Chapter 1 - Chapter 1: Chapter 1, My Declaration

Chapter 1: Chapter 1, My Declaration

“In this world, just surviving is already very difficult.”

“We live in abandoned mining tunnels from before the war, using the most rudimentary tools, even bare hands, to extract minerals, and we trade them for leftover scraps from other survivor camps. We have never harmed anyone; we just want to survive. Yet even so, there are people who cast their greedy gazes upon us.”

The gaunt and dark man kneeling in front of Gu Hang, recounting his hardships, was named Patel. He was neither tall nor strong, and beneath his dirty and thin clothing was rough skin. From his appearance, he was indeed as he described: someone who scraped a living in abandoned mines.

Patel continued, “Eight days ago, a group of wasteland bandits who called themselves ‘Prisoners of the Void’ killed seventeen of our people and kidnapped forty-two. Divine Emperor above, the youngest of them was only four years old! They demanded a ransom, we paid it, but they grew bolder, not only did they not release our people, but they also demanded more.”

“I went to Revival City, found the officials of the Alliance, and begged them to help us. They sent a warning to the ‘Prisoners of the Void’, chiding them not to cause trouble...”

“Ha, a warning... The day before yesterday, those bandits cut the throats of two children right on our doorstep, tore the paper of the warning into shreds with blood on it. They declared we had to come up with double the ransom in three days, or else they would attack our mining tunnels, kill everyone, and take everything.”

“We were cornered. Some said to flee, others argued that even with hoes and fists, we should fight those bandits armed with guns and cannons. But I knew we weren’t without options, the world now has a new governor. I had to come to you for help, Your Excellency the Governor, I implore your aid to save us.”

Patel lowered his head, his manner sincere. From his perspective, all he could see were Gu Hang’s boots. They were soft leather boots, with satin ribbons connected to golden clasps, elegant and elaborate.

Those boots, who knows how long over nine hundred people from the Abandoned Cave Society, would have to toil without food and drink to afford them.

The boots moved before his eyes, as Gu Hang crossed his legs into a more comfortable position, and asked:

“Before seeking the Alliance, why didn’t you come to me first?”

Patel was momentarily stunned, only managing to muster an excuse, he stammered, “We are members of the Alliance, and the Alliance should govern this matter...”

Gu Hang shook his head and said, “You think you are a member of the Alliance, that they will protect you, and I am just an appointed governor who might not sit here for two years, like the previous governors who were executed because they couldn’t pay the empire its taxes. In your heart, you think I am not important, until the Alliance also turned a blind eye to your affairs, and you ran out of options, then you came to me.”

“I never had such thoughts!” Patel denied in panic, gritting his teeth, making a major resolution, “If you can save us, then we are willing to give everything! We will pay the imperial tax at a higher rate two years from now!”

Gu Hang became even more disappointed, “Let me put it this way, Patel. You know full well that I arrived on this planet a month ago, and my camp is close by, not far from you. Yet, you never visited me until trouble arose, and now you kneel before me saying, ‘Your Excellency the Governor, please save us,’ but deep down, you never regarded me as a real governor. You even refused to believe my declaration on the first day I arrived.”

“I said I wanted to rebuild the entire Wasteland World, to ensure every person submitting to me would live a good life. But you didn’t believe it; many of you never did, just treating me as an annoying tax collector. You offer to pay taxes in exchange for me to save your people—how do you plan to pay the taxes? By the standards of the imperial tax, all of the people in Abandoned Cave Society could work themselves to death in the mines and still not afford to pay.”

Patel’s face, dark and lean, showed extreme tension, “Your Excellency the Governor, I believe in your words, please save us.”

As he spoke, he was about to forcefully knock his head on the ground.

But Gu Hang stopped him.

A pair of hands grasped his shoulders, lifting him to his feet without allowing resistance.

Gu Hang wrapped an arm around Patel’s shoulders, not minding the grease and dust on his clothes:

“No need to kowtow, no need to kneel. You diligent and hardworking folks, I am certainly going to help. Those predators who do not engage in productive work are our common enemy. But they are a minor issue, rebuilding the world is the big task at hand. This is not empty talk. Since you have implored me, I will save you completely, not just by eliminating some ‘prisoners of death,’ but by helping you build up your territory and ensure you have plenty of food and clothing. Now, I ask you, do you believe in me?”

Tears fell from Patel’s eyes, and it was unclear how much was moved by emotion, how much was relieved at being saved, and how much was acting: “I believe! I fully believe! From now on, the Abandoned Cave Society will strive for your ideals!”

“This should be our common ideal.”

Gu Hang patted Patel on the shoulder: “Go rest for a bit. Before long, I will personally lead my troops and rescue your compatriots.”

“By the Divine Emperor above, my compatriots and I are deeply grateful for your assistance!”

After watching Patel leave the barracks, profusely thanking the guard as he went, Gu Hang turned his gaze to the military-clad man standing stiffly to his rear, “Captain Yan, your expression tells me you have some doubts.”

Yan Fangxu saluted him and then began hesitantly, “Are we... really going to help the Abandoned Cave Society? On this wasteland planet, similar incidents occur almost every day; we can’t manage them all.”

With a tone of regret, Gu Hang said, “It seems, Captain Yan, that you also do not believe my declaration.”

“I wouldn’t dare.” While Yan Fangxu said this, his heart was indeed full of doubt: “But... forgive my frankness, Governor, you only have two years. In those two years, we need to submit at least the minimum standard ‘Imperial Tax’ for the entire Rage Owl Star, otherwise...”

Gu Hang picked up his thread, “Otherwise I’ll be removed from my post and executed, of course, I know. But Captain Yan, we’ve been on this planet for a month now, and you’ve seen what it’s like. This is a place that has undergone an apocalyptic catastrophe, most of the land is unfit for living, Low Energy Storms continue to rage, and there are mutated monsters and desperate looters turned bandits everywhere. The remaining survivors are hiding at various settlements, struggling to stay alive.”

“It’s already very difficult for them to survive, they can’t afford such high taxes; taxing them would be tantamount to taking their lives. The contradiction between Imperial taxation and planetary development is the main contradiction of Rage Owl Star. Previous governors have all focused on taxation. The biannual Imperial tax collection acts like a

death warrant, ultimately taking their lives. But I am different, I am thinking differently. Development is the true key; if Rage Owl Star becomes more prosperous, taxes will be a minor burden, and we will have succeeded."

Yan Fangxu sighed, "You're right, development is the correct path. But development takes time, and that is exactly what we lack. You only have two years in your first term, and we need to deliver at least one quarter of the Imperial standard in taxes. However, Rage Owl Star has always only managed to contribute an eighth, and there's a half-gulf to overcome. In two years, trying to double the planet's output is..."

"Then it's time to see what I can do," said Gu Hang with a smile. "Happily, I am somewhat confident in this area."

As he was speaking, a ghostly message popped up before him, visible only to him:

[1st Automaton Light Infantry Battalion (300 soldiers), training complete, unit level upgraded to T5.]

[Limited by equipment level and personnel quality, the unit cannot continue to train for improvement.]

Gu Hang's smile broadened, and he patted still worried Yan Fangxu on the shoulder, saying, "Assemble our troops, it's time we sought justice for our neighbor."

————

A new book is here!

ps: It's not about hammering, at least not entirely.

Chapter 2 - Chapter 2: Chapter 2, The Gift

Chapter 2: Chapter 2, The Gift

"`

Actually, this was Gu Hang's first month since he had transmigrated.

He now found himself in a cosmic era, within a vast Human Empire that ruled over endless star domains. Ten thousand years ago, a Divine Emperor ascended and established the "Spirit Network," bringing spiritual energy to humanity. The current empire was governed by the Supreme Council seated on the Human Ancestral Star, Terra.

About 120 years prior, the planet on which Gu Hang was currently situated had been an ordinary world. A war devastated the entire planet's surface environment, turning Rage Owl Star into a wasteland planet.

Twenty-nine years ago, the Empire Government assessed that there was still hope for saving Rage Owl Star and dispatched a Planetary Governor for the first time to oversee reconstruction efforts.

Within the empire's system, a Planetary Governor could rule their planet in any manner, provided that, above all, the governor remained loyal to the empire.

What constituted loyalty? Paying taxes was loyalty. Not paying taxes, or not paying enough, meant execution, followed by the replacement with someone loyal.

To this day, over twenty-nine years, Rage Owl Star had gone through five governors.

Even the three who preceded Gu Hang each lasted only two years. The imperial tax on Rage Owl Star was due every two years, and all three of these unfortunate souls didn't survive past the first taxation period.

And now, Gu Hang had arrived.

A month ago, he had just transmigrated, still adapting to the memories of his new body, when he found himself on a starship headed for Rage Owl Star. He needed to ensure that in two years, Rage Owl Star would pay a quarter of the standard tax, with the Star Sector Government footing the bill for the insufficient three quarters. This was a favorable condition procured by his political family, the Gu Clan.

By the second tax payment four years later, full taxes must be paid.

A cruiser belonging to the Star Sector Navy was stationed in orbit above the planet to offer him support. The forces he brought to the surface numbered only 3000 slaves, 300 mech soldier servants who had their frontal lobes removed and underwent mechanical enhancements, and 30 Navy Marine Corps soldiers, led by Captain Yan Fangxu.

The main political power on Rage Owl Star, known as the "Alliance", was established by the first generation of governors twenty-nine years ago.

In theory, upon arriving on Rage Owl Star, Gu Hang should have landed in the Alliance Capital, Revival City, to take on the identity of the Alliance leader, and begin exercising the powers of the Planetary Governor based on the Alliance Government.

But he didn't do that. Instead, he set up a camp not far from Revival City with his people, and immediately began doing things that baffled others.

For example, Captain Yan couldn't understand why Gu Hang would train those 300 mech soldiers.

These slaves, stripped of their self-thinking, were ill-equipped to operate armored vehicles or artillery and could only be fitted with basic gear to serve as cannon fodder, having seemingly little value in training.

Yet, he had to feel ashamed of his shallow insights.

He watched in disbelief as the mech servants actually underwent a dramatic transformation in a very short period!

Under Gu Hang's command, he saw these mech soldier servants quickly complete a series of pre-departure tasks such as forming ranks and checking gear; during previous training, they also demonstrated tactical skills far surpassing their former abilities. Shooting, physical fitness, tactics... all of these were greatly improved, and combined with their innate fearlessness of sacrifice and absolute adherence to discipline, they became high-level soldiers.

This was already the standard of the Imperial Guard Star Realm Regular Troops.

Although he still didn't think these mech soldier servants could match his elite Marine Corps in one-on-one combat, that was beside the point. He had only 30 elite Marines, while there were 300 mech soldiers.

More importantly, Captain Yan had no clue how Gu Hang managed it.

It completely surpassed his understanding: Weren't mech soldier servants supposed to depend only on their level of enhancement at the time of their modification? Weren't subsequent trainings meaningless?

While he was lost in thought, he heard Gu Hang's resonant voice, "Captain Yan, make your squad move faster. How can the elite Marines be slower in pre-battle preparations than the mech servants?"

Coming back to his senses, Captain Yan, slightly abashed, saluted Gu Hang and then turned, bellowing at his subordinates who were equally stupefied by the transformation of the Mech Servant Battalion, "What are you loafing around for, you lousy bunch? Move it! The five slowest will sleep with the mech soldiers starting tomorrow!"

Watching Captain Yan go and kick his squad's butts into gear, Gu Hang chuckled softly, withdrawing his gaze and refocusing on the panel of information that appeared before him.

The ethereal, floating text before his eyes formed multiple options:

“`

[Current Favor Points: 2]

[Total Territorial Income: 5/Terra month]

[Hero]

[Troop Tags]

There were four items in total, and Gu Hang clicked on the second item,[Total Territorial Income]. Here, he saw more detailed information:[Governor’s Temporary Camp: 5/Terra month].

There was only this one.

According to Gu Hang’s understanding, this monthly total income depended on the sum of incomes provided by territories recognized by the system as belonging to him. And right now, his territory was only this temporary camp.

Upon seeing the system and learning that he had become the governor, he was initially eager to find out: with a planet as his territory, how much favor would it provide him each month?

However, after disembarking from the starship onto Revival City, this number had remained zero.

He guessed at the time that a territory in name only would not be recognized by the system; it had to be under his actual control.

For him, a governor parachuted in, to take control of a loose wasteland Alliance Government and to integrate the entire alliance was no easy feat. If it were easy, his predecessors would not have all failed.

Therefore, he decisively abandoned the paths taken by the previous governors, turned his head, requested servant slaves and some armed forces from the starship, left Revival City, found an open space, and planned to start from scratch, making use of the golden finger that had accompanied him through his travels.

After he led people and established a temporary camp completely under his control, the number finally changed from 0 to 4.

The initial 4, Gu Hang guessed, was from the population; the additional point that came later was likely because the camp had been built larger and more complete.

In the two items that followed in the system,[Hero]displayed his own panel, and in Troop Tags, there were two items.

[Navy Marine Corps 1st Squad, Comprehensive T4 level, Upgradeable]

[Number: 30],[Equipment: T4],[Training: T4],[Experience: T4]

This was the status of the thirty men led by Yan Fangxu.

The other was the just-upgraded Mechanized Infantry Battalion.

[1st Mechanized Infantry Battalion,Comprehensive T5 level, Not upgradeable]

[Number: 300],[Equipment: T5],[Training: T5],[Experience: -]

The “T” level likely corresponded to the overall strength of the unit; the smaller the number, the more elite. The Mechanized Infantry Battalion started off as a low-tier unit, equipped with rifles, hand grenades, machine guns for the squad; mortars and grenade launchers for the platoon, but lacked heavy weapons, only qualifying as a light infantry battalion.

He spent 3 Favor Points to enhance this light infantry battalion. Over four days, this brainless troop, which only followed orders and was considered of very low training value, cannon fodder, underwent a complete transformation.

Reaching a T5 level of training, it could almost be considered to have reached the standard of strength of the Imperial Regular Army. While the T4 level of the Marine Corps counted as a regular elite unit.

It was precisely because the originally cannon fodder Mechanized Infantry had been upgraded that Gu Hang had the confidence, after hearing about the situation with the Abandoned Cave Society, to forcefully get involved.

This was an opportunity, and he now had the ability to seize it.

He hoped to use this event to bring the Abandoned Cave Society under his actual rule, rather than merely being a governor in name. And in the future, he would expand his sphere of direct control, step by step, until it encompassed the entire planet.

Chapter 3 - Chapter 3: Chapter 3, Prisoner on the Run

Chapter 3: Chapter 3, Prisoner on the Run

From the temporary camp to the Abandoned Cave Society, there was a total journey of four and a half hours.

The elite troops of the marine corps spread out in squads of five as vanguards and scouts. Gu Hang, along with the victim Patel and the majority of his Mech Servant Battalion, advanced steadily.

Midway, Gu Hang received a report from the marine corps' scouting team; they had come across a small transport convoy that likely belonged to the 'Prisoners of the Void' tribe.

Gu Hang authorized Yan Fangxu to lead the marine corps and a part of the Mech Servant soldiers to annihilate them and to capture as many prisoners as possible.

Captain Yan, a naval elite, easily handled the small task without any surprises.

However, Gu Hang's mood didn't brighten after he heard the prisoners' testimonies.

Gu Hang had Patel brought over to him and said, "It seems that these bandits never intended to let you go."

Patel had also seen the condition of the transport convoy, his expression filled with fury, "Yes, they transported a large amount of high explosives. They could not only blow open the gates of the Abandoned Cave Society but even collapse the mines and bury us all alive."

Gu Hang shook his head and added, "That's not all. According to the intelligence Captain Yan obtained through interrogation, they had long ago negotiated with the Green Skins dwelling in the ruined high walls. Your entire population of over nine hundred from the Abandoned Cave Society was to be traded as quality provisions to those green-skinned beasts."

"What?!"

Patel was aware of the 'Prisoners of the Void' gang's absolute malice towards them, but was still shocked by their brutality.

The term 'green-skinned beasts' aptly described those mutants. They didn't merely exist on Rage Owl Star but were widespread across the universe, also referred to as 'the cancer of the cosmos.'

They lacked gender differentiation, reproducing by shedding symbiotic spores in their bodies, which then grew from the ground, as did their food.

Technically, they didn't need to buy any provisions, but these green-skinned beasts had two favorite activities: fighting was one, and eating the brains of sentient beings was the other. The former was their instinct, while the latter was their means of technological advancement.

These beasts that sprouted from the land were indeed primitive and savage at first, fighting with stone axes and clubs. But as they consumed enough and sufficiently intelligent brains, their technology would rapidly evolve, advancing to iron weapons, firearms and even interstellar travel...

Their belligerent nature, destructive to everything, meant the stronger they became, the more they turned into a scourge ravaging all existence.

Logically, such a race should be an enemy of all humankind. The Empire did have an extermination decree against the Green Skin Orcs: kill on sight and then purify the land to destroy the spores, ensuring they would not resurface.

But... policy is policy, and enforcement is another matter altogether.

On Rage Owl Star, where taxes could not be collected and even basic food and shelter could not be guaranteed, conflicts among various powers were rife, and the entire planet was in chaos. Even the governor was driven to farming himself... In such conditions, it was unrealistic to expect gangs like the 'Prisoners of the Void' to consider the fate of all mankind.

Not only were they not opposing, but doing business with these man-eating beasts was intolerable.

Clearing out the green-skinned beasts was something Gu Hang was determined to do.

Of course, not right now.

According to the testimonies, the so-called Green Skin tribe in the high wall ruins numbered in the thousands, and had at least evolved to possess automatic weapons, making their equipment not significantly different from that of the humans on the planet. To thoroughly eradicate those brutes was beyond the power that Gu Hang currently had at his disposal.

Fortunately, the 'High Wall Ruins' were quite far from their current location, so there was no need to worry too much, for the time being.

What they needed to focus on was the gang of wasteland plunderers threatening the Abandoned Cave Society.

Now, Gu Hang had their exact intelligence.

Four kilometers outside the mining area where the Abandoned Cave Society was located, the ‘Prisoners of the Void’ had set up a temporary camp. These scoundrels had never considered the possibility of the Abandoned Cave Society daring to come out for a field battle, so they made no preparations for defensive fortifications.

“Good opportunity, we can launch a surprise attack! Our mortars can cause considerable impact!” Yan Fangxu appeared excited.

“Alright, let’s do it.”

After a brief rest, what would have been a two-hour journey, they completed in just over an hour.

They hastened their pace, worried that the lack of arrival of the transport convoy for a long time might alert the bandits to unusual activities.

After the rapid forced march, they still needed some time to rest before launching the attack.

The thirty elite marine corps soldiers were fine, but it was the Mech Servants who needed to rest. They wouldn’t complain of fatigue, but they did indeed get tired, and fatigue could lower their combat effectiveness.

Following Yan Fangxu’s recommendation, the soldiers would set out again after forty-five minutes of rest, and an hour later, the mortar positions would commence bombardment.

From their position, already within sight of the ‘Prisoners of the Void’ camp, Gu Hang patiently led his troops in resting, consuming nutrient paste, and sitting to replenish their strength while setting up the mortar positions...

He knew that patience now was for the decisive battle that would follow shortly.

...

Kaja was feeling inexplicably restless at the moment.

These days, even being a plunderer was not easy. They hadn’t opened for business in a while, and all their supplies were running low. Food was the least of their worries, as they would have plenty once they breached the Abandoned Cave Society. Even if the miners didn’t have much in the way of food reserves, slaughtering several hundred people to make jerky would last them a long while.

But damaged weapons and depleted ammunition were more difficult to replenish. The major powers were quite unwilling to do business with these plunderers, only the Green Skin tribes were willing. Although Green Skin technology left much to be desired, with a

high failure rate for weapons and ammunition tending to misfire, and when it reached their hands, it was far less powerful than in those of the Green Skins themselves...

But it was better than nothing.

To be honest, Kaja had little interest in the most plentiful mineral produced by the Abandoned Cave Society. It was heavy and of little value, making it hard to fence. But the nine hundred people in the mine were valuable commodities; they could serve as nourishment for them or could be herded to the High Wall Ruins to exchange for Green Skin munitions, which was a delightful prospect.

Herding people was indeed easier than herding sheep.

For this reason, the 'Prisoners of the Void' had almost mobilized everyone. Apart from a few old, young, women, and those left to guard their lair, the main force was led out by Kaja, totaling over a hundred people.

Abandoned Cave Society had many people but few guns, nothing to fear. Their prolonged survival in the wastelands mainly relied on the favorable geography of their location. Kaja had personally scouted that mine, and it truly was easy to defend but difficult to attack. The entrance was securely sealed with ores and metal, and a heavy gate barred it from the inside—impenetrable by human strength.

Yesterday they had already tried blowing up the gate, but to no avail; the explosive payload was insufficient. Frustrated, he had no choice but to send his confidants back to the base to fetch explosives, including some reserved concentrated explosives.

His patience had worn thin; if he couldn't fool those miners into opening the gate, well, when the explosives arrived, he'd just blow it open.

It was supposed to be resolved today, there was no need to rush, but Kaja still felt irritable. By his calculations, his transport team should have been back by now. So, why was there no sign of them?

He had been hurrying his subordinates earlier, trying to establish contact with the transport team through the radio but to no avail.

This made him even more uneasy.

Half an hour ago, he sent out a squad to search the return route, but until now, there had been no response, not even radio contact.

He became fully alert.

Such bizarre circumstances could not but instill fear and hesitation in him.

People who weren't cautious enough were long buried in the wastelands, their bones turned to dust.

He made up his mind to dispatch four or five squads to scout the area; at the same time, he ordered his entire troop to prepare to move out and check on the situation themself.

Suddenly, a subordinate came to report, "We've made contact with the transport team. They're on their way back and should arrive soon."

Kaja's brows instantly furrowed, "Why haven't we been able to contact them until now?"

"They said the radio had some issues; they just fixed it. They sent the message immediately, fearing that we might be worried."

After pondering for a moment, Kaja ordered, "Reply with: 'Damn you, have you motherfuckers been fucking zombie dogs on the way? That's why you're so slow? Hurry up! Any more delays and your spoils will be halved!'"

Finishing his instruction, he strode outside, shouting to his brothers who were getting ready, "Move, move, move! We're leaving right now! Stop stuffing those damn bullets and bring as much as you can, leave the rest! Let's go! Prepare to break out! We've been marked!"

The subordinate who received the order was a bit confused. He caught up in two steps, asking, "Boss, this... I..."

"What about you? Get the fuck going with the message, and grab your gun and follow the team after!"

"Why?"

Kaja smacked his head: "We're definitely being watched! The message is meant to deceive the enemy; better if it works, or else you're dead meat if you're slow!"

After saying this, he paid no more attention to the bewildered youth, grabbed his own gun, and called out to his brothers to prepare to leave camp.

Just as he reached the entrance, he heard a whistling sound from the sky.

His face instantly turned pale.

That was the sound of artillery shells!

"Get down!"

He quickly threw himself to the ground, cursing nonstop: “Fuck! They’re actually shelling us... spit spit... let me catch them... spit...”

The roaring explosion nearly drowned out his own voice; he could only vent his fear through swearing and bravado.

He guessed that someone was targeting them, and even feared the worst—that he was surrounded.

What he hadn’t expected was that those watching him also had artillery in their hands!

Luckily, he wasn’t too unlucky—that aside from his ears ringing and his head feeling a bit dazed, he was mostly unharmed.

He crouched and looked around.

The caliber of the artillery firing at them couldn’t be too large, seemingly only mortars of some sort. If it were heavy artillery, the ten or so concentrated rounds would have left no one unturned in the camp.

Still, even so, the mortars had caused significant casualties in their fragile camp without sturdy fortifications.

In a glance, at least twenty of his brothers were dead or missing limbs.

The rest were shell shocked.

Now was clearly not the time to be dazed—staying here meant certain death.

He bellowed, “Run! Move! Get out!”

But just then, gunfire erupted from outside.

They were really surrounded! Following the artillery, came the infantry!

The only piece of good news was that the gunfire sounded distant, suggesting that the small squads he had sent out earlier were engaging the enemy.

This was their only lifeline.

He screamed, “Support them! It’s do or die time, if you don’t want to meet your maker then fight like hell!”

It was then that the second round of shelling hit.

Chapter 4 - Chapter 4: Chapter 4, Is this a Mech Servant?

Chapter 4: Chapter 4, Is this a Mech Servant?

“What a pity.”

Gu Hang, who was holding the binoculars, uttered these two words.

He lamented that the enemy reacted quickly, having moved before the bombardment began, otherwise the artillery could have been even more devastating;

he also regretted that their firepower was still insufficient. If the 60mm mortars had been replaced with larger-caliber howitzers, the infantry could have just cleaned up the battlefield afterward, as the main problems could have been resolved by the artillery directly.

But under these circumstances, there was nothing to be done.

In any case, after two rounds of shelling, the enemy had lost a third of its fighting strength. Though it seemed there was a chance for two or three more rounds, the results were unlikely to be as good.

The remaining enemies would still have to be dealt with by the infantry.

Patel, on the other hand, was very pleased with what he saw.

From the information provided by the captives, he knew that most of his people, aside from those who had died, had already been transferred and imprisoned in the lair of the captors, so there were no concerns about friendly fire when shelling the temporary camp.

Thus, watching these bandits who endangered his hometown get bombed, with every round crumbling their ranks and causing incalculable death and injury, brought him genuine joy.

O great Governor, may all these bandits be killed! I, Patel, am willing to serve you for a lifetime!

As he thought this, he saw the Governor roll up his binoculars and signal the soldiers standing by to move forward.

He hurriedly followed.

…

Locate the target accurately, fire, and kill.

Feeling the slight warmth on his cheek from the HS3 type ‘Eagle’ Electromagnetic Rifle in his hands, Yan Fangxu felt much relieved.

The situation on the battlefield is always changing. He had thought that taking advantage of the enemy’s unpreparedness with multiple rounds of mortar fire would deal a devastating blow to these native bandits. Most of the remaining ones would have been dazed by the explosions, allowing his infantry to just clean up the battlefield and deal with a few surviving enemies.

But the enemy was more alert than expected.

Even as mere wasteland plunderers, they should not be underestimated.

The enemy dispersed several squads in advance, forcing him to launch an attack immediately, lest they be discovered by the enemy. The artillery strike was initiated a few minutes ahead of schedule, and the infantry he led had to eliminate those enemy squads hundreds of meters from the enemy’s camp first.

Eliminating these bandit squads wasn’t difficult.

But the upcoming battle, he found a bit troublesome.

The damage caused by the mortars was less than expected; it was up to him and his infantry to tackle the tough fight.

Winning was not in question, but what about the losses?

If they were to suffer substantial losses while having the upper hand against a bunch of wasteland bandits, that would be quite embarrassing. Additionally, excessive losses could affect the plans of His Excellency the Governor.

He had full confidence in the thirty marines he personally brought down from the starship, but not so much in the Mech Servant soldiers. They were cannon fodder by design, equipped with garbage, and more importantly, the battle instincts implanted in the brains of the Mech Servant soldiers were also oriented toward being cannon fodder, emphasizing recklessness without fear of death.

Being cannon fodder might be an advantage, but not when acting as the regular army.

He was genuinely worried that these Mech Servants would be too impulsive and suffer too many casualties.

However, once the battle began, he immediately felt a great deal more at ease.

During the elimination of the peripheral plunderer squads, these Mech Servant soldiers didn't show too many special attributes, as the main targets were dealt with by the marines. Special operations were what the marine corps excelled in, especially since they were equipped with targeting aids, rapid enemy location, precision shooting modules... a variety of accessories. They had an overwhelming advantage over the plunderers both in terms of training and equipment level, so it was very normal for them to achieve victory without injuries.

The Mech Servant soldiers, who missed their opportunity to shine, showed remarkably good training in the process of attacking the camp.

Instead of charging forward like cannon fodder, each squad maintained open formation, advancing in groups of three. There were assault troops, fire support, and squad machine guns provided suppression from the rear as they advanced. Though the mortars a kilometer away could no longer inflict significant damage, they could still continuously lob shells to accompany the soldiers' advance and suppress enemy fire.

The tactical moves of these Mech Servant soldiers, in the eyes of someone as elite as him, seemed somewhat rigid, but they were standard and effective enough.

Those raiders who wanted to break out were pinned down inside the camp, unable to come out.

They could only occasionally fire some bullets from within, but without any accuracy. They didn't dare to show their heads, let alone take aimed shots.

Soon, several assault teams had already entered the camp. The Mech Servant soldiers' professionalism was still online, advancing in turn, covering each other, cutting in from multiple angles, minding the blind spots in their vision... all the necessary technical maneuvers were being employed.

Those bandits, who had thought that at close range they could finally mount a substantial counterattack, were still met with the ruthless slaughter by the Mech Servant soldiers.

Of course, the Mech Servant soldiers were certainly not invincible. Close-quarters combat inevitably led to casualties, but the numbers were much better than what Yan Fangxu had previously estimated.

Was the training organized by the governor really effective?

It wasn't just for show; there was a real enhancement in combat effectiveness when it came to fighting.

Three hundred cannon fodder turned into three hundred regular soldiers, and the transformation took place in such a short time that he found it truly unbelievable.

But this was a good thing.

With the Mech Servant Battalion at this level, he finally didn't have to worry about suffering too many losses in the storming battle.

Those robbers simply couldn't withstand the onslaught of the Mech Servant soldiers.

This battle was secure.

...

Yan Fangxu found it unbelievable, but for Kaja, it was utter despair.

His reaction was not slow, but still, he couldn't reverse fate.

His brothers, trapped in the camp, had already dwindled to less than half their number.

The howling mortars had stopped bombarding. He had thought this would give them a breather, even a chance to counterattack, but it didn't happen. Those attacking soldiers with mechanical eyes were the most despairing thing for him.

He had heard of 'Mech Servants', and some big powers also had them, but they were just like slave labor.

They wouldn't think independently, could only follow orders to do some low-end repetitive manual labor, not suited to being trained as soldiers. If one insisted on doing so, they could only get a bunch of cannon fodder. If there were any advantages, it was that they would not leak secrets, absolute loyalty, absolute obedience.

And these now, were Mech Servant soldiers?

Was there such an outrageous type of Mech Servant?

In their cold eyes, not a hint of stupidity could be seen, only ruthlessness. They were well-trained, their movements brisk and orderly as they slaughtered his subordinates.

A counterattack?

Quite a few of his fierce bandits indeed tried to fight back, but scattered counterattacks were useless. If any Mech Servant soldier was wounded, it didn't affect their emotions in the slightest. Even hiding in the temporary houses made of building debris and rubble was futile. Those Mech Servant soldiers would throw two to three grenades in succession, then

enter without hesitation, guns in hand, fearless of casualties, and often without incurring any, they could kill the bandits who stubbornly resisted.

Now, he knew, everything was over.

His temporary camp was bombed to ruins, everywhere there were debris and craters; his brothers lay dead or wounded across the field, killed by the bombs, scraped to death by shrapnel, their bodies shredded by the well-equipped soldiers with ‘Eagle’ Electromagnetic Rifles at long range, executed at close quarters by Mech Servant soldiers...

The ‘Prisoners’, had perished.

But Kaja still had one last card to play.

His tribe was beyond saving, but perhaps he still had a chance to save himself.

Pulling out a green, dirty glass bottle the size of his palm from his chest, he looked hesitant. He had seen what became of those who drank this stuff, and it wasn’t much better than death.

But if he didn’t drink it, he would die right now.

Eventually, he gritted his teeth, pulled out the cork, and gulped down the potion.

Chapter 5 - Chapter 5: Chapter 5, The Green-Skinned Beast

Chapter 5: Chapter 5, The Green-Skinned Beast

How tough is the green-skinned beast known as the cancer of the cosmos?

Gu Hang saw it with his own eyes today.

The battle was drawing to a close, and as he personally led the remaining troops into the fray, planning to finish off the fight and, incidentally, get a close-up whiff of the smoky scent of war, he heard a huge beastly roar, much like that of a bear.

Then, a genetically modified giant at least two meters twenty in height, muscular and hefty, with dark green skin, appeared before him.

This creature was almost naked, with only a few strips of cloth hanging from his body, clearly a result of his suddenly enlarged form bursting through his original clothes.

His skin was dark green and appeared very coarse. The weapons in his hands were wildly styled, with most components looking quite haphazard. In the hands of an ordinary person, they would seem like a handheld cannon or rocket launcher, but in the hands of this giant, they were as normal as a shotgun, and he could even use them one-handed.

After making his presence known, he immediately drew the attention of the surrounding soldiers. The Mechanized Infantry Battalion soldiers, with their G7 Type 'Striker' Rifles, aimed at him, pulled their triggers, and the automatic rifles' rapid fire fiercely enveloped him.

However, a shocking scene unfolded: the dark green mutant giant was hit by so many bullets, yet nothing happened to him!

In that instant, at least a dozen rifles were fired at him. He didn't fall, and of course, the soldiers didn't release their triggers, fully unleashing their rounds. With the beast's large frame and lack of evasive movement, most bullets hit their mark.

Logically speaking, unless it was made of iron, any flesh would be torn to shreds.

But it wasn't.

The creature was still standing there, unharmed.

Some bullets were deflected, some lost all their kinetic energy and fell, and others lodged into the skin and muscles but failed to penetrate further...

A bit of blood was shed, but it was nowhere close to a severe injury.

Kaja, having just completed his transformation, recovered from his initial confusion. He retained some self-awareness, knowing that even though he had transformed and grown stronger, his primary goal was still to escape as quickly as possible.

Thus, he started running towards the outskirts of the camp.

His increased stature and stronger muscles didn't make him clumsy; instead, they made him faster and more agile. Once he was in motion, the chances of the Mechanized Infantry Battalion soldiers hitting him plummeted.

If he hadn't been reckless and just kept his head down and ran, he might have really had a chance to get away.

But during the process, his attention was constantly drawn to the nearby Mechanized Infantry Battalion soldiers, and he couldn't resist the urge to attack them.

On the one hand, being shot irritated him—the ‘Striker’ Rifle bullets weren’t fatal, but they were still painful; on the other hand, the drug’s effect swiftly invaded his brain, urging him to unleash a bloodthirsty massacre.

Finally, he couldn’t hold back any longer.

He was still running, only at a slightly reduced speed. He turned his head and aimed his ugly, bulky gun at a Mechanized Infantry Battalion soldier and pulled the trigger.

Thick black smoke belched from the muzzle, and the burst of buckshot disintegrated the entire upper body of that Mechanized Infantry Battalion soldier, splattering flesh and blood everywhere, with plenty splashing onto Kaja himself.

The green-skinned beast, bathed in blood, became even more ferocious.

He worked the bolt action, fired another shot, and another Mechanized Infantry Battalion soldier met a gruesome death.

Another go, but the bullet didn’t fire. His shotgun only had two rounds.

Kaja instinctively reached into his chest pocket, as if to reload, but came up empty. His clothes had been torn apart, let alone any ammo he might have been carrying.

He simply tossed aside the wild shotgun and lunged directly at a third victim.

The targeted Mechanized Infantry soldier raised his gun to fire while retreating in combat, but before he could get off more than a few shots, the extremely fast green-skinned beast was already upon him. A large hand scooped up the soldier, who was then brutally torn in two.

Holding the corpse above his head and letting the blood pour down from above, Kaja felt complete satisfaction, even believing that his already invincible physique was reaching new heights. The little rationality that remained made him understand that the drugs he had taken were further enhancing his body’s potential, which might not be a good thing. But those slight worries and struggles were quickly overwhelmed by a flood of combat desire.

All he wanted was to keep killing.

A hand grenade was tossed at his feet and exploded, but Kaja had already rolled away to avoid it before it went off.

A machine gunner had set up a firing position a hundred meters away, and a succession of bullets came screaming towards him. But thanks to the combat instinct that had been implanted by the drug and was now coursing through his blood, Kaja weaved through the

gunfire with serpentine agility, not only dodging most of the bullets but also maintaining his forward charge.

At this moment, his eyes were blood red, intent only on tearing the machine gunner to shreds.

But just then, he suddenly stumbled and, due to inertia, fell heavily to the ground.

He couldn't feel his left leg, as if it had been severed by something.

Looking down, his left leg was still perfectly attached to his body, hardly injured at all. Yet no matter what he did, he couldn't move it, as if the leg attached to his body wasn't his own.

Using his hands and his remaining leg, he barely propped his body up and raised his head to see a man in luxurious clothes, protected by several Navy Marines, approaching from behind the machine gunner.

He opened his mouth wide to roar, but a burst of machine gun fire hit him full on, stifling the roar back into his throat.

Even the squad machine gun, which was much more powerful than the 'Striker' Rifle, couldn't kill him quickly. However, the 'Eagle' Electromagnetic Rifles in the Marines' hands were on another level.

The metal spikes accelerated by electromagnetic fire could penetrate his epidermis and muscle defenses. After the four Marines emptied their magazines, Kaja was riddled like a hornet's nest.

But he was not dead yet, still gasping for breath, even as the gaping wounds on his body were slowly self-healing.

Gu Hang stepped forward in stride, "This is Kaja? The leader of the Captives? The one who can fully transform humans... Those green-skins have some outrageous technology."

He actually didn't care about Kaja the individual, but the condition displayed by this mutant was worrying.

Kaja could no longer speak, only emitting meaningless roars from his throat.

Gu Hang didn't bother to say more. With a wave of his hand, the soldiers behind him took over the cleanup.

The Electromagnetic Rifles fired a series of metal spikes, turning the green beast's head into minced meat.

Dealing with a green-skin is a troublesome matter. Killing it is just the beginning; the area where its blood flowed, where its corpse lay, must all be burned with high-temperature flames. Otherwise, it wouldn't take long for a bunch of mushrooms to grow here, and then it would turn into a spawning ground for little green monsters. First would come the goblins, then orcs, and later on orclings...

Although this green-skinned beast was supposedly the leader of the 'Captives' who had mutated for some reason, who knew if there would be similar cases?

Anyway, the fight was over, and there was plenty of time to clean up the battlefield.

Gu Hang also needed to tally his gains.

[Resounding Victory, earned 19 points of Grace]

[Losses 9, Kills 146, Prisoners 11]

[1st Automaton Light Infantry Battalion: Losses 9, Kills 105]

[Navy Marine Corps: Losses 0, Kills 41]

Chapter 6 - Chapter 6: Chapter 6, Time to Upgrade.

Chapter 6: Chapter 6, Time to Upgrade.

After the battle had completely ended, a new interface popped up in front of Gu Hang.

Looking at the words "Glorious Victory," there was a strange look on his face.

Would there also be "Epic Triumphs," "Slight Advantage," "Bloody Close Victory," and the like?

He could not only see the overall spoils and losses but also the detailed situations of each branch of the troops.

And more importantly, the 19 ennoblement points he received after winning the battle.

The earnings from this battle were almost four times his regular monthly income!

Wow, so this is a war-monger system, huh? Is fighting the most profitable thing, and farming just a service for warfare?

He opened the system interface and saw that the “Hero” option was flashing slightly.

He clicked on it again, and it was his own name that was flashing.

[Hero: Gu Hang (Faction Leader), LV1, enough experience for an upgrade (10 ennoblement points)]

[Physique: 7, Spiritual: 14]

[Traits:]

[Psychic Caster: You possess the power of spiritual energy and can consume spiritual talent to release psychic spells.]

[Governor of Rage Owl Star: You are the legitimate ruler of Rage Owl Star, with a higher chance to legally unite the forces native to Rage Owl Star.]

This was his personal information.

Of the two traits, Governor of Rage Owl Star was due to his status; needless to say, the other trait, Psychic Caster, was his personal ability.

Gu Hang was a legal psychic.

The Gu Family he belonged to would, of course, train their core offspring. Education, politics, business, providing social resources—these are a given. Someone like Gu Hang who showed spiritual talent at a young age certainly wouldn’t be overlooked either.

His talent in spiritual energy wasn’t bad, and as could be seen from the system, the 14 points in that attribute showed that.

Gu Hang also had a pretty clear understanding of what attributes were about.

Strength, agility, neural response, resistance to damage... all abilities based on the body were categorized under physique. A strong body was essential for growing into an outstanding warrior.

In this era of supernatural strength, even with technological advancement, individual valor still had its place in warfare. The most elite warriors, with the most advanced equipment, slashing starships would be an exaggeration, but storming the front, capturing trenches, conquering strongholds... these were easy feats.

The green-skinned beast from before was a proof of that. If Gu Hang hadn’t been there, even though the creature wouldn’t have survived, who knew how many additional machinists and perhaps even marine troops’ lives would have been lost to kill it.

Spiritual energy was even more mysterious, and in many ignorant worlds, it was known as witchcraft or magic.

This was a supernatural force from the dark side of the world. The ultra-light speed travel of the starships, many high-specification powerful equipment and weapons, all used this supernatural source. The empire had special energy worlds, where they collected spiritual energy and condensed it into crystals.

At the same time, the higher the spiritual technology content of cutting-edge devices, the more they required high-level psychics to operate them; powerful psychics themselves, without any equipment, could also demonstrate a strong combat capability with their psychic spells.

Earlier, when Gu Hang dealt with the green-skinned creature, he used a psychic spell. A “Soul Slash” temporarily severed one of its legs, making it a live target.

This was also the only psychic spell that Gu Hang had mastered, which was hard to learn. Spending decades poring over psychic spells wasn’t something Gu Hang wanted to do.

However, the upgradeable option in the hero interface offered him a new path.

Why wouldn’t he relish the prospect of direct upgrades?

Before this, the option to upgrade was nonexistent. He noticed the words “enough experience.” He speculated that it came from winning a war.

It seemed that the upgrade option would only appear when there was enough experience.

As for the 10 points of grace needed to upgrade, he gritted his teeth and paid directly.

After receiving 19 points of grace this time, plus the previous 2 points, he had a total of 21 points, which was enough.

Suddenly, a new prompt appeared before him: “Please choose one among the following attributes to generate a new talent: Constitution, Spirituality, Command, Leadership, Unique.”

What’s this now?

Constitution and Spirituality need no further explanation, obviously related to personal strength.

The next two, Command and Leadership, seemed similar yet certainly had their differences. Gu Hang speculated that the former meant military command, enhancing the ability to lead troops in war; the latter referred to the leadership abilities of a ruler or governing official.

As for the last option ‘Unique’... a special talent given based on each individual? As to what it specifically entailed, that was anyone’s guess.

Gu Hang tried choosing ‘Unique’, but then received a new prompt: “Unique sequence upgrade path not unlocked, upgrade failed.”

“No idea what the conditions for unlocking are...”

With no other option, he could only choose from the first four.

He chose Spiritual Talent.

He did not choose Constitution because it was clear that he had more talent on the path of a Psychic Caster than that of a warrior. Although bonuses to Command or Leadership were great, they were likely not very effective in the early stages when army size was limited and the realm small. In contrast, individual strength played a more significant role in small-scale conflicts.

What’s more, if he were to become a powerful Psychic Master who could move mountains and fill seas, having tremendous personal strength might well surpass the effects of enhancements for the whole army or entire power.

After making his choice, Gu Hang immediately felt a warm surge from his chest flow through every part of his body, all the way to his extremities.

His complexion even turned rosy due to this, and fortunately, only the mechanical soldier-servants saw him. These modified beings that do not actively think wouldn’t ask any questions.

“Whew...” Exhaling a warm breath, Gu Hang felt filled with strength. He could sense his muscles becoming more defined, his joints more flexible, his senses sharper, and his thoughts quicker...

A holistic enhancement!

But... didn’t I choose Spiritual Talent? Why does it feel like my Constitution has improved?

Summoning the system again, he saw the datafied effects of the upgrade.

“Hero: Gu Hang (Faction Leader), LV2, insufficient experience to level up”

“Constitution: 8, Spirituality: 15”

“Traits: Psychic Caster, Rage Owl Star Governor”

“Talent:”

“Spiritual Energy Shield: When receiving damage, spiritual energy can be expended to offset the damage. Spirituality +1”

Constitution did indeed increase, which seemed to be a natural result of the level up enhancing basic attributes. His Constitution was somewhat low, so the increase was noticeable, whereas the rise in Spirituality was less obvious.

Yet, Spirituality was still able to grow by one point, thanks to the new talent “Spiritual Energy Shield”.

An increase in Constitution was good, as being healthier and stronger was always beneficial. The boost to Spirituality allowed him to release more Psychic Spells and increased his spell power.

However, the most crucial part of the “Spiritual Energy Shield” talent was its actual effect.

With just a thought, he could feel a miraculous energy saturating his body, immersing every cell. If an external blow struck, the corresponding damage would be nullified by the spiritual energy, lasting until he chose to turn off this ability or ran out of Spiritual Energy.

The functionality of the ‘Spiritual Energy Shield’ was also excellent. It was a switchable passive effect, incurring no cost when active until damage was received, eradicating the worry of being unable to activate skills in time for ambushes. And in critical moments, temporarily turning it off to save some Spiritual Energy for a counterattack, even at the risk of injury, was an option.

Overall, the operation was very flexible.

This practical skill of exchanging mana for health was something Gu Hang was quite satisfied with.

Chapter 7 - Chapter 7: Chapter 7, Can It Get Any Worse?

Chapter 7: Chapter 7, Can It Get Any Worse?

While the outside was buzzing with activity, there wasn't a peep inside the Abandoned Cave Society. They had many people, but only a few guns, so they didn't even dare to step outside to see what was happening at their door.

It wasn't until Patel made contact with Neili through their secret channel and confirmed that he wasn't an imposter or a traitor that they opened the door and let him in.

They only let in one person, him.

At first, he was worried that Governor would be displeased, but that wasn't the case. Gu Hang generously allowed him to enter first to explain the situation. The Governor's troops would stay outside the Abandoned Cave Society for two days, waiting for his message.

As for what message they were waiting for, Gu Hang didn't specify, but Patel had a rough idea.

The Governor had fulfilled his promise of rescue, and now it was time for the Abandoned Cave Society to show their sincerity.

To this, Patel didn't feel uncomfortable.

What was so bad about the Abandoned Cave Society being completely obedient to Governor?

As he entered through the door, he returned home.

Familiar faces appeared before his eyes, one after another.

Their complexions were both pale and blackened. Pale because they lived underground all year round, away from sunlight; blackened because the sweat from labor mixed with the coal dust, and they had no conditions to wash regularly.

He was the leader of the Abandoned Cave Society; in the cave, he knew every one of the more than nine hundred faces.

People rushed to ask him:

"Patel, are we saved?"

"Were those damn bandits all killed?"

"Who saved us?"

Face to face with these many questions, Patel at first replied while walking, answering them one by one. But later, it became impossible to address everyone's questions

individually, so he could only shout out a unified response while trying hard to make his way through the crowd.

“Yes, we are saved.”

“All those bandits have been killed.”

“The Governor saved us.”

Hearing the answers, the people wept with joy.

Having finally made his way through the crowd, he looked back at his compatriots’ malnourished and by no means pretty faces, feeling both proud and anxious.

Proud, because he had brought help and saved everyone.

Anxious, because he didn’t know what the future held.

Heaving a light sigh, he turned his head and saw his uncle, Butch.

Butch’s hand had been crushed by an overturned cart full of ore, got infected afterwards, and had to be amputated, nearly costing him his life. During that time, Patel was elected.

After Butch recovered, he didn’t attempt to seize power—there was nothing to seize. In the environment of the Abandoned Cave Society, there was no room for exploitation or oppression. Leaders were elected, and the settlement was so poor that even as leader, there was little difference in terms of labor and living conditions compared to the others.

Due to the disability, Butch couldn’t do heavy labor anymore. But he was still contributing his remaining strength, assisting Patel, his junior, with all his heart.

Butch patted his shoulder with his remaining hand, “You’ve worked hard.”

“It’s what I should do,” Patel replied.

The two of them entered a small room where Patel recounted the entire ordeal of seeking aid to Butch.

Butch let out a long sigh, “It’s a disaster, not a blessing.”

The old comrade’s attitude seemed somewhat pessimistic.

Patel disagreed with his view, “What do you mean disaster, not a blessing? I don’t see any disaster here. This is definitely our opportunity. The Governor-General has said that he will not only save our lives but also provide salvation to the end. He has come to build the entire world, and our Abandoned Cave Society is just the first stop.”

With a sigh, Butch said, “How can you just believe what those big shots say? In their eyes, we are no different from rats or bugs in the gutter. When have they ever considered us as humans? They say a few nice words when they need you, acting as if they really care about you, but once you’re no longer useful, you’re ruthlessly discarded.”

Patel said, “I don’t think the Governor-General is that kind of person.”

Butch sneered, “What do you know, you young fool? How many days have you known him?”

“What else can we do?” Patel sidestepped the issue of trust and countered, “Could our situation possibly get any worse? Over nine hundred people working themselves to death beneath these mines, no one dares to slack off—those who do get starved to death. Even so, we still can’t get enough to eat or wear, accidents happen frequently, and every winter, some freeze to death.”

“We don’t have extra property to buy guns and arm ourselves. When danger comes, we can only lock ourselves in the cave and pray it passes by. We haven’t perished previously because we were too poor, even thieves didn’t want to expend too much effort cracking a turtle shell for just a nibble of meat. Now, faced with the greediest lot, hell-bent on breaking in and selling the living for provisions, all we can do is sit and wait for death.”

“I absolutely do not want my people to continue living like this.”

“Besides, what else do we have to lose?”

This speech silenced Butch. After a while, he finally spoke, “We would lose our freedom.”

“Hahaha! Freedom!” Patel laughed loudly, his laughter nearly reaching beyond the door, and anyone unaware might think he was truly happy, “Can freedom be eaten? This time I also visited the Capital City Revival Town of the Alliance, and I’ve seen the slaves. Slaves live much better than us, we don’t even have a life as good as cattle and horses! If giving up freedom means no more starvation, freezing, or being eaten by others, then I am willing to give up freedom.”

Butch was left without any further argument, he could only sigh again, “I don’t oppose any of your decisions, I just hope we won’t regret it.”

“We will never regret it.”

…

“I believe you won’t regret it.”

That very day, Gu Hang saw Patel return with several influential members of the Abandoned Cave Society, all of whom expressed their complete submission to him.

This was all within Gu Hang's expectations.

The people of the Abandoned Cave Society had no choice.

In a humble tone, Patel said, "Governor-General, there are a total of 907 people in the Abandoned Cave Society, awaiting your first command."

"Let's take a look inside the cave."

"What? You want to go inside the cave?"

"Not welcome?"

"No... but... our conditions there are very poor, you..."

He truly did not want Gu Hang to enter the mine, not for any other reason but because the conditions inside were abysmal.

Over nine hundred people living together in cramped caves; even with ventilation, the smell inside was unbearable. The living conditions were primitive, with filth and excrement everywhere...

Patel was afraid the conditions in the mine would soil the Governor's exquisite clothes, even more afraid they would dirty his heart.

Gu Hang waved his hand and said, "I need to see what your situation is really like before deciding what to do next."

Chapter 8 - Chapter 8: Chapter 8, The True Salvation

Chapter 8: Chapter 8, The True Salvation

Although Gu Hang's arrival was unexpected and no grand welcoming ceremony could be hastily put together, the people of the Abandoned Cave Society still went to great lengths to make some display, trying to let the governor feel their respect.

As Gu Hang entered through the somewhat cleaned-up entrance of the mining cave, he saw that all the lights inside the cave had been lit.

The citizens of the Abandoned Cave Society stood in two rows, lining both sides of the mine's tunnel, greeting the arrival of the man who would determine their future fate.

Gu Hang was not the first to come in; his military supervisor, Captain Yan Fangxu, had already led over a hundred people inside ahead of him.

Along the way, robot soldiers had formed a human wall, separating the pathway from the residents of the Abandoned Cave Society.

The soldiers stood erect with their guns, while the surrounding civilians all knelt down as Gu Hang passed by.

Wherever Gu Hang went, the people there would kneel to greet him.

Aside from people, the Abandoned Cave Society had nothing else to put on a display with.

Within the crowd, Gu Hang walked, observing the conditions throughout the Abandoned Cave Society.

The people had pallid complexions, all looking rather unhealthy; in the cave lay some mining tools, like hoes and carts—purely manual work, nothing to speak of in terms of equipment.

As he walked, Gu Hang arrived at a cavity within the mine that the people of the Abandoned Cave Society used as a square and for major living areas. Numerous crude wooden structures were haphazardly built – this must be many people's homes.

Even more residents of the Abandoned Cave Society gathered here.

As Gu Hang stepped into their midst, hundreds of people, led by their leader Patel, all knelt down in unison.

Respect was shown in ample measure.

Here, a temporary platform had also been erected.

Gu Hang stepped onto it, and a microphone was already in place. Not only could his voice be heard by the people in the small square of the mine, but it could also be transmitted to those not in the square through speakers placed throughout the mine.

After all, the mine's square was not large enough to accommodate nine hundred people.

Standing on the platform, Gu Hang gazed at the faces under the dim yellow light. He could see the relief of survival from a disaster on their faces and the gratitude they felt toward him as their savior.

But at the same time, their expressions did not lack the perplexity about the future, the doubts about him, the man who would decide everyone's fate from now on, and the numbness left from a hopeless life in the wastelands.

The responsibility was great and the journey long.

But he still slowly began, “Residents of the Abandoned Cave Society, I am your governor, Gu Hang.”

“Today, I saw everyone bowing to me, showing their submission. This is good, it proves that you have made the right choice.”

“Your leader Patel pleaded with me for salvation, and I granted him that.”

“I led my troops to the Abandoned Cave Society and annihilated the bandits who threatened your lives. One hundred forty-six corpses are neatly laid out outside, and eleven prisoners will soon be judged in the presence of you all.”

“The salvation you desired has been provided, but the salvation I want to give has just begun.”

“On the harsh, merciless wasteland, whether it’s natural disasters or man-made calamities, our survival is always under threat. Today the ‘Prisoners of Death’ came, tomorrow something else might come. You need the ability to protect yourselves, and I will arm you. This is the first salvation I will bestow upon you.”

“You toil day and night in the mines, only to live a life without sunlight, never full, never warm, with people dying every winter. You have the right to a better life, and I will ensure that everyone willing to strive for it will have a better life. This is the second salvation I will bestow upon you.”

“A safe environment, plenty of food, and warmth may be your greatest desires now. But once you have had your fill, you will have more desires—better living conditions, finer spiritual comforts, and even self-actualization, honor, and faith...and I will provide you with the platform to pursue these higher aspirations. This is the third salvation I will bestow.”

“In my plan, only after I have granted you these three salvations, only after I have made your lives safe and prosperous, can we talk about truly saving you!”

Gu Hang finished his speech, and at this moment, whether fortunate enough to see Gu Hang’s face in the plaza or crowded elsewhere, only able to hear his voice through the loudspeakers, all the residents of the Abandoned Cave Society were in an uproar!

When Gu Hang mentioned that the bandits outside had all been killed, people were already exuberant. Those bandits had killed and captured their brethren, trapping them in the cave for many days with their food supplies depleted. They lived in constant dread until now they were finally rescued, and their gratitude could not be more genuine.

And when Gu Hang mentioned arming them, some residents, especially the young and hot-blooded, were even more stirred. The people of the Abandoned Cave Society always knew the importance of having guns and ammunition in the wasteland. In this survival-of-the-fittest world, without the ability to protect oneself, one is just meat waiting to be bitten into, for everyone is starving after all.

But guns don't come for free; military trade is the most valuable on the wasteland. And the people of the Abandoned Cave Society, barely able to feed and clothe themselves, simply cannot afford them.

Only with weapons will they feel secure. Faced with situations like the present one, whether they could fight back or not, they would at least have a fighting chance, and not be left to sit and wait for death, depending solely on others for rescue.

The second point, the promise of food and warmth, sparked even greater passion! Gu Hang's words struck deep in their hearts!

We work so hard, we suffer so much, why can't we have a full meal? They don't understand the exploitation of the external market, the value disparity between raw and processed products, but...the Governor-General has promised them food and warmth!

That alone was enough to make them fully support whatever the Governor-General planned to do!

The third point, the so-called 'higher pursuits'...people didn't feel as strongly about that, in fact, some were perplexed. Just staying alive was tough enough; they rarely allowed themselves to think about anything more, not understanding what 'self-actualization' or 'sense of honor' meant.

Cheering along, it was because of the momentum built by the previous points—that whatever the Governor-General said must be right!

But there were always a few who, despite the torment of a painful life, managed to keep thinking. Their eyes lit up when they heard the Governor-General mention this.

The vast majority in the Abandoned Cave Society were inspired by Gu Hang's speech!

They could see a path of light and hope unfolding before their very eyes.

Chapter 9 - Chapter 9: Chapter 9, How Many Devices are Free to Use?

Chapter 9: Chapter 9, How Many Devices are Free to Use?

Butch's mood was complicated.

As people age and undergo more hardships, and with the safety of the entire Abandoned Cave Society resting on his shoulders, it was inevitable that he would overthink and become overly suspicious.

In his view, the hundreds of people in the Abandoned Cave Society huddled together for warmth on the dangerous wasteland, seeking survival. No matter the situation, thinking more and being more cautious—even if it meant missing many opportunities—was much better than making one misstep that could lead to utter catastrophe.

When the Governor-general came with troops to the rescue, he was undoubtedly grateful. Without outside help, all of them would have died.

But to be honest, what he most hoped for was that the Governor-general would come with his troops, annihilate the bandits, and then leave. Even if it meant they had to pay a higher cost, that would be acceptable. He had considered the worst-case scenario, where taxes would double in two years, possibly leading to half of the Abandoned Cave Society starving to death, but it was still better than everyone dying.

Now, however, the Governor-general not only did not require them to give anything but was also willing to offer more, which made Butch very anxious.

If there was no cost at all, it might mean the greatest cost of all.

After listening to Gu Hang's speech, he too was unavoidably impassioned for a moment and cheered jubilantly along with the crowd.

Everything the Governor-general spoke of, of course, was what he hoped for, what he dreamed of having.

But...

Was it really possible?

The people of the Abandoned Cave Society, besides their strength, had nothing. No technology, no equipment, even the mines, relics from before the war, had limited reserves and were difficult to exploit. If the veins were of good quality, how could they have possibly ended up in their hands?

How could such people pursue a better life?

Butch could not imagine.

He didn’t want to think this way, but he couldn’t help fearing the worst, feeling that Gu Hang’s words were all deception, and perhaps they would end up being sold off as slaves or something of the sort in the future.

But he was no longer the leader of the Abandoned Cave Society.

The current leader, Patel, seemed brainwashed, fervently trusting the Governor-general’s words. After the Governor-general’s speech, the young man was beside himself with excitement, and at the slightest beckoning, he scurried off to discuss the grand plans for the development of the Abandoned Cave Society.

“Sold out and still counting the money for the buyer!”

Butch could only retreat to his cramped and musty little space, brooding in private.

His brooding didn’t last long before his door was knocked on.

Opening the door, Patel walked in.

The room was pitch black, and Patel asked, “Why don’t you light a lamp?”

“To save a bit.”

“According to the Governor-general, a happy life can’t be saved into existence.”

“Heh, now you’re spouting nothing but the Governor-general’s words.”

“He saved us.”

“I’ve never denied that.”

“He also wants to bring us a bright future.”

“Hmm,” Butch replied noncommittally, having given up on persuading Patel.

What else could be done at this point?

Truth be told, the Abandoned Cave Society had no strength. Even if Patel listened to him, what could they do? Could they revolt against the Governor-general?

Thinking this, he grew even more disheartened. He listlessly asked, “Aren’t you supposed to be discussing important matters with the Governor-general? What do you want with an old wreck like me?”

“The discussions are already done, I came to ask for your help.”

“That was quick?”

“The Governor values efficiency highly,” Gu Hang said.

“What do you want me to do?” Butch asked.

“Lead our people to the surface and establish a settlement. We can’t continue to live in the mines for much longer; the poor living conditions will lead to disease,” Patel explained.

“But…”

Butch hesitated.

Of course, it would be great to live on the surface—who would choose the mines if they had a choice? In fact, the Abandoned Cave Society had plans to expand to the surface and had a camp there.

Then, the ‘Prisoners of Oblivion’ beat them up. The dozens of people they captured were taken from that surface camp.

The surface was too dangerous; with the Abandoned Cave Society’s capabilities, they simply couldn’t defend it.

“I know what you’re worried about,” Patel said, “but we have the power to protect ourselves. The Governor will leave behind a hundred robotic soldiers to be responsible for defense here. At the same time, a hundred sets of soldier equipment will be transported here. We’ll select people from the Abandoned Cave Society and arm a platoon!”

Now it was Butch’s turn to be surprised.

He thought the Governor was bluffing, but he hadn’t expected the promise to be carried out so quickly.

No, it should be said, two promises.

Arming the Abandoned Cave Society’s own soldiers so they could protect themselves was one thing; building houses on the surface to improve living conditions was another.

Change was immediate.

On this matter, Butch couldn’t refuse.

But he was curious about something else, “You want my help to construct the surface camp, what will you be doing yourself?”

It certainly wouldn't be training the military. That kind of thing would surely be managed by someone from the Governor's side. Not to mention military authority, even if the Abandoned Cave Society handled it themselves, they lacked the capability.

"Me?" Patel said with a mysterious smile, not keeping the suspense any longer. "I'm going to build our own production line. There will be new mining machines delivered, as well as alloy smelting furnaces. The Governor doesn't just want to help us improve the efficiency of mineral extraction, but also to directly establish a production line for producing alloy steel!"

Hearing this, Butch was genuinely astonished and found himself at a loss for words.

Establishing a military force, returning to the surface to live—these things were certainly good, but plainly speaking, they were all illusory. How could the Abandoned Cave Society, on its own, afford a decent military force? Wouldn't they still rely on the Governor for support?

This was at the core of Butch's pessimism: for the Abandoned Cave Society to lead a good life, they had to possess enough value themselves. He never expected others to provide unlimited, gratuitous support to the Abandoned Cave Society—it was impossible.

Even if it was just a temporary measure to win hearts, it was for a greater benefit. Whether it was to build a good reputation or for a darker scheme, it was never a good thing.

But now, he knew he was wrong, egregiously so.

Indeed, Gu Hang wouldn't provide unlimited, gratuitous support to the Abandoned Cave Society—he did want something from them. However, what he needed was something that the Abandoned Cave Society currently couldn't offer.

But that didn't matter, as Gu Hang could enable the Abandoned Cave Society to develop. Once their productivity increased and their inherent value rose, then they would be able to pay the price that Gu Hang was asking for.

Of course, by that time, the debt the Abandoned Cave Society owed Gu Hang would likely be much more than just a life-saving favor.

But Butch was content.

This opportunity was what he had been dreaming of.

He was completely invigorated now, having thrown his previous worries to the winds, "When do we start?"

Patel asked teasingly, “Didn’t you say before that it was a disaster, not a blessing? And something about losing freedom?”

Butch’s face turned red, but he stubbornly retorted, “You little brat, what do you know! Is our freedom worth more than the equipment the Governor is bringing in?”

“Hahahaha!” Seeing his uncle change his attitude by a hundred and eighty degrees, Patel laughed out loud.

This wasn’t mocking his uncle; this was joy for the future of all of them

Chapter 10 - Chapter 10: Chapter 10, Technological System

Chapter 10: Chapter 10, Technological System

[You have successfully allied with the Covenant Empire faction: Abandoned Cave Society]

After finishing his speech, Gu Hang reopened the system interface and saw this new message.

The Covenant can do this?

In the system’s judgment, even a small place like the Abandoned Cave Society was recognized as a faction?

He looked further.

[Current Grace Points: 11]

[Total Revenue of Territories: 6/Terra Month]

[Governor’s Temporary Camp: 5/Terra Month]

[Abandoned Cave Society: 1/Terra Month]

The total revenue had risen slightly each month, Gu Hang pursed his lips, not particularly satisfied. The population of the Abandoned Cave Society wasn’t large enough, and their productivity wasn’t strong enough. By contrast, his temporary camp, although built from scratch, had more than three thousand people.

Of course, there was still considerable room for development on both sides. He believed that once productivity and prosperity increased, the monthly Grace income would also see a substantial rise.

But as far as Gu Hang's current knowledge was concerned, relying on monthly fixed income would at best ensure a basic guarantee.

To become wealthy, one must rely on warfare.

What Grace system? This is a War Frenzy system!

After wiping out the main force of the 'Prisoners of War', he had gained 19 Grace points. The windfall gave him a taste for more. Once the work at the Abandoned Cave Society was done, he dispatched Yan Fangxu, instructing the captain to take half of the elite marine corps and a Mechanized Servant Infantry Company to launch an attack on the 'Prisoners of War' bandit stronghold based on the confessions of the captives.

It should be an easy battle. The main force of the Prisoners of War had already been annihilated outside the Abandoned Cave Society, and most of those left in the camp were the old, weak, sick, and disabled.

After all, bandits have families too.

The handful of bandits left behind weren't much of a concern, they added up to barely fifty people, and it was unclear how many guns they could muster. The forces that Yan Fangxu took were more than enough to annihilate them completely.

Gu Hang hoped that Yan Fangxu would save as many of the still-living Abandoned Cave Society prisoners as possible, but if not, he couldn't force it.

Besides, what Gu Hang was looking forward to more was the harvest of Grace points. Although he knew the enemy was weak and the Grace earnings wouldn't be high, it should be better than simply waiting for the fixed income each month, right?

Thinking this, he continued to look down.

Then, a bigger surprise came.

He saw that the system had silently added a new function.

Beneath the [Heroes] and [Soldier Cards] options, a new choice quietly sat there.

[Technology].

Gu Hang was far from calm.

He had previously felt that the system was a War Frenzy system, not only because it awarded many points for winning battles but also in terms of the system's functionalities.

Whether it was individual leveling or the training and leveling of troops, it was all in preparation for war.

It seemed to be a cycle system where the more you fought, the stronger you became, and the stronger you became, the more you could fight, with farming being a secondary element.

But unexpectedly, the system's functionalities had not been fully disclosed to him.

Could there be other new functionalities in the future?

And what conditions would be needed to unlock them?

It was unknown.

There would be plenty of time to delve deeper later; right now, what Gu Hang was most eager to see was exactly what this [Technology] function entailed.

Upon opening it, the system interface displayed a sky full of stars, except that each star was dim, waiting for him to light them up.

Upon closer inspection, these dark stars seemed interconnected in a rather intricate manner, varying in size. Each star seemed to represent a specific technology.

[You may invest Favor points to initiate a random technology unlock. The success rate and the level of technology unlocked will increase with more points invested. The minimum tier requires 10 points for one unlock, the second tier requires 100 points, and the third tier requires 1000 points for one unlock...]

A gacha, lottery mechanism?

Could it be a scam?

Gu Hang had some psychological shadows regarding these gacha things.

But there were no other options.

He currently had only eleven points of Favor. After one draw at the lowest standard, they'd be gone. Judging from his understanding of similar mechanisms, drawing once at the lowest level often didn't yield any good results.

But the problem was, if he didn't spend them here, he had nowhere else to use the ten points of Favor!

In terms of heroes, he was now at level 2, capped by experience. Even with Favor points, he couldn't level up; as for troop training, from non-elite to T5, it cost 1 point of Favor for every hundred people, from T5 to T4, 1 point for every 10 people, and from T4 to T3, 1 point per person.

Now, his Mech Servant Battalion was T5 and couldn't be upgraded due to hardware limitations. The elite troopers of the marine corps could be upgraded, but elevating just 11 of them to T3 wasn't very meaningful, especially since their equipment wouldn't improve; thus, their comprehensive combat ability wouldn't reach the mark.

With that in mind, if he didn't want his Favor points to mold away, drawing technology was indeed his only choice.

So, he might as well draw.

Hopefully, he wouldn't be unlucky.

As his thoughts commanded, ten points of Favor quietly vanished, and in their place, a star in the dimly lit sky lit up.

[Basic Technology: Alloy Plastic Steel]

[A research product of the Empire Mechanical Doctrine, it is a qualified multi-functional material, based on steel, blended with various minerals to forge. It has different properties depending on the specific formula used. It can be used for soldier's bulletproof inserts, construction materials, vehicle armor, spaceship components...]

As expected, it was just the most basic technology, and it was in the domain of raw materials.

But upon further understanding, Gu Hang's mouth dropped open:

"I've struck gold!"

Alloy Plastic Steel was not an exceptionally rare material, and the performance gap between different ratios and manufacturing processes could be drastic. The best-quality plastic steel could be used to make core material components for precision instruments, while the poor-quality ones could only serve as construction materials.

If it were just the process, the formula, and the blueprints, their usefulness wouldn't be that great. Given Gu Hang's current poor state, he didn't have the means to implement the process or blueprints.

But... what the system provided was akin to spoon-feeding.

The illumination of one technology provided three things:

Firstly, there were theories, processes, and design blueprints. With these, as long as there were sufficient technological talents and an industrial base, one could apply this technology on a large scale directly and build factories.

That wasn't peculiar, but what came next were two items: Black Box Manufacturing Machines.

Black box is an adjective, implying that no one can know how the equipment operates internally. Just by inputting the rawest materials, it can directly produce finished products.

And such Black Box Manufacturing Machines numbered two, each distinct. The first one is a finished-product black box, which required only iron ore and any ratio of materials to directly produce the highest level of Alloy Plastic Steel material.

The second one is a master black box, similarly requiring only the most basic materials to produce the smelting furnaces capable of manufacturing qualified Alloy Plastic Steel.

This was amazing, Gu Hang thought, looking at the two machines that he could materialize at any time, along with the knowledge in his mind, and realizing how powerful the technology system was.

The food was literally being fed to his mouth.

Indeed, Gu Hang lacked any significant technological or technical talents under his command, but with these devices, he figured that even a group of baboons could manage to put together an Alloy Plastic Steel production line.

Ten points of Favor, a massive profit!

"What Battle Frenzy System? I declare, this is the ultimate Farming System!"