melincha smiled sweetly, controlling her mecha as it flew back. "Well done, rookie."

Joseph was greatly impressed. As a fellow rookie, I'm just an invisible presence, trembling in fear during the fight, while he can already strategize and command the team leader into battle! Impressive!

Even Selena, the little demoness, gave a nod, implying, You have gained this queen's approval.

Only Charles felt like vomiting blood in frustration. My contributions were also enormous! I barely escaped with my life while restraining that monster, but no one paid any attention to me!

The special agents remained secretly on alert, but the darkness grew silent. Not a single powerful Mutant came charging out again.

Joseph was puzzled. "This was clearly a trap, with Zhou Shenyu being used as deliberate bait, but only two Mutants ambushed us?"

Marcus shrugged. "They must have been dealt with by Team Three and Team One."

Melincha was surprised. "They came too?"

Marcus laughed. "If Mutants can ambush us, why can't we turn the tables on them?"

Everyone suddenly understood. Chen Gu nodded to himself. The Bureau of Mystic Security specialized in dealing with Mutants and had plenty of experience fighting them. If Mutants were cunning, the Bureau was no fool either.

Several massive transport aircraft appeared in the sky, casting bright searchlights that illuminated the nearby area, making it as bright as day.

Over the communication channel, Director Mei's voice came through. "Mutant cleanup is over. Begin clearing the battlefield."

A large number of cleanup crew members entered. One of their team leaders, seeing the Bone Mutant blown to pieces, cursed in annoyance, "Marcus, it must be you again! Don't think you can pass the blame onto someone else this time!"

Marcus felt genuinely wronged. "It really wasn't me this time; it was Chen Gu..."

"Shut up!" the cleanup team leader said, his voice filled with heartfelt pain. "Marcus, you're a team leader! Letting a rookie take the fall for you? Aren't you embarrassed?"

Marcus was at a loss for words. No one would believe my explanation anyway.

Chen Gu quietly patted Joseph on the shoulder. "Let me tell you an old story called 'The Boy Who Cried Wolf.'" He chuckled. "Heh heh heh!" Then he laughed with schadenfreude.

Dejected, Marcus led his team members back. Everyone conducted a thorough cleanup and underwent psychological testing to ensure they hadn't been contaminated before they could rest.

In Team Five's office, the team members sipped the hot tea prepared by the clerical ladies and groaned in comfort.

Melincha's gaze roamed, eventually landing on Chen Gu. She smiled and said, "Our perks have certainly improved lately. When did we ever have tea waiting for us after a mission before?"

A few of them thought about it, and it was indeed true.

The special operations teams usually worked at night, after regular work hours. Although many in the support staff actually lived at the sub-bureau—for their safety—not many would work overtime. They were likely already home, lying on their couches binge-watching shows or live streams.

Marcus, an old hand, first glanced at Silver Eagle. The Iceberg Prince had already restyled his hair and stood proudly erect.

But Marcus shook his head and shifted his gaze, pointedly not lingering on Joseph.

Joseph knew his own capabilities. Although frustrated, he raised no objections.

Marcus's gaze finally settled on Chen Gu. After a moment's thought, he said, "Have you guys noticed? Chen Gu seems more handsome than before."

Selena snorted disdainfully. This newcomer isn't my type, anyway. I prefer someone playful, easygoing, and who doesn't get too attached.

Melincha smiled slyly. "I feel the same way. Agoos have changed since coming back from Yinglong Star."

Chen Gu's heart stirred, but he merely smiled and said, "Becoming a Professional has its perks, even for one's looks."

It must be that piece of the super-life form's remains, Chen Gu guessed internally.

Back on Yinglong Star, Chen Gu had already sensed something was off. Qing Ruyan's reaction had been very strange. I know I'm good-looking, Chen Gu thought, but not so much that an assistant to the Director-General like Qing Ruyan would go crazy over me.

Marcus and the others didn't press the issue. However, everyone was happy to receive such treatment after every mission.

Marcus nodded, about to praise Chen Gu, when he suddenly received a communication from Director Mei. Her voice was stern. "You've been collectively reported by the operations teams!"

"Ten points will be deducted from your merit value for this mission."

Marcus tentatively asked, "So... how much is left?"

"The settlement is complete and has been sent to your accounts. You can check for yourselves."

Filled with anticipation, Marcus opened his account, hoping to climb a few places on the "Team Five Wealth Leaderboard."

Speaking of which, thanks to the addition of the newcomer Joseph, he, the team leader, had recently shed the title of "Poorest in the Group"!

After all, Joseph hadn't participated in a single operation yet, so his merit value was zero.

Marcus glanced at his account. The originally pitiful 76 had become 156. He breathed a sigh of relief. At least only ten points were deducted.

Team leaders typically earned 90 points for a single operation. Yet, he still felt a bit uncomfortable. Why? I was the one who played the main role in killing the Iron Anchor Mutant.

He immediately checked Joseph's account. That guy was slacking off throughout the entire mission and only got 10 merit points. Marcus felt a flicker of satisfaction. At least there's someone below me now, so I won't be the poorest one again. But I'm the team leader; I have aspirations! It feels rather inglorious to always be compared to a newcomer.

Then he looked again. Charles had actually received 40 merit points!

There was even a special explanation: Charles had a high level of participation in this mission, distracting the Iron Anchor Mutant and making an important contribution to its eventual takedown.

Moreover, he was nearly killed in a sneak attack by the Octopus Mutant and deserved some consideration for it.

Marcus pursed his lips. Okay, I can understand that.

That meant Silver Eagle's merit value was now 204! Still quite a bit higher than mine, Marcus thought.

Melincha and Selena had both earned 30 merit points this time, an average amount consistent with their performance in the mission.

Melincha's account total rose to 185, and Selena's to 182.

Marcus took a look and quietly cheered himself on. Keep it up, Marcus! You'll soon surpass these two!

Err... that still doesn't seem like something to boast about...

Then Marcus's eyes swept downward and landed on Chen Gu's merit points. He let out a cry of disbelief, thinking he had misread it.

Marcus rubbed his eyes and looked again. No mistake. The account indeed showed 1,300!

Chapter 86: Father and Son Bonding

"What's going on?!" Marcus hurriedly looked at the explanation below, which consisted of a few simple sentences: 1,000 merit points were awarded to Chen Gu for his achievements on Yinglong Star and were now being retroactively issued.

In addition, for this mission, Chen Gu had killed the bone-mutant and ingeniously devised a strategy to kill the iron-anchor mutant, earning an extra 200 merit points.

Chen Gu originally had 200 merit points, and he had spent 100 upon assuming his position, so all together, that came to exactly 1,300.

"This..." Marcus felt incredibly suffocated and glared fiercely at Chen Gu. "Rich boy!"

"Well then, you will complete the entire report for this mission!"

Chen Gu was flabbergasted. "What?!"

Everyone noticed Chen Gu's merit points, and jealousy twisted their insides. Naturally, they strongly supported the team leader's decision!

After finishing their tea, all team members returned to rest, light-hearted, while Chen Gu was left miserably completing the report in the office.

In Chen Jixian's office, several directors and bureau chiefs sat together, but there was no joy from a successful operation; instead, they were fraught with worry.

"In this operation, we exterminated six Beta Level (Level 2) Mutants and four Gamma Level (Level 3) Mutants. It seemed like a complete victory. However, our preliminary screening of the Mutants' brain memories showed they were all warriors who didn't know many secrets. This lead could very well be dead."

"Although we captured Zhou Shenyu, we still know nothing about the spy hidden in our city, or even within the entire upper echelons of Empire River Star."

"This spy is very cunning, cutting off all leads that could point to him. If we hadn't been vigilant this time, we could have actually fallen for his counter-ambush and suffered heavy losses!"

In such times, Chen Jixian's thinking was incredibly sharp. "Strengthen security measures. Starting now, cease all intelligence reporting. The Bureau of Mystic Security's actions should only be known internally."

"Additionally, select some bait information to leak out, and report different intel to various city government departments to quickly determine which system the spy is operating within."

"Yes!"

Marcel handed over another report. "Director, we have recently monitored increased activity of the True Knowledge Sin on Empire River Star."

Director Mei was puzzled. "After the last prison break, the Confederation secretly moved Wei Jiangqi. Why would they continue to focus on Empire River Star?"

"The specific goals of True Knowledge Sin are unclear, but from some clues, we can infer that at least two Angel Envoys have arrived on Empire River Star."

Chen Jixian's eyelids twitched slightly. "Good. Let them come, and we'll catch them all in one fell swoop!"

After the executives finished their meeting, Chen Gu finally completed the mission report. As he left the building, he ran into Chen Jixian.

His father, Chen Jixian, was sitting in his private car. He looked very stylish as his assistant opened the door and gestured for Chen Gu to come in.

Chen Gu grumbled internally: He's still putting on such airs, even with me, his son!

But he got in the car anyway. The car didn't move; Chen Jixian just wanted to say a few words to him. "We've just received intelligence that in the Great Cross Star Domain, our forces have encountered a special Alien Insect Race. They are stronger, more ferocious, and more evil..."

Chen Jixian tapped his finger, and a holographic projection opened in front of Chen Gu, showing a recording of that battle.

Chen Gu saw those Alien Insect Race members. They were more than twice as tall as their kin, their bodies were pitch black, and their exoskeletons were covered in sharp barbs. Their eyes were a bloody red, and some even displayed special abilities during combat!

Chen Gu exclaimed in disbelief, "Are these Mutants of the Insect Race?!"

Chen Jixian slowly nodded. "The battlefield in the Great Cross Star Domain was originally the destination Kloya and the others were preparing to head to. Furthermore, the mothership seized by the Mutants ultimately headed toward the Alien Insect Race in this star domain."

Chen Gu found it hard to believe. "The Mutants contaminated the Alien Insect Race? Why would they go through such trouble? The Endless Realm can directly infiltrate the real world and could contaminate the Alien Insect Race just as easily..."

Chen Jixian spoke slowly, "According to current human research, the Endless Realm can influence all intelligent life, even super life forms. Some scholars also speculate that many of the debased creatures and Evil Gods within the Endless Realm may very well be super life forms that were corrupted and fell."

"But there is an issue: the greater the intelligence, the easier it is to be influenced. Life forms with low intelligence are almost never tempted."

Chen Gu began to understand. "Those insects have strong reproductive capabilities, but most are not highly intelligent. Within the entire race, there is usually only one commander: the Empress."

"The Endless Realm could also slowly tempt these Empresses, but the Insect Race's population is extremely vast, and they probably can't find those Empresses with such accuracy."

"Even so, it's still possible to influence the Alien Insect Race through the Endless Realm. For the Mutants to go to such trouble to achieve this goal, it seems they are quite desperate!"

Chen Jixian didn't say anything more. "These matters concern you, so I thought I'd let you know." After saying that, he pointed at the car door, projecting an 'I'm the boss, you can leave now' attitude.

Chen Gu pursed his lips. After some thought, however, he realized his father had spoken a lot more smoothly with him this time. This was a big step forward, unlike their previous meetings when his father would always just spit out a few dry words.

Chen Gu got out of the car straightforwardly. But Chen Jixian's driver sensed that the director's expression was not very pleased for the entire journey—overall, Chen Jixian was not very satisfied with this meeting. Why? Because he always felt that it didn't resemble the interaction between other fathers and sons.

Look at the two of us, so respectful to each other, our conversation concise and logical! Other families... aren't they always a chaotic mess, fathers being unreasonable and overbearing, and when they can't win an argument, they just yell at their sons to get lost? I haven't experienced that kind of interaction. Chen Jixian felt that while this meeting had achieved all its objectives, it was ultimately a failure!

On the way home, Chen Gu kept thinking about the issue of Mutants contaminating the Alien Insect Race. After reaching home, Chen Gu immediately logged into "Endless Realm".

It wasn't yet time for the "every three days" routine check-in, but sure enough, a series of messages came through upon logging in, from "Dressing for Battle by the Mirror".

"Urgent matter, come online and respond immediately!"

Three consecutive messages. Based solely on this number, Chen Gu knew it wasn't truly an urgent matter. Otherwise, with the temperament of this in-game crossdresser, hundreds of messages would have bombarded him by now.

But Chen Gu also wanted to understand the situation, so he promptly replied, "What happened?"

The other party was actually not online! Chen Gu pursed his lips, understanding even more clearly that the military wasn't actually very anxious about this matter.

After waiting for over twenty minutes, "Dressing for Battle by the Mirror"'s icon lit up, and she responded quickly, "I'm sending you a battle video, but it's highly confidential. You need to ensure it won't be leaked. Otherwise, it would be a crime, and you'd be brought before a military court!"

"Even the 'Endless Realm' officials can't protect you in this case!"

Chen Gu pursed his lips again; this person was not only an in-game crossdresser but also liked to bluff.

Chapter 87: [Sacrificing Life for Righteousness] Tactics

"I won't spread the word," Chen Gu replied perfunctorily. Soon, a combat video was sent over. It was indeed about the Insect Mutant matter, but this report from the military was more detailed and comprehensive.

Moreover, it was evident from the combat footage that the Mutants, once contaminated, not only became stronger but also craftier.

They still retained their obedience to their stronger kin. Consequently, their overall combat strength was several times that of the regular Alien Insect Race!

When facing the Confederation's armies, they held an absolute advantage.

Even the "Pillar Tumble" tactic was not so easily executed against them.

Within this segment of combat footage, Chen Gu analyzed a total of four small-scale battles. The ultimate outcome was always the Confederation's military defeat, with heavy losses!

Any army would inevitably fail when suddenly encountering such an enemy. However, humanity's greatest strength lies in learning. For example, the staff in the Central Operations Room must be working overtime right now, studying the characteristics of these Insect Mutants and developing targeted tactics.

As a result, the battle situation would surely change later on.

Chen Gu responded, "I've watched it. What on earth is this?!"

"Mutants contaminated by the Alien Insect Race," replied 'Mirror Makeup' succinctly, without mentioning the Bureau of Mystic Security in Zhaojieze City.

Chen Gu put on an act, looking like a veteran familiar with the Alien Insect Race: "Such a type of Alien Insect Race has never been seen before!"

He then maintained his "tactical master" persona: "From the video, it appears that this class of Insects has no connection with the ordinary ones. Can we confirm that they are hostile towards each other and will not cooperate in battle?"

This inference was affirmed by 'Mirror Makeup': "We can confirm that."

Then Chen Gu continued to solidify his persona with a dazzling analysis, similar to what he had previously explained to his 'older son.' He concluded, "The Mutants appear to be in a rush! There must be reasons for this that we are not yet aware of."

Bai Xianya curled her lip yet had to admit, This crafty old man has some bad streaks, but he truly has a knack for tactics. Our entire senior staff combined all our intelligence to reach this conclusion, and he analyzed this much just from some combat footage.

'Mirror Makeup' stated the purpose of this exchange: "Would you be able to provide a tactical analysis of these Insect Mutants and devise some targeted tactics?"

This time, Chen Gu dared not overplay his hand. Immediately channeling the memories of Griffin Wester, he began his analysis: "Against the ordinary Alien Insect Race, we choose the 'Pillar Tumble' tactic because ordinary Insects rigidly follow orders without independent initiative."

"However, the Insect Mutants are quite cunning, so 'Pillar Tumble' would be unsuitable. But every army has its weaknesses. For the Insect Mutant army, their weaknesses are their slyness, distrust, and inability to control their inner ferocity."

"Using this weakness, I can preliminarily determine that the 'Heroic Sacrifice Tactic' should work against them."

After Chen Gu finished these points, he stopped to await the other party's response. However, the tactic Chen Gu suggested had a trap hidden within it.

Bai Xianya, having received the 'Idol Actor's' reply, fell silent. As the highest-ranking operational staff officer in the Central Operations Room, she naturally knew what the 'Heroic Sacrifice Tactic' was. It stemmed from the ancient 'Bait and Bleed' stratagem from the Thirty-Six Stratagems.

In essence, it involved sacrificing a portion of the army to entice the enemy into a fervent assault, causing them to make mistakes and thus creating an opportunity to defeat them.

The 'Idol Actor' suggested this tactic, and it was indeed very suitable. As long as a friendly force was in dire straits, given the Mutants' uncontrollable urge to destroy, they would certainly swarm in frantically, completely disregarding their own potential peril.

However, this small force would undoubtedly have to make a 'heroic sacrifice.'

Every battle victory comes at the cost of sacrificing some warriors.

Some ruthless generals, to achieve ultimate victory, would not hesitate to choose such tactics.

Behind Bai Xianya stood several other people, led by Bai Yunpeng, along with two senior staff officers and generals. They all furrowed their brows without speaking. Finally, Marshal Bai Yunpeng said, "Reply to him and ask him to consider other tactics."

After a pause, Bai Yunpeng added, "The 'Heroic Sacrifice Tactic' can be kept as a backup and incorporated into the tactics manual for distribution. However, we definitely do not encourage grassroots commanders to use it... It's merely giving them an option in desperate situations."

Bai Xianya nodded. "Okay."

Chen Gu breathed a sigh of relief after receiving the reply from 'Mirror Makeup'.

The 'Heroic Sacrifice Tactic' was certainly not the only choice. Chen Gu proposed this tactic first primarily to test the military's attitude. If the military had agreed without hesitation, he would have kept his distance from them in the future.

Now it seemed that the Confederation's military was not a group of cold-blooded bastards who only sought victory, which was good.

Chen Gu replied, "Give me some time."

"Also, I need more information. Send me all future battle footage."

After consulting, Bai Xianya responded, "Okay."

Then, following Bai Yunpeng's instructions, she said, "We are planning to expand your research institute, turning the 745 Research Institute into the 745 Research Academy. We'll provisionally establish two departments: the current institute will become the 'Pillar Tumble' Department, and the tactical research on Insect Mutants will be the second department."

Chen Gu thought for a moment, Shepherding one sheep is the same as shepherding a flock.

"Alright, you prepare. I'll work out the tactics once I've researched them."

"Okay."

After finishing the conversation, Chen Gu was about to exit the game but noticed the little horn icon still flashing. He clicked it and saw a message from 'Mu Busu Yan,' the friend he had added last time.

"Godlike player, want to make some extra money?"

Chen Gu replied, "What's up?"

However, 'Mu Busu Yan' did not respond. Chen Gu checked again and noticed the message was a day old. He had been focused on the messages from 'Mirror Makeup' and only saw this one after finishing his discussion about the Insect Mutants.

He didn't wait any longer and logged off.

After becoming a Professional, Chen Gu no longer needed to undertake preliminary training; his physical abilities would continuously improve with the increase of his Energy Level.

If an ordinary person, after much effort, became a Professional and obtained great power, they would likely have a period of complacency.

But Chen Gu was different. Right after he became a Professional, he encountered the Mutant attack and witnessed various powerful beings.

Take those Mutants, for instance. Chen Gu could not defeat many of them on his own, let alone those powerful Professionals. It's worth noting that in "The Past of Four Hundred," Milna Katerina was at the Fourth Energy Level, while Griffin Wester was as high as the Fifth Energy Level!

Chapter 88: [Skill Points]

Chen Gu had many targets to chase, so he was always full of motivation.

However, the training methods among professionals were completely different. Chen Gu learned from the memories of two professionals that there were two conditions for professional advancement. The first was a quantitative indicator that professionals called "skill points." Every time a professional skill was used, one "skill point" would accumulate, meaning the more often skills were used, the more skill points were accumulated. This number might not seem large, but professionals had their own limits; it wasn't about grinding skill usage indefinitely.

To advance from the first Energy Level to the Second Energy Level as a Star Battle Instructor, one needed 130 skill points. The Nuclear Explosion Nun and Radiation Missionary needed 160. The higher the professional level, the more skill points were required for promotion.

For example, Chen Gu was a first Energy Level Radiation Missionary, just like Milna Katerina, possessing four skills: "Biological Nuclear Explosion," "Mind Belief," "Radiation Scouring," and "Atomic Life." However, at the first Energy Level, Chen Gu could only consecutively release three skills, or four at his absolute limit. Even if Chen Gu always pushed himself to this limit, he would still need to do so forty times to earn enough skill points. But when one pushed to the limit, recovery would be very slow. Even releasing only three skills at a time would require several days to recover.

Therefore, the most optimistic estimate to accumulate enough skill points for advancement to the Second Energy Level was half a year. Such an optimistic estimate, however, was actually impossible to achieve because professionals were not like ordinary people who could just go to martial arts gyms or training halls to practice. For instance, where could Chen Gu release his "Biological Nuclear Explosion" to rack up skill points?

The sub-bureau did have places specifically for professionals to practice their skills, which Silver Eagle frequented. Even Silver Eagle, with his "Star Wind Marshal" profession, didn't always need to go to the training ground; female colleagues would often approach him, saying, "Charles, my packed lunch has gone cold. Could you heat it up for me?" Charles would raise his hand, and a stream of particles would emerge, producing a steaming hot lunch box.

In Chen Gu's eyes, this guy's ability is just like a giant microwave! he thought. Look at him, pleasing the ladies and accumulating skill points all at once.

But Chen Gu was a Radiation Missionary; what kind of training ground could withstand the ravages of a "Biological Nuclear Explosion"? The sub-bureau might as well hang a sign at the entrance of the training ground: "No Nuclear Explosion Professionals or Dogs Allowed."

This category of profession possessed immense destructive power and granted formidable combat ability early on. This was also why Chen Gu had been able to turn the tide of battle multiple times and accumulate so many merit points that it made everyone in his group drool. However, there were pros and cons; advancement was extremely difficult.

Chen Gu touched his chin. It looks like if I want to advance quickly, I need to participate in as many missions as possible. Those optional missions, like the one from Gold Tooth Cowboy Rabbit, I'll have to actively join them now. Trying to play it safe and develop quietly... no way. I have to gamble on the future.

The second indicator was the professional's mental state, for which there was no fixed standard. Before deciding to advance, one had to ensure their mental state was "safe." This was because every time a professional advanced, they would directly face the Endless Realm. If their mental state was unstable, they couldn't break through that barrier and would be tempted into downfall, becoming a Mutant.

The mental state was the most difficult to confirm; even a Brain Domain Hacker couldn't be sure if they were in a safe state. Fortunately, over the years, professionals had found a method they called the "ultimate state." It involved trying to keep one's mind in an extreme condition to observe whether it was safe.

In total, there were several methods:

The Manifestation Method: Show off in front of others—to put it bluntly, flaunt strength, treasures, and so on, accepting everyone's envy and observing one's mental state in that situation.

The Ups and Downs Method: Experience great rises and falls, observing one's mental state in the midst of such extreme contrasts.

The Indulgence Method: Historically, some renowned playboys, who were utterly profligate and luxurious, were actually professionals. They used this method of completely unleashing their desires to observe their mental states.

Besides these, there were also some less popular methods, not widely used.

Chen Gu had yet to decide which one to use.

Forget it, I'll try the training ground tomorrow, he decided.

「The next day was the weekend.」

There were no classes, so Chen Gu headed straight for the sub-bureau early in the morning, displaying a diligence uncharacteristic of a special agent. Since he arrived early, the training ground was deserted. The entire sub-bureau had five special agent teams. Including those already in high positions, there were more than thirty professionals in total—who would come to train on an early weekend morning?

The spacious hall was located twenty-four floors beneath the sub-bureau building—it was the deepest level. Surrounded by thick nano-armor, it could withstand the skills of most professionals below the Third Energy Level. Of course, this "most" excluded the likes of the Radiation Missionary... and the "Alchemical Mage." Yes, Team Leader Marcus was a professional in just as tough a spot as Chen Gu.

If "Biological Nuclear Explosion" won't work, I'll try "Mind Belief" and "Radiation Scouring," Chen Gu thought. As for "Atomic Life," it's a healing ability and can't be trained without an injury.

Chen Gu activated "Mind Belief" first. It was indeed very easy. This skill has little destructive power and only increases perceptive abilities! he thought, a surge of joy washing over him. But I can't keep a skill active all the time; the consumption is too great.

Chen Gu deactivated "Mind Belief," pleased to gain a skill point... and then he encountered a problem. This skill actually has a 'cooldown period'!

It wasn't really a cooldown period. Rather, because professionals were biological beings, "Mind Belief" consumed a great deal of mental energy. After activating it once, if Chen Gu immediately tried to activate it a second time, he would become extremely exhausted. If he deactivated it and then tried for a third time, he wouldn't be able to muster the strength. Conversely, if he activated "Mind Belief" and simply maintained the skill, it wouldn't consume much energy. In simple terms, it was a skill that had a huge activation cost but was easy to maintain.

Chen Gu's plan to farm skill points with "Mind Belief" had failed.

In future training sessions, I can only use "Mind Belief" once each time, Chen Gu decided after some serious thought. As a member of the special agent team, I might receive urgent missions and have to deploy at any moment. I need to reserve some energy, as this ability is very useful in combat. If I receive a mission and can't use this skill, and then die on the battlefield because I couldn't sense the danger, that would be a true tragedy.

With a resigned twist of his lips, Chen Gu began to test the second skill, "Radiation Scouring."

Chapter 89: Simple Task (1)

"Radiation Scouring" is the ability to use one's own radiation to affect the surrounding environment. Any living thing under this scouring will quickly suffer severe damage.

Chen Gu's first Energy Level "Radiation Scouring" had a range of about ten meters, and even if he pushed himself to the limit, it wouldn't extend past fifteen meters.

However, within that range, the damage inflicted was enormous.

After using "Mind Belief" twice in a row, Chen Gu was exhausted from another "Radiation Scouring" and collapsed in the training field, drenched in sweat. He also figured out the combination for allocating his skill points in the future: one "Mind Belief," two "Radiation Scourings."

As for "Biological Nuclear Explosion," it was better not to test it out. He had heard that destroying the training field came with a hefty compensation fee.

Chen Gu lay on the ground, gasping for air. Suddenly, the door to the training field was flung open with a CLANG, and in came a familiar face: the little demoness Selena.

As she walked past Chen Gu, he weakly lifted his hand as a greeting. The little demoness scoffed, "Looks good, but useless."

Chen Gu felt his male pride insulted and really wanted to jump up like a carp to show her just how useful he could be.

But... he was truly spent. Let it go, let it go. Having lived two lifetimes, his actual age was over ninety years; he shouldn't squabble with a little girl. An inexperienced little sister, completely unaware of my true terror!

Chen Gu lay on the floor for over half an hour before he finally got up and left. He ate a lot for lunch, yet still felt a bit weak.

He had thought the afternoon would be uneventful, playing the good student by completing his homework in the division office.

Suddenly, the phone rang. Chen Gu saw that it was a call from Gorilla.

"Qing Yu's coming in to record today. Do you want to come and see?"

Chen Gu glanced at the empty office. "Sure."

The Special Duties team was seriously slacking off. Chen Gu had only seen the little demoness at the training field; none of the others had shown up from start to finish.

「Twenty minutes later, Chen Gu arrived at Sky Dog Records.」

To his surprise, Gorilla had moved, now located in a bustling commercial tower. The streets were congested with traffic, bustling with people. The tower had a total of three hundred seventy floors, with Sky Dog Records on the three hundred fourteenth floor.

Chen Qingyu had already started recording. Xiao Jiangxia came with her and warmly greeted Chen Gu with a smile when she saw him.

Chen Gu nodded at her and stood next to Gorilla.

Chen Gu asked, "How's it going?"

Gorilla, with his arms crossed and wearing headphones, listened intently and didn't answer Chen Gu. It wasn't until Chen Qingyu took a break from recording that Gorilla finally nodded with satisfaction. "Very good," he said. "I've figured out her positioning. I estimate that with three years of management, she can at least reach the status of a second-tier singer."

Chen Gu frowned in dissatisfaction. "Are you serious? You're a gold record producer, and you're telling me it'll take three years to reach second-tier?"

Chen Qingyu had just come out and quickly said, "I'm already very satisfied. Many singers never get famous in their whole lives."

Gorilla didn't need to mince words with Chen Gu and retorted, "Qing Yu, don't listen to him. He's an outsider, trying to teach his grandmother to suck eggs."

Chen Gu glared. "Our Qing Yu has so much talent; she's definitely got to be a megastar..."

Gorilla ignored him and pulled Chen Qingyu aside to explain some minor issues in the previous recording, leaving Chen Gu with a bewildered expression. He decided not to bother arguing with the guy.

After a busy afternoon, they had only managed to record about a third of the material. Chen Gu tapped on the table. "I came all this way, and you're not even going to treat me to a meal?"

Gorilla felt too tired to care. "I'm working my butt off here for your Qing Yu, and you don't even offer to treat me as a thank-you? You even expect a meal from me?"

Chen Gu had already started browsing on the interstellar web. "Let me check which restaurant nearby is the most expensive..."

Gorilla resignedly said, "Stop looking. The 'Gentleman's Kitchen' on the top floor is the most expensive, with an average spending of ten thousand Starshields per person."

"Smart choice," Chen Gu declared. "That's the place we'll go."

The meal cost Gorilla nearly a hundred thousand Starshields, which made Xiao Jiangxia and Chen Qingyu feel extremely embarrassed, but Chen Gu was nonchalant. "The taste is just so-so," he said. "I won't bother taking leftovers."

Gorilla wanted to kick him. "Get lost, get lost, get lost! Don't you ever come back again!"

Then he quickly turned to Chen Qingyu with a smile. "Qing Yu, you should come here often. We won't bring this old relic; we'll eat something delicious ourselves."

When Chen Gu and his companions left the building, Chen Qingyu and Xiao Jiangxia drove themselves home. Chen Gu went to the parking lot to find his car and accidentally saw someone pushing open a side door and entering the safety passage.

Chen Gu frowned and quietly followed.

The man was dressed in the dark blue uniform of the building maintenance staff and was checking some equipment along the way. Chen Gu, hiding in the shadows, didn't notice anything unusual.

After checking six floors, the man exited through another door and met up with a group of building facility managers. It seemed there was nothing suspicious.

But Chen Gu still couldn't shake off a nagging feeling of unease.

I really should not have used up all of my Mind Belief this early in the day, Chen Gu regretted inwardly. After checking those six floors and finding nothing out of the ordinary, he decided to leave and drove away.

Chen Gu was planning to go straight home, but on the way, he received a call from the team leader. "There's a surveillance task tonight. Originally, Silver Eagle was taking Xuelei; it should be safe, but I still feel we should be extra cautious, so you go along as well."

Chen Gu thought for a bit before realizing that "Xuelei" was Joseph.

An experienced member was taking a newcomer on a simple surveillance task. The old team leader wanted more security without making a big deal out of it, and so he "squeezed" the new member, Chen Gu.

But for Chen Gu, this was actually a welcome development; it showed that in the eyes of the team leader, he was also a reliable member.

Moreover, getting more involved in missions had been Chen Gu's plan from the start. If the opportunity arose, he could earn a skill point from Biological Nuclear Explosion!

At Chen Gu's voice command, his magnetic levitation car turned to meet up with Silver Eagle.

If there was anything unpleasant about this mission, it was the prospect of working with Charles. But, oh well, he could endure it.

Little did Chen Gu know, Charles was even more uncomfortable than him!

「The meetup location was outside a restaurant near the precinct.」

Charles had just treated the newcomer to a meal. The restaurant's valet then quietly drove up in Charles's strikingly luxurious supercar and walked away, nodding and bowing, after receiving a tip.

Joseph was drooling with envy. "The Da Kui Bull from the Tianqi Company! The official price is two million six hundred thousand shields!"

Charles smiled modestly. "It's just a means of transport... nothing more."

Chen Gu's car zoomed to a stop beside them. He rolled down the window and slapped the car door. "Hurry up, don't be late."

Joseph's mouth fell open as he stared at Chen Gu's car. "I—we Special... I mean, do we earn *that* much? And look, there's the little lightning logo! So flashy and cute. Money well spent is indeed lovely."

Chapter 90: Simple Task (2)

Charles felt like he had swallowed a fly, utterly disgusted. Seriously, how did that kid manage to ruin what was supposed to be an impressive first impression for the newcomers?

As a team member highly valued by his team leader, Chen Gu focused solely on the mission!

Seeing Charles standing aside with a cold expression, Chen Gu asked Joseph, "Are you riding in his car or mine?"

Without hesitation, Joseph yanked open the car door and climbed in. "I'm going with you. The leader said safety comes first!"

Chen Gu slapped the car door shut, started the engine, and drove off. Charles got into his own car, slammed the door forcefully, and followed. After driving for a while, Charles suddenly realized, Why am I following them?

To put it bluntly, it felt like he was just trailing behind the newbie, eating his dust.

So he accelerated and overtook Chen Gu, finally finding some solace. After all, my sports car's acceleration is definitely better than his "Xuanwu III".

Chen Gu checked the time and snorted. Now he realizes he's in a hurry? We're almost late, and he wouldn't move when I urged him earlier.

But just then, all hovercars in the vicinity received the same yellow message: "BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!"

"Traffic control in effect. Please maintain order. The system will grant passage based on citizen rank."

All hovercars, including Chen Gu's and Charles's, suddenly slowed to a halt. Charles had just accelerated when his car abruptly stopped.

Charles's face filled with frustration. It always feels like things never go smoothly when Chen Gu is around.

He immediately used his Special Services team identity. "Inquiry: reason for traffic control. Request priority passage."

Although hovercars flew, they couldn't just go anywhere. They had to follow designated routes within a three-dimensional airspace.

These restrictions were for safety. In this era, buildings were towering, and there were many floating islands and similar structures. Hovercars were fast; without restrictions, accidents would be frequent.

The traffic system quickly responded, "Greetings, respected police officer. Traffic control is in effect due to the passage of important foreign dignitaries."

The Bureau of Mystic Security's public-facing identity was that of police personnel.

"Your request has been denied. Your citizen rank is insufficient for priority passage. Thank you for your patience."

Citizen rank was similar to ancient systems of nobility but was mostly useless in the modern world, except in situations like this, where it could have a minor impact.

Charles was a special agent with the Bureau of Mystic Security, and his citizen rank was "Elite," the second level, above "Ordinary" citizens.

But clearly, this rank wasn't high enough to let him proceed first.

Charles glanced at the time and, annoyed, hammered his fist against the car. They were already running late. That overly elaborate, showy dinner had wasted too much time.

Charles had no choice but to contact his team leader. While he was explaining the situation, he saw Chen Gu's "Xuanwu III" beside him start up and WHOOSH past, taking the lead!

"Hey, hey, hey, Charles, what are you saying?"

Silver Eagle, on the phone, was suddenly speechless as his team leader on the other end urged him to continue.

"Chen—Chen Gu went through... How could he go through? Is his citizen rank even higher than mine? That's not scientific!" Charles exclaimed, tugging at his hair.

In this era, every hovercar was connected to the traffic system. When control was initiated, it was absolute, so there was no possibility of forcing one's way through.

Chen Gu being able to pass through earlier can only mean his citizen rank is higher than mine!

Marcus, upon hearing this, said, "He got through? Then I'll contact him. It's just a stakeout; with Chen Gu there, it shouldn't be a problem."

The call ended with a BEEP.

Charles, still in disbelief after the team leader hung up, immediately issued another instruction: "Query: citizen rank required for advance passage through current traffic control."

Soon, the traffic system responded: "Citizen rank required for advance passage through current traffic control: Expert."

"Expert rank!" Charles howled. "How could that brat Chen Gu reach Expert rank? There must be some backdoor dealings!"

Ordinary, Elite, Distinguished, and then Expert.

Chen Gu was a full two ranks above him. Citizen rank was evaluated based on an individual's contribution to society.

Chen Gu's performance in Zhaojieze City was worth far more than 1,000 valor points. However, Valkyrie felt deeply uncomfortable whenever she thought of using her own valor points to reward that despicable little thief, so she begrudgingly awarded him only 1,000.

But she was the Director-General, after all. Failing to reward such a significant contribution would be hard to justify to the public. Moreover, those "old issues" between her and Chen Gu simply couldn't be brought to light.

Valkyrie felt humiliated by it too.

Thus, Valkyrie had a sudden inspiration: Give that little thief a boost in citizen rank!

This rank was mostly inconsequential in most situations. Plus, it wouldn't cost her anything personally; the Confederation would pick up the tab.

So, Chen Gu was promoted to Expert rank in one fell swoop.

In fact, if Chen Gu were to apply using his "Idol Actor" identity, his citizen rank would be at least "Academician," if not the even higher "Elder."

Silver Eagle couldn't figure out why Chen Gu's citizen rank was so much higher than his. His plan to show off in front of the newbies tonight had been a spectacular failure. He had even lost the mission—it now belonged to Chen Gu, and the associated valor points likely had nothing to do with him anymore.

From now on, I must stay away from that guy! Silver Eagle gritted his teeth. If it really comes to it, I'll request a transfer!

Meanwhile, Chen Gu received a call from Marcus. When Joseph heard that Charles couldn't join them for the time being, he couldn't help but shudder. "Just the two of us? Can we handle it?"

Chen Gu, however, wasn't nervous. He had handled things on his own back on Yinglong Star; a stakeout was trivial in comparison.

"You two lads, remember this!" Marcus instructed them pointedly.

Chen Gu and Joseph responded in unison, "Safety first!"

"Correct answer," Marcus laughed. "If something seems off, run immediately. Preserving your lives is more important than anything."

"Yes, sir!" they both acknowledged. After Marcus hung up, Chen Gu's car had already pulled quietly into the shadows of a street.

This place seemed incongruous with the rest of Wuzhaoyin City, even with the entire era.

The street was narrow and dark, with wastewater flowing freely by the roadside and rubbish strewn everywhere. The buildings on either side were dilapidated and dark, and occasional screams echoed from within them.

About twenty meters ahead of where Chen Gu had parked, a drunken vagrant lay snoring heavily beside a trash can.

Three gang members armed with prohibited weaponry brazenly crossed the street. Seeing the vagrant, they immediately shouted and rushed toward him, kicking and punching with cruel laughter, for no reason other than sheer amusement.

Joseph, sitting in the car, said uneasily, "Sector 109, huh? This is the infamous 'Poison of Gods'! The most lawless district in all of Wuzhaoyin City."