Governor 271

Chapter 271: No Need to Worry About Imperial Tax at All - Part 3

Otherwise, some equipment is so heavy that its own weight is more than some structures, which are not sturdy enough, can bear.

In any case, with these two gadgets in place, the Wind Falcon Rapid Attack Vessel could roll off the production line and be mass-produced on its own.

Of course, a servo skull is still missing. If there is no servo skull to serve as the fire control system, production is still possible; it's just that the copilot or, in other terms, the gunner, would have to aim manually.

But clearly, that would reduce combat effectiveness to some extent.

Once you have a servo skull, it's like having an auxiliary computer.

As for what exactly a servo skull is…it is actually a form of genetic technology that can turn a human with an intact brain and skull into a "wetware component". Similar to the way servitors are made, part of the brain is removed, the personality and conscious thought are erased, leaving it to function merely as a type of computer.

In many creations by the Sect of Mechanics, such an object can be found: a human skull connected to some machines by a metal spinal cord, sometimes able to move on its own, floating around…

To be honest, Gu Hang didn't quite understand why this was considered a basic technology. In his previous life, this would have been some seriously black tech, dark enough to be considered the darkest of them all.

Yet, this was indeed just a basic technology.

Like land resource exploration, servo skull technology is also blueprint in nature; it includes the manufacturing process.

A finished black box could immediately produce a set of equipment required for a servo skull conversion workshop.

It was simpler than imagined. A workshop, a junior commissioner, could produce one per day.

But Gu Hang's attention was caught by a very important part included in this process: burning incense, praying, six hours of scripture recitation…

Initially, Gu Hang didn't understand, but he soon got it.

To consider this universe as purely materialistic would be foolish. He himself was a wielder of Spiritual Energy.

Clearly, the process that could really produce servo skulls was inextricably linked to supernatural forces.

Or rather, almost all technology may have some supernatural element involved to varying degrees, whether overt or covert.

Once he realized this, Gu Hang didn't struggle with it anymore.

Just use it, regardless of the principle.

After all, he himself couldn't make sense of it.

However, Gu Hang was still somewhat uneasy about the fact that manufacturing servo skulls required a complete human head.

He wasn't obstinately ignorant, nor would he let the strict morals and ethics of the Empire restrict him utterly—since by the standards of the Empire, making servo skulls from living people wasn't really a big deal.

But he certainly wasn't going to randomly capture people to use as material.

In this regard, he had established certain rules: only convicts on death row and those who had been stripped of human rights, lacking even an E9 ranking, could be used as materials.

Only those who had no human rights could be treated as non-human and have their desires ignored.

In addition, arrangements could be made with the public, and soldiers could sign related donation documents before death; after death, their bodies could be donated, and their brains would be preserved.

Causes of death like a headshot, brain cancer, and the like, were definitely out of the question. Deaths that had occurred too long ago were also unacceptable. However, other types of bodily organ failure leading to death, if the head was preserved by special means within an hour after death, then it could undergo the conversion operation to become a servo skull.

More directly, doing it before death yielded the highest success rate.

However, Gu Hang had not yet decided whether to open up this option. It could lead to ethical issues, even murder and corruption.

For now, there was no need, but if the situation changed in the future and the demand for servo skulls was too great to be met by death row inmates, Gu Hang might actually be forced to propose it.

It was unfortunate that the prisoners who had been captured for trial and execution had been shot before Gu Hang could harvest their servo skulls, as they would have been a good source of material.

In any case, with this technology in hand, the Wind Falcon Rapid Attack Vessel could now be comprehensively put into production.

In the last two months, finished black boxes had already churned out eight Wind Falcons. With the continuation of production, the initial estimate is that three can be produced each month. Adding in that the black box can turn out four a month, the total would be seven per month.

Of course, this production capacity will increase over time.

By the time tax is due a year and a half from now, Gu Hang optimistically estimates that his Star Realm Armed Forces could be equipped with an Air Force Corps, with around a hundred Wind Falcons without much problem.

And this Air Force Corps could comfortably meet the standard of one million Tax Currency.

Apart from alloy cerasteel, servo skulls, and anti-gravity engines, with the Wind Falcon Rapid Attack Vessel now in production, the deep mining operations at the Ruin Mine have also been initially constructed and put into production.

The “Ruin Mine” and “Storm Mine” in Gaota Province have both commenced operations as well,

Especially the Storm Mine, Wu Jiarong has recently devoted a month’s effort to mastering the primitive technology extracted from the ruins for collecting spiritualized gas and has came up with a trial version; a sturdy group of wind towers has been constructed and connected to the Energy Compressor.

According to Wu Jiarong’s estimates, in two months’ time, they should be able to achieve the projected monthly income of 40,000 Tax Currency in energy crystals.

Of course, this is an average, an estimation, the actual amount mainly depends on how often the Low Energy Storms blow.

According to the latest statistics from the Alliance Government’s production department, in terms of Tax Currency, the annual output value of the entire Alliance can now reach slightly over two million Tax Currency.

Chapter 272: No Need to Worry About Imperial Tax at All - Part 4

This was Gu Hang’s eighth month on the planet’s surface.

Even without the matter of offsetting the Imperial Tax with the Troops of the Star Realm, paying 2.5 million Tax Currency in one year and four months wouldn’t be a problem.

Admittedly, a tax yield of two million Tax Currency per year definitely can't all go to taxes, as people need to eat and drink. But who's to say that productivity won't continue to rise?

After all, the current main production capacity of the Union still lies with the population of about 1.6 million in the Twin Cities. The remaining population of over 3.3 million, most of whom are in extreme poverty, contribute very little to productivity.

However, given that Gu Hang was able to construct an industrial center like Weixing City in just eight months, he certainly has the capacity to create another one. Those over three million impoverished people have enormous potential for productive growth.

Given a year, he was absolutely confident in boosting the current annual output of two million by more than 500%.

Paying a year's Imperial Tax for a single city, no problem at all.

Not to mention, he was still expanding.

Gu Hang was no longer worried about the Imperial Tax at all, not the first phase, and even less so for the subsequent phases. He already had too many ways to deal with tax issues, and the pressure brought by Imperial levies would become lighter and lighter with development and expansion.

Besides, there was always someone to extort.

In the sky, the Beautiful Lady was doing business with Blackbird Heavy Industries.

As the Planetary Governor, Gu Hang approved the request of Blackbird Heavy Industries to engage in interstellar trade with the Beautiful Lady on the condition that they pay the current tax, as well as the past two incomplete tax periods, totaling seven million Tax Currency.

It was a reasonable demand. Blackbird Heavy Industries, entrenched in the Western World of Rage Owl Star, controlled a population of over ten million directly or indirectly. Based on a tithe tax standard,

collecting two million in taxes per period was no issue. Adding the past dues, seven million Tax Currency was actually on the low side.

A month ago, the envoy from Blackbird Heavy Industries had already arrived at Revival City and met with Gu Hang.

The two parties had several rounds of negotiations on this matter.

In the end, Gu Hang couldn't stick to the seven million and refuse to budge.

Clearly, Blackbird Heavy Industries couldn't agree to the seven million price tag.

First of all, they didn't have that much money; secondly, even if they did, they wouldn't give it, as the value brought by this interstellar trade might not even be worth that much. Why should they give so much to the Governor?

Gu Hang didn't want to push too hard either.

He could have declared Blackbird Heavy Industries as traitors for not paying taxes, but he didn't have the power to quell a rebellion thousands of miles away. He could also block the interstellar trade of Blackbird Heavy Industries, making not only this deal fail but also preventing any legitimate future interstellar trade.

But if things really went that far, nobody would benefit.

Blackbird Heavy Industries could smuggle, although they would have to face the threat of starships. But after all, starships are only so large and have to run circles in planetary orbits. If the smugglers flew to the other side of the planet, using small ships to enter the atmosphere and fly at low altitudes to evade detection…

Although it's troublesome and risky, it's not completely impossible to conduct business.

And if Blackbird Heavy Industries was hit, what good would that do Gu Hang right now? Nothing at all.

It was better to negotiate a reasonable price and secure the deal.

If they didn't agree to seven million, then negotiations would continue, with Gu Hang's bottom line being two million.

In the end, they settled on a price of around three million five hundred thousand.

Just this amount of money alone was enough to pay the taxes in one year and four months and still have a surplus.

Indeed, Gu Hang was not worried about the Imperial Tax, having complete confidence.

However, not everyone was happy with the negotiations between Gu Hang and Blackbird Heavy Industries.

Chapter 273: Gu Hang, you are really too bad

Those who were not too happy about the agreement reached between Gu Hang and Blackbird Heavy Industries were Yelisia and Wang Jiarong.

Let's start with Yelisia.

This outstanding young woman from the Fufana Family did not have a legitimate stance to oppose the matter, but she clearly hoped Gu Hang would fall out with Blackbird Heavy Industries. Moreover, during several calls, she had explicitly stated that should the negotiations fail, she could completely block the connection between Blackbird Heavy Industries and the starry sky.

Publicly and privately, she argued that Blackbird Heavy Industries' failure to pay taxes was equivalent to rebellion, a disdain for the governor's authority.

Gu Hang brushed her off.

Dealing with the Fatches Family was a matter for you, the Fufana Family, and the Pei Desi brothers. Why should I act as your enforcer if you're offering me no benefits?

Even if a day comes when Gu Hang must completely unify the entire planet, inevitably facing Blackbird Heavy Industries, that day is not today.

There are no eternal friendships, only eternal interests. Future conflicts do not prevent turning a profit now.

Yelisia was thus completely out of options.

Gu Hang did not label them imperial traitors but approved their interstellar trade; Beautiful Lady was a legitimate member of the Empire Commerce Guild, with merchant qualifications. These two parties conducting legal trade activities, she had no proper reason to attack or sabotage.

She could only pinch her nose as Wang Jiarong, representing Gu Commercial Firm, and Blackbird Heavy Industries, representing the Fatches Family, exchanged goods ship after ship, fuming with irritation.

In their most recent communication with the surface, her anger vented on Gu Hang, questioning him on when he could arrange for a battle suitable for the currently damaged Quintet, to earn more merits?

She even 'threatened' in a fit of rage:

"If you don't find some proper military achievements, I might not stay!"

Facing the peevish Yelisia, Gu Hang consoled her with a smile, drew a few pie-in-the-sky promises, and finally satiated her, leaving her content to continue waiting patiently.

When Yelisia came back to her senses, realizing she might have been sweet-talked by Gu Hang's glib tongue, she got upset again.

She had an even worse thought: Could it be that Gu Hang, through this incident, was coordinating with the Gu Family to repair relations with the Fatches Family? Was the payment by Blackbird Heavy Industries essentially a gesture of goodwill towards the Gu Clan?

And even, was there some unknown cunning scheming involved?

Thinking of all this made Yelisia even more annoyed.

“Gu Hang! You’re just too wicked!”

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“Cousin, you’re just too wicked!”

In their communication, Wang Jiarong complained to her cousin.

“I’m not, I didn’t, stop talking nonsense.” Gu Hang denied it in threefold.

Wang Jiarong rolled her eyes. Having a closer relationship with Gu Hang, she asked more directly, “Cousin, tell me the truth, do you not want to reconcile with the family, feeling it’s better to hold on to the Pei Desi leadership?”

“I’m not, I didn’t, stop talking nonsense.” Gu Hang consistently denied it again.

But to say he hadn’t thought about it?

That wouldn’t be entirely true either.

Blackbird Heavy Industries had spent a large sum, 3.5 million Tax Currency, which hurt them considerably. And Gu Hang’s surname was ultimately unchangeable; he was a member of the Gu Family.

It was said that the Fatches Family was very skeptical if the Gu Family had any sincerity in their actions to repair relations.

Internally in the Gu Family, there was also considerable dissatisfaction with Gu Hang's behavior, and several messages had come through, all of which Gu Hang ignored.

Why bother with them? Did sharing the same surname Gu entitle them to point fingers?

All things considered, both Yelisia and Wang Jiarong were overthinking, or rather, underthinking.

Governor Gu didn't plan to cling to anyone's legs or shear anyone's wool.

Why should I mix with the Pei Desi brothers? They got me a governor's commission which seemed valuable, but in reality, they were trying to use me to drag my mother into the fray. A cruiser was sent as supposed aid, but they didn't provide a single bit of resource for planet construction.

Gu Hang wasn't about to feel grateful for that.

Dream on.

It was the same with the Gu Clan, and likewise on my mother's side, cutting ties mercilessly to avoid getting dragged down. Well, if we're cut off, then we're cut off, who needs to rely on you?

Gu Hang didn't consider any of them enemies, but there was no need to treat them as insiders either.

Fair cooperation, mutually beneficial transactions. If the price is right, let's do business; if not, maybe next time.

That was Gu Hang's attitude.

Of course, there was no need to say that outright and hurt feelings.

With the Gu Clan, it was all about ‘keeping it in the family’; with the leaders, it was about ‘gratitude for their favor, willing to devote life and limb.’

No problem.

Gu Hang didn’t want to discuss this matter further with Wang Jiarong and changed the subject to another matter:

“By the way, I’ve got the demand list for those goods on your merchant ship, and I already know how to pay for them.”

Wang Jiarong rolled her eyes, “It’s that money Blackbird Heavy Industries gave you, right?”

Gu Hang also laughed, “Yes, exactly! They really are great benefactors!”

He had no intention of keeping the 3.5 million Tax Currency promised by Blackbird Heavy Industries; money that lay idle couldn’t hatch more money.

As for using the Tax Currency for taxes later? That was not an option either.

Wealth has no value if it’s not used. Gu Hang would rather invest it all in production, in the development of his territory.

As for taxes? He’d deal with it in a year and a half.

The bigger the investment, the greater the output of Gu Hang’s territory, the less he would worry about Imperial Tax.

As for what Gu Hang wanted to buy, much of it was related to interstellar warriors.

First of all, it was the things promised to the interstellar warriors.

Chapter 274: Gu Hang, you are really too bad_2

He had promised to bring the Phoenix Battle Group a high-quality, advanced genetic workshop capable of conducting genetic implant surgeries.

The price Wang Jiarong quoted for this set of equipment was 500,000 tax currency.

According to her, this thing wasn't expensive; some powerful war troops used the same thing. The success rate of the genetic seed implantation surgery mainly depended on the recipient's own qualifications and, secondly, on the level of genetic science of the person performing the surgery.

Ordinary battle groups would have a position known as 'Pharmacist,' responsible for this task, including collecting genetic seeds from comrades on the battlefield and creating new soldiers to provide fresh blood for the battle group.

Currently, the Phoenix Battle Group did not have this position, but it was said that old Priest Rizzo had been a pharmacist before; they just hoped his skills weren't rusty now.

Additionally, a set of Terminator Power Armor was needed; this was also something Gu Hang had promised to Matins.

The quoted price for this set of Terminator Power Armor was 800,000 tax currency.

Looking at these prices, Gu Hang could only say that stuff related to the Starfighter was damn expensive.

Gu Hang had estimated the value of his troops.

Currently, he had three types of division and brigade formations under his command: the composite division, the motorized infantry division, and the garrison division.

The most expensive military force was the mechanized composite brigade like the 1st Extinguishing Wind Brigade and the 13th Brigade, whose total production cost, including equipment and manpower, was about 200,000 tax currency.

The production cost of a motorized infantry division was only half of that, worth 100,000 tax currency.

The garrison division was only worth 75,000.

One Interstellar Warrior's Terminator Power Armor was worth the total production cost of four composite divisions or eight motorized infantry divisions, including manpower and equipment!

It was outrageous!

According to Wang Jiarong, she hadn't made much money on the batch she sold to Gu Hang, basically selling it to him for the same price she acquired it.

In this regard, Gu Hang believed her—he had asked Yelisia and received a similar answer.

Either of these two women could potentially deceive him, but no matter how good their relationship was when they cooperated for mutual benefit, there was a natural conflict between them regarding securing Gu Hang. Given the chance, neither would pass up the opportunity to one-up the other.

With the prices not being an issue, Gu Hang began to doubt the cost-effectiveness of this stuff.

An old Terminator warrior killing off eight divisions?

Gu Hang didn't believe it.

Pile them up and he would overwhelm them; no matter how thick the Terminator Armor was, it was still individual armor. If a 155mm artillery shell couldn't open a can, firing a hundred or a thousand shots, the armored vehicle's machine guns barraging, bomb-carrying machine guns shooting vigorously… sheer firepower could smash the can open.

It just meant more people would die.

However, he quickly realized this wasn't the right way to calculate it.

Having elite individual soldiers and pitting them against a formal army in head-on combat was the sign of a commander with a screw loose.

But at certain critical strategic points, in places where the enemy couldn't deploy heavy firepower, for special combat missions—in short, where large-scale military forces couldn't reach—these super soldiers could demonstrate a value higher than an entire army.

But regardless, the total of 900,000 tax currency was a commitment Gu Hang had made to the Phoenix, and he intended to keep his promise.

After all, with Matins equipped with the Terminator, he would be working for him; rounding off, it was practically like buying it for himself.

The genetic seed implant equipment was the same principle.

Beyond that, Gu Hang also bought twenty sets of unpainted, brand-new Interstellar Warrior Powered Armor.

They were the seventh generation of tactical power armor, known as 'Sky Eagle Type,' the most common, widely used, and… cheapest powered armor, with the breathing grates on the helmet as the most characteristic feature.

But they were still worth 40,000 tax currency per set.

A total of 20 sets of tactical power armor cost Gu Hang another 800,000 tax currency.

This made him sigh, “Now I understand why a Starfighter Battle Group would need an entire planet as a home, to supply them with resources. A slightly poor planet really couldn’t afford it.”

Wang Jiarong scoffed, “This is just the beginning; your current investment in the battle group hasn’t even touched on the more expensive levels yet.”

She was right.

A standard battle group not only needed power armor and superhuman warriors but also various vehicles and equipment unique to Starfighters, required a large auxiliary army, and even a fleet.

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Especially at the fleet stage, that’s truly a money pit with no bottom.

But fortunately, Gu Hang currently doesn’t need to worry about such things, and he might never have to allocate a fleet to the Phoenix Battle Group, as that does not align with his interests.

All he had to do was to meet the current needs of the Phoenix. He could certainly afford to sustain the four living warriors.

Of the 20 sets of tactical power armor Gu Hang had purchased, he only planned to give five sets to Matins. The reason he gave was that these were gifts for the two other warriors apart from Matins and Rizzo, who had special armors, to replace their battle-worn, tattered old power armors.

The old armors that were replaced were supposed to be given to Gu Hang to offset the cost.

Of course, Gu Hang actually kept them for himself.

The other three armors were gifts for the three incoming Starfighters, the new recruits.

As for the remaining 15 sets, Gu Hang planned to keep them for himself for the time being.

If the Phoenix needed more in the future, then some from these fifteen could be allocated to them.

It was also possible that Gu Hang would later try to exchange for genetic seeds to create new Starfighters, in which case these suits of armor would come in handy.

Rage Owl Star was still a long way from being able to manufacture Interstellar Warrior Powered Armor, and Gu Hang didn't even know at what level the technology for manufacturing powered armor appeared in the technology tree interface.

Certainly, it was neither basic nor advanced.

If he wanted to acquire it, he guessed it was still far off in the future.

For now, the only way for him to get power armor was through interstellar trade.

So, he shouldn't miss this opportunity.

After the Beautiful Lady left, he didn't know when the next sizable merchant convoy would arrive.

Besides these power armors, Gu Hang also bought some other items that Rage Owl Star was unlikely to be able to produce in the near future.

Such as thermal melt weapons, powered weapons, and so on.

He planned to give part of these items to the Phoenix Battle Group and intercept a portion for himself.

In any case, the four warriors of the Phoenix Battle Group had indeed undergone quite an upgrade. Not only did the group leader Matins receive a Terminator Power Armor, their weaponry had also been upgraded.

If they faced another heavily armored orc boss or a Green Skin Overlord, at the very least, they now had some means to deal with them, and wouldn't be as devastated in battle.

These weapons and equipment cost Gu Hang an additional 400,000 Tax Currency. The most expensive among them was a 'Blade of Honor' type powered sword, valued at 200,000 Tax Currency, which Gu Hang gave to Matins, replacing his nearly worn-out chainsaw sword.

By that calculation, after extorting 3.5 million from Blackbird Heavy Industries, 2.5 million was gone in an instant.

There was 1 million Tax Currency left, and Gu Hang didn't save any of it.

He purchased quite a few miscellaneous items, including soilless farm technology, water purification technology, high-quality food crops…

These technologies and equipment would help Gu Hang establish five large soilless farms, similar in technology to what the Western Desert People on Rage Owl Star used from the pre-war era.

With these five large farms, plus the synthetic starch production line that Wu Jiarong had already mastered, the self-sufficiency rate of grains for the alliance could increase significantly.

Not much need to be said about the water purification equipment and technology, as the water on Rage Owl Star wasn't particularly clean. Any improvement was welcome. Whether it's wastewater treatment and reuse or seawater desalination, this set of equipment could handle it.

Beyond that, a production line for exoskeletons was introduced.

This too was quite costly. Gu Hang estimated that it could be considered advanced technology, or maybe among the best of the basic technologies.

However, this exoskeleton was far from a real power armor; it was not difficult to achieve, and upon introducing a production line, they could be mass-produced, facilitating Wu Jiarong's subsequent reverse engineering. Once mastered, he could even expand the production line on his own.

And thus, the last 1 million Tax Currency was spent.

Chapter 275: Gene Seed Implant Surgery

Powered exoskeletons are a different beast from powered armor.

Even if you welded armor plates onto the exoskeleton to make them look somewhat similar, or even fashioned the steel plates after the Interstellar Warrior Powered Armor for a cosplay, the reality is far from comparable.

Essentially, powered exoskeletons simply provide soldiers with additional load-bearing capacity, making it easier for them to carry heavier loads with less effort, and at most, a few steel plates may be welded on for bulletproofing.

Systems like the life support, electronic muscle bundles, tactical systems, and assisted firing systems contained in the Interstellar Warrior Powered Armor… None of that is included, and it's unlikely to have the same level of protection.

But with such a set of equipment, trained elite mortal soldiers can handle bomb guns that would otherwise be difficult to bear due to recoil.

Or they could continue to use laser guns or electromagnetic rifles.

Strapping on some individual heavy firepower such as automatic rocket nests is also doable.

Add a chain sword, and train soldiers to T2 or T1 level…

An elite squad like that, with some effort, could barely suffice as a super poor man's version of an Interstellar Warrior.

The key is that it's much cheaper.

A suit of powered armor costs forty thousand Tax Currency, while the cost to manufacture an exoskeleton is only a thousand Tax Currency, a fortyfold difference in price.

Can a single Interstellar Warrior take down forty elite soldiers armed with chain swords and bomb guns, and enhanced with exoskeletons?

Perhaps, but there's also a high chance of failure.

The genuine Interstellar Warrior might easily blow away these super poor versions with a single shot; but on the flip side, elite soldiers with bomb guns and chain swords, wearing exoskeletons, also have the ability to threaten an Interstellar Warrior. Ordinary tactical powered armor can resist bullets and laser gun pressure, but the loyal bomb gun and roaring chain sword won't show any mercy.

And when facing ordinary soldiers, fully equipped special forces elites can also enjoy the effect of damage crushing.

Gu Hang's 10th Special Warfare Brigade plans to experiment with a few squads like this.

It's a long shot from replacing Interstellar Warriors, but it should suffice for some secondary-level special missions.

However, the production capacity of this line is average at best, estimated at about fifty sets a month, so it's only enough for special elite use. If there's a plan to produce on a larger scale, production capacity won't be able to keep up, and the cost would be too high.

If Wu Jiarong can reverse engineer this technology successfully and expand production, and once the overall productive capacity of Rage Owl Star improves, perhaps Gu Hang could arm an elite division where everyone is equipped with exoskeletons?

Hope that day comes soon.

…

After completing the specific transaction, Wang Jiarong couldn't help but ask a question:

"If it weren't for the compensation from Blackbird Heavy Industries, what were you originally planning to use to pay for that gene engineering equipment you wanted to buy?"

Gu Hang curled his lips, "Rage Owl Star isn't exactly destitute. Even if it was in the past, it's not the case now. Can't our productivity come up with five hundred thousand Tax Currency?"

Wang Jiarong remained somewhat skeptical, but she didn't press further.

But actually, Gu Hang never worried about this issue.

Without the money from Blackbird Heavy Industries, he would simply have bought less. The gene engineering equipment worth five hundred thousand could be scraped together after all. Sell a thousand armored vehicles, a million sets of individual equipment, or decommission two production lines to the skies, and the money would come.

Of course, that would have affected the planet's development.

Now, with a windfall at hand, it naturally got much better, and he could buy much more.

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Once the corresponding items were delivered, some were transferred to the research institute and others to the Phoenix Battle Group.

The Phoenix Battle Group was naturally very happy about this.

Although, in the nearly more than half a year they'd been on Rage Owl Star, they had lost three people, and the already nearly extinct Phoenix now faced even more dire circumstances.

But at least, this replenishment was a significant boost for them.

The replenishment and upgrade of weapons and equipment wasn't so critical, but the gene seed surgery equipment was a lifesaver.

Matins and Priest Rizzo planned to conduct three surgeries in the near future, hoping to bring three new members to the group.

Gu Hang had his doubts about this.

"Is there such a rush?" he expressed his view, "Out of the group of young men you've recruited, do you have three most suitable candidates? They've trained for less than half a year."

"Ah…" Matins, the normally resolute battle group leader, showed a look of worry, "The Governor's concerns are valid, to be honest, their qualifications are the best we could find, but they're still far from enough, and their training isn't up to standard either. But we… have no other choice.

Before this, we didn't have the technology or ability to properly preserve the gene seeds; simple preservation methods couldn't maintain seed viability for long. If we delay any longer, the odds will only decrease, we can't afford to wait to find more suitable people or give those young men more comprehensive training."

That was indeed a realistic factor.

Gu Hang asked, "So… what do you estimate the chances to be?"

Priest Rizzo, who had been silent before, now spoke, "The odds are very low, I have no confidence."

"Can the success rate reach fifty percent?"

Matins shook his head with a bitter smile, “Perhaps not even ten percent. But… if we succeed with just one, if the Battle Group gains its first new blood, there’s at least hope, everyone can breathe a sigh of relief and not be so desperate.”

Chapter 276: Gene Seed Implant Surgery_2

Gu Hang likewise could only sigh.

He patted Martins on the shoulder and said, “I hope everything goes smoothly.”

Gu Hang meant it sincerely. He truly hoped that all three seeds for the Phoenix Battle Group would succeed.

Building a battle group wasn’t something Gu Hang was ready to tackle yet; he’d let the star warriors handle it among themselves. Three more star warriors, then another three… As long as it was just a matter of tens or dozens, it wouldn’t shake Gu Hang’s authority.

Considering the current sorry state of the Phoenix, reaching that level was a long way off.

In fact, without Gu Hang’s external help, they might never achieve it.

However, things often don’t go as one wishes.

Just a week later, Gu Hang received news from Martins.

The first surgery failed; in the following days, two more pieces of bad news came in quick succession.

When Gu Hang visited the Phoenix Monastery, which now had a semblance of scale, he couldn’t meet Commander Matins.

According to Priest Rizzo, Martins Salas had locked himself in the prayer room and hadn’t come out for a long time, nor did he allow anyone to disturb him.

To be honest, seeing Martins like this, Gu Hang also felt a pang of compassion.

Every time Gu Hang called upon the fallen Phoenix, they responded without fail, and each time they fought desperately—with nearly half of them perishing.

They had truly lived up to their name, something Gu Hang had to admit.

Because of this, he got the surgery equipment repaired, new ones purchased; power swords and Terminator Armor bought…

However, he still felt guilty, especially about the matter of offering one hundred points of grace for a seed.

But now wasn't the time to bring that out.

As for when it would be the right time… to be honest, Gu Hang didn't know.

Despite his compassion and guilt, Gu Hang couldn't risk bringing out the genetic seeds only to be reported to the Tribunal right afterward.

Reporting to the Tribunal depended on the status of the reporter. Random accusations against a governor couldn't prompt an investigation; even if the Tribunal expanded a hundredfold, they would be too busy to handle it all.

But if a commander made such an accusation, it was entirely different; the weight of the charge would be significant.

He had to be certain of his absolute safety after revealing the seeds, otherwise, he wouldn't do it.

Privately was another matter.

However, Gu Hang noticed something else.

Priest Rizzo's demeanor seemed off.

Gu Hang turned and stared at Rizzo for a while.

Rizzo looked back and asked, "What's the matter?"

Gu Hang said, "I find it strange, Your Reverence, that you seem very calm, not saddened?"

He indeed found it odd.

Martins was in such agony he didn't want to see anyone and had locked himself in the prayer room; the other two members of the battle group were grief-stricken, aimless, at a loss, and in despair…their numb expressions could hardly hide these emotions.

But Priest Rizzo seemed very calm, with no noticeable change in his interaction with Gu Hang from before.

Now, hearing Gu Hang's question, Rizzo even revealed a trace of a smile: "Whether the surgery succeeds or fails, it is the Divine Emperor's will. We should learn to accept it."

"Yes, of course," Gu Hang responded, then asked further, "But are you not worried about the future of the Phoenix Battle Group?"

The smile on Priest Rizzo's face became more defined. Looking at Gu Hang, he said seriously, "The fate of the battle group does not rest on the success of these three surgeries but on you, Governor.

Gu Hang frowned deeply.

“`

This charlatan’s demeanor made him quite uncomfortable.

He spoke cautiously, “Your Excellency, Priest, I don’t understand what you mean.”

At this point, Rizzo didn’t directly answer Gu Hang’s question but simply stated, “The Divine Emperor will decide everything.”

…

When Gu Hang left the Phoenix Monastery, he was full of confusion.

The old priest’s attitude really made him somewhat entangled.

He seemed to know something.

But it was not suitable to dwell on this matter, thinking would be pointless, he didn’t even have enough manpower to monitor these superhuman warriors, he could only ask the staff who entered the Phoenix Monastery to pay more attention and report back.

The Phoenix Monastery was right next to Weixing City, since having come this far, Gu Hang took the opportunity to inspect Weixing City, his last stop being the Secret Research Institute, overseen by Wu Jiarong.

The items bought from the Beautiful Lady were for either the Phoenix Battle Group or the research institute.

Gu Hang initially wanted to see how the Research Institute was doing with the technologies they had acquired, but as soon as they met, Wu Jiarong took the opportunity to complain bitterly.

This sister from the Sect of Mechanics was quite dissatisfied with Governor Gu's exploitation of her.

Previously, she didn't dare show such an attitude, for fear that after knowing the governor's grand secret, her already mysterious and uncertain life would abruptly end.

But with prolonged contact, she found that the governor was actually quite easy to get along with. As long as she did her job well, the governor was generally not too harsh.

So she gradually dared to express her thoughts.

Gu Hang was pleased with this.

It was acceptable for his subordinates to fear him, but Gu Hang did not wish it to go overboard. Loyalty should come from respect, not from fear. This is not to say that fear cannot breed loyalty, but fear, along with loyalty, can also bring hatred, which can quickly turn into betrayal.

Respect, admiration, trust… these are much better.

Gu Hang hoped his subordinates could dare to express their needs clearly to him; perhaps that would be better.

However, what Wu Jiarong said this time still made Gu Hang a little embarrassed.

"You can't keep piling one research project after another on me; I don't even have a moment to research the Black Box to improve my own skills," she said.

Wu Jiarong's words were not just a complaint, but also pointed out a very practical issue.

"With all kinds of scientific research projects squeezed in here, many projects are unrelated to one another. I'm not being lazy or complaining about the workload, but with this scattered approach and not enough scientific staff, it's impossible to complete all these tasks. I know these technologies are important in your plans, not trivial matters that you can easily dismiss.

That means you cannot accept that many of these things will remain indefinitely queued, with no idea how far into the future they'll be scheduled…"

"Hmm…" Gu Hang nodded his head.

He admitted that Wu Jiarong was right.

"But what's your suggestion?" he asked.

"My suggestion is that, under your command, there must be more people capable of scientific research. I know, under the conditions on Rage Owl Star, it's difficult to find many such people. But the more challenging it is, the more we need to prepare in advance, just like you established Wind-Extinguishing Zhongsi Academy, you also need a Technical Academy," she replied.

"Of course, that's possible," said Gu Hang, "that's already part of my plan, but… Wu Jiarong, are you interested, do you have the time, to serve as a professor at this academy?"

Wu Jiarong sighed helplessly and said, "If this is an order from you, Governor, of course I have no problem. But, you also need to bear a consequence: if I dedicate half my time to teaching students, then the time required to complete all research projects will be doubled."

That was the trade-off.

Would you hasten the research projects or assign someone to teach in a school?

The former, although not rapid, was the most effective at the moment.

The technology to synthesize starch needed optimization; the effectiveness of the new production line couldn't compare to the one dismantled from the starship; the 'high energy' in high-energy batteries was a misnomer as it couldn't even sustain laser gun firing, let alone be used by rapid attack crafts, which foreclosed the laser guns from reaching their full potential, forcing the Wind Falcon to use far more valuable energy crystals as fuel, resulting in a tremendous waste.

Not to mention, there was a pile of technologies that needed to be reverse-engineered: hydroponic farms, water purification equipment, spirit gas collection equipment, exoskeleton production lines…

Without Wu Jiarong, who had effectively reached the level of a Mechanical Priest, all these projects would grind to a halt.

Chapter 277: The Technical Expert You Wanted

Gu Hang could not let Wu Jiarong abandon her work.

Without her, they could hardly expect those who were, at best, junior technicians to solve those scientific research problems.

If Wu Jiarong taught students, all research work would operate at half efficiency.

But without teaching students or building schools, Gu Hang's predicament would never end.

If it were someone else, there might be no solution at all.

However, Gu Hang still had one.

"You'll have to hold on for a little longer," Gu Hang said, "the construction of the school will start soon. We may have to sacrifice half our time, but I believe we will soon make up for this lost time."

Wu Jiarong said, "Teaching a qualified technical specialist, even a mechanic, is very difficult. It requires many years of study."

"I know, but maybe we have a genius in Rage Owl Star?"

"I hope so."

Gu Hang's solution was to first establish a Technical Academy, then use the [Construction] interface to apply the [Technical Academy I] template to it, consistent with the operation plan of Loyal Heir Academy.

The exchange value of [Technical Academy I] was only 500 grace points.

And this building had actually two functions:

1. To improve students' learning efficiency

2. To increase the likelihood of emerging technically talented individuals who could be activated.

The former is certainly useful, but what could quickly solve Gu Hang's current dilemma was the latter.

Once there was such a technically talented individual who could be activated, the grace points spent on the activation would immediately endow them with attribute points, allowing for a rapid improvement in their technical level.

It would definitely not reach Wu Jiarong's current level, but at least it could become a competent assistant or independently handle some research work with a determined direction, even a settled plan.

Relieving some of Wu Jiarong's work pressure was also good.

And Gu Hang planned to build this academy in Weixing City.

After all, compared to Revival City, which was more geared toward administration, commerce, and light industry, Weixing City was the production center that needed technical talents more. There was no need for Wu Jiarong to travel dozens of kilometers to Revival City for work.

Saving this precious technical talent's commuting time was saving time needed for the planet's development.

The rapid development of the entire alliance needed to be healthier, and there were still too many fundamentals to be supplemented.

Sometimes, Gu Hang still wished he could stumble upon another expert in technology. That would be great.

…

Sometimes, Hu Ke still wished for a stable life where his son and daughter could grow up healthy and happy. That would be great.

At that moment, he was blending in with a group of refugees, holding a pot of thin gruel in his hands.

This was according to the food ration allocated for his family of four.

A bowl of thin gruel to last a day.

Back in his dwelling—a shabby tent constructed from tattered cloth and building debris that could, at most, measure three to four square meters—he, his wife, his six-year-old son, and his four-year-old daughter lived temporarily.

The conditions were undoubtedly harsh, not only in terms of living space but also the sanitary environment.

However, Hu Ke was actually relieved.

At least, it was better than when they were fleeing previously.

Escaping from the southern end of the Green Valley Region all the way north reminded him of his experience of fleeing to Rage Owl Star from his hometown over two hundred years ago.

Of course, when speaking of over two hundred years ago, that was in terms of real time, the actual feeling for him was not as long.

He came from ‘Chong Lu Fortress Casting World’, and when he left there, he was already an ‘Engine Prophet’— a ‘title’ within the Sect of Mechanics, one level higher than a Mechanical Priest.

He was a technical expert.

As for why he left Chonglu Fort…

It was because of war.

Chonglu Fort was probably dragged into hell by now, no longer existing in the real universe.

In that war, he fled for his life and, in the final moments, boarded a spaceship in a panic and left his homeland.

After getting on the spaceship, he drifted in space for a few years and spent some time in the Star Realm Army, but he really couldn’t stand the war anymore.

He knew that in this turbulent universe, war always existed. But as long as it wasn’t happening before his eyes, that was enough.

He admitted he was a coward, but he absolutely did not want to return to the battlefield and witness slaughter again.

As for those wars still raging, let them be. Although the status of an Engine Prophet was not low, what could he decide in the vast universe?

Tired of everything, Hu Ke only wanted to find a secure, peaceful, and beautiful planet to spend the rest of his life.

Indeed, the entire universe was always at war. But that was when looking at the entire empire. Zooming in on individual planets, the situations were different.

Among many options, he chose Rage Owl Star.

The scenery was beautiful, productivity was fairly advanced, and thanks to the Spiritualized Gas Field energy industry, it wasn't too competitive. The social atmosphere was stable, and more importantly, there hadn't been a war for thousands of years, whether from invaders or internal strife, it was rare, or at least the impact was minimal.

It was a place that met his requirements.

So, he went there.

With his expertise, he applied and joined a Gene Research Institute on Rage Owl Star.

It wasn't difficult; he was an Engine Prophet from the Mechanical Cult Guild and had made outstanding contributions to genetic engineering—though he was slightly less knowledgeable in other areas.

Chapter 278: The Technical Expert You Wanted_2

After he was hired, his life began to feel comfortable. He thought this place was truly paradise—climate, environment, and other physical conditions were countless times better than his desolate homeland, Chonglu Fort, which was essentially one grand factory encompassing the entire planet.

Moreover, his work situation had vastly improved compared to the past. Here he was almost the most outstanding genetic engineer. Some projects were quite typical, not too difficult; he just needed to follow procedures and do his job. Not like before, when he used to engage in cut-throat competition over resources and political struggles within the Mechanical Cult Guild.

He settled down in Rage Owl Star, found a woman who could soothe his soul, and together they had a pair of children.

At this point, he experienced something he had never felt in his previous life; he thought this might be what happiness looks like.

But alas, good times are short-lived. ‘Happiness’ might just be the most luxurious thing in the entire universe.

His daughter was only three years old, and his son just two when war broke out in Rage Owl Star.

The war didn’t affect his area immediately, but he still sensed the danger sharply.

He was, after all, experienced in such matters.

Hu Ke immediately joined the evacuation teams with his wife and children, heading to what he believed was the safest place.

It was a refuge built to the highest standards. In principle, it was easily defended but hard to assault, its location concealed, and it also had the capability for immediate planetary evacuation. In fact, as far as he knew, the ships meant to evacuate those of high value like themselves should already be en route.

However, misfortune sometimes knows no bounds.

First, the evacuation ships were shot down mid-journey; then, the very refuge he was in was discovered by the enemy, with a horde of Demons charging towards it.

In a critical moment, just before the refuge was breached and the commander gave the desperate order to self-destruct, he used the facility’s lowest level to freeze his wife and children. Then, after gathering as much backup power as possible, he managed to cryogenically freeze himself inside a hibernation pod just as the self-destruction sequence was initiated.

He didn’t know if this could help him evade disaster, but as a husband and father, it was the last thing he could do.

And as it turned out, he succeeded.

When he was unearthed by a former colleague who was also his student, a native of Rage Owl Star named Ge Wajia, he saw his wife and children again—they were all still alive.

He wept tears of joy, and couldn't help but pray to The Emperor, thanking him for keeping his most precious possessions in this world.

At the same time, he learned that nearly two hundred years had passed since the war's end. His former student Ge Wajia had lived until now through life-extension surgeries.

Nowadays, he had established an organization called the Nature Salvation Society, striving to create a paradise on the devastated Rage Owl Star, and from there to expand outward, ultimately aiming to restore the natural ecology of Rage Owl Star and save the entire world.

To be honest, Hu Ke wasn't interested in that cause. He had long passed the age where he wanted to save the world.

There were too many worlds within the Empire to save; destroying a few didn't really matter.

All he wanted was to live a good life for himself.

However, on this point, their interests intersected.

Ge Wajia needed the technical capabilities of his teacher, while Hu Ke needed the stable order that his student had already established in the southern end of the Green Valley Region.

It was a scenic seaside town, with no worries about food and drink, and for the time being, suitable for his family to settle in. He was willing to exchange his knowledge and labor for the right to live for his family.

But during his work, he gradually discovered some issues.

His student… seemed a bit off-kilter.

Or rather, the town called Chanter Town where he lived was all somewhat off-kilter.

His technical level was outstanding enough that through some of the content of the projects he participated in, he saw that Ge Wajia was working on some very new stuff.

It was not just ecological restoration that was so simple but filled with extensive genetic and human research.

He saw some of the results produced by the Nature Salvation Society, called bioweapons, natural weapons.

If it was just that, then so be it. He tried to convince himself to turn a blind eye. What's so terrible about developing bioweapons? In this post-apocalyptic world, one needed something for protection.

Even if they had crossed the line of skull purity, he could turn a blind eye.

The so-called 'Skull Purity' is an ironclad rule upheld by the Empire and the Mechanical Cult Guild during human modification and genetic technology: no matter how humans are altered, the skull must remain untouched.

The Empire's culture is full of oddities, varying greatly across different worlds. However, some things are consistent throughout.

Among them, the Empire itself has three major symbols: the skull, the Sky Eagle, and the gear.

The skull symbolizes sacrifice and also the purity of humankind. Traitors, heretics, and beings with aberrant flesh often deviate significantly from pure humans, especially in the structure of their skulls. For this reason, an unaltered skull serves as a symbol of human purity and the sacrifices made to defend that purity.

Throughout the Empire, from the Walls of Martyrs to the Skull Badges, from the decorations on interstellar warriors' armor to the Purity Seals… the image of the skull is everywhere.

Moreover, whether it's the research of the Mechanical Cult Guild or theological studies of the Imperial State Religion, there is solid evidence to suggest that maintaining skull purity is an important means and factor in safeguarding human souls from corruption. Changes in the skull are signs of degeneration, mutation, and betrayal.

The Mechanical Cult Guild manufactures servo skulls, creates mechanical servants, alters brains, and performs large-scale human modifications… these are common, but they do not destroy the shape of the skull and typically only modify areas such as the eye sockets, mouth, or ears.

But much of Ge Wajia's research had already crossed this baseline.

Even so, Hu Ke could ignore it.

However, in the end, he couldn't lie to himself.

The source of Ge Wajia's technology was problematic.

First off, the life-extension surgeries claimed by his student were suspicious. Such advanced biotechnology, capable of enabling someone to live two hundred years, was no simple feat. Even he had not mastered such a procedure, let alone his student.

Then, he found traces of supernatural forces in many of the studies.

This was not uncommon in itself, as the Mechanical Cult Guild's research also naturally involved Spiritual Energy, as well as faith in The Emperor as the deity of all mechanisms. Both could yield extraordinary powers.

However, he did not believe that the supernatural elements in the Nature Salvation Society's technological approach stemmed from orthodox belief or normal Spiritual Energy research.

As for where exactly this technology originated from, he had his suspicions but dared not speak of them.

But even at this point, he remained silent.

Despite the extensive preparations he had made in secret, he never brought up these issues at face value.

He was very hesitant.

He knew the current world had become entirely unsuitable for survival, and he was not alone. Could he ensure the survival of his own family in the harsh wasteland environment once they left Chanter Town?

Moreover, the act of escaping was dangerous enough in itself.

In the midst of his internal struggle, one final straw helped him make his decision: Ge Wajia asked him to apply the Nature Salvation Society's genetic modification techniques to his own family, under the pretense of better survival in the wastelands.

Many residents of the town had undergone similar modifications, and Hu Ke had even performed them himself.

But when these technologies were to be applied to his own family, his bottom line was finally breached.

He outwardly agreed, but in secret, he initiated all the preparations he had been making for the past half year.

A multitude of bio-weapons rioted, and the mutated aberrant beasts that he had accumulated defended him and his family as they fled the place that seemed like a paradise but was truly a den of hell.

Once outside and having initially ensured their safety, he ordered all the beasts to self-destruct.

He dared not carry these creatures with him because he knew that the technological origins of these aberrant beasts were not normal and could become uncontrollable at any moment.

Then, he and his family endured a hellish escape, heading north until they were sheltered by a coalition.

Chapter 279: What Rank Can the Engine Prophet Set?

For Hu Ke, the half-year journey to the north had been even more nerve-wracking than his initial flight from his hometown of Chonglu Fort.

The brutality of the battle at Chonglu Fort was far more exaggerated than his current escape to the north. But back then, he was by himself, only concerned with his own life.

However, this time, he was with his whole family.

This psychological pressure was so much heavier than before.

But with his sufficient skills, the Aberrant Beasts on the road often couldn't pose a threat to him. Sometimes, he could control several Aberrant Beasts to help him find some food.

Of course, he adhered to a principle, not to use the same Aberrant Beast for too long to avoid dangerous loss of control.

With his own capabilities and a bit of luck, he not only escaped the pursuit of the Nature Salvation Society but also evaded the threat of Aberrant Beasts and the increasingly numerous looters amidst the chaos, successfully making it from the southernmost tip to the northernmost end of the Green Valley Region.

Here, he heard about the Alliance, heard about a Governor arriving at Rage Owl Star, proclaiming to save the entire world.

Of course, just that alone couldn't touch anyone's heart.

Who couldn't boast?

However, based on what he'd heard, in that so-called Central Province, in the Twin Cities Region of the Alliance Capital… it seemed they were indeed doing well?

Especially surprising to him was hearing that a Green-skin Orc Tribe had appeared at the ruins of a high tower, only to be dealt with by the Governor.

The high tower ruins, with only a moment's thought, he knew it was the biological research institute where he had once worked. He could guess why Green Skins had emerged there; part of his job was to research Green Skins.

If a mere mortal like himself could rely on being frozen to survive to the post-war era; if Ge Wajia could live until now through life-extending surgeries; then what's so surprising about Green Skin Orcs, with their vitality far beyond that of humans, living until this time?

Not destroying the research live samples was a grave mistake, but in the face of war's arrival, everything was in utter chaos. Struggling to escape, to resist, to die, it was understandable that they didn't manage this task.

But for live samples to survive to this day and evolve into an entire Green Skin Tribe was a huge disaster.

Yet, they were taken care of by that Governor?

This was beyond his expectations.

He knew how troublesome Green Skins could be once they formed a tribe.

Could just two cities, one province, barely supporting a population of a million, really handle a Green Skin tribe?

And even go to heaven to fight a battle and kill a Beastman Overlord?

This was quite impressive.

Furthermore, hearing that Twin Cities were also doing very well in terms of public welfare, he couldn't help but fall into deep thought.

With his abilities, if he were to reveal his identity, show his knowledge, he was confident that the Governor, if he had even the slightest discernment, would provide him with a good treatment.

But he was truly scared by his previous experiences.

He feared encountering another unscrupulous leader.

If it were only the leader's lack of integrity, that would be tolerable, but such a person often posed a threat to the safety of him and his family.

With his capabilities, even if he doesn't seek refuge with the Governor, he could still make a living by finding a place to settle in seclusion.

It's just the quality of life…

Thinking of this, he couldn't help but look towards his children, who were wolfing down their food, and his wife, who had turned her back and was silently shedding tears, feeling a touch of sadness in his heart.

His children had never had a good life since the day they were born, frozen with him till today; his wife, once literate and well-educated, had experienced so much hardship on the escape northward that now, disheveled, she bore no resemblance to her former elegance.

He wanted his wife and children to have better living conditions, for his wife who loved beauty and books to continue enjoying her grace, to brew a cup of tea in her spare time and read stories; he wanted his children to have a complete childhood, not to be secluded with him in a hideaway for a lifetime, perhaps never seeing another new person.

If there were no choice, of course, life safety comes first;

But it’s not really without choice.

He struggled within himself but suddenly heard a noise outside the door.

“…This is the place! He lives here!”

Hu Ke’s hair stood on end.

A multitude of thoughts raced through his mind, and his biggest worry was that Ge Wajia’s henchmen had come knocking.

It was possible, in fact, all through his escape he had always been under the threat of Ge Wajia’s Nature Salvation Society. In the Green Valley Region, this society wielded great influence; they had extended their reach deep into many plantations by helping them with superior breed transformations, soil environment improvements, and teaching planting techniques.

All those technologies had hidden corruptions, even secretly turning many plantation workers into deformed puppets for the Nature Salvation Society.

These deformed puppets were very difficult to distinguish under normal circumstances, but they were actually controlled by the Nature Salvation Society.

Furthermore, even without the deformed puppets, many plantations grateful for the help were completely blind to the true nature of the Nature Salvation Society. They did not know that the annual exotic tide ravaging Green Valley was the doing of these people. In their eyes, these were good Samaritans, exchanging food for yield-increasing technologies, a wonderful trade indeed.

Chapter 280: What Rank Can the Engine Prophet Set?_2

So, he had experienced many life-and-death moments.

Betrayed, falling asleep only to be surrounded by a horde of Aberrant Beasts, and struggling to obtain supplies without revealing his tracks…

He thought that by arriving here, supposedly on the turf of the Alliance and far from the south, he could settle down at last, but unexpectedly, there came a time when they caught up to him!

He saw the gaze of his wife and children, filled with terror and concern, turned toward him.

He extended his hand, signaling them to be silent. At the same time, he was also preparing himself for combat.

He was not a warrior by trade, but his experience of multiple escapes in the past had forcibly taught him many fighting techniques.

Hu Ke might have appeared to be an ordinary person from the outside, but as a biological expert specializing in genetic engineering, his body had undergone many changes. To some extent, it wouldn't be too far-fetched to say he was a humanoid biological weapon.

Of course, by the Empire's standards, he was still human. His self-modification had not crossed certain outrageous lines.

The muscles in his arms bulged fiercely, and his chest heaved, accumulating strength. When necessary, the power of his punch was not inferior to that of an interstellar warrior; moreover, the bioelectricity stored within his body could instantly form a high voltage and, through his modified finger bones, pierce the skin and discharge electricity outward.

This was a move of desperation.

Yet despite being ready, he was still somewhat annoyed.

He hadn't thought things through enough, hadn't prepared sufficiently. He thought that once here, he could live incognito and not be caught, but he hadn't anticipated that the Nature Salvation Society's minions would be here too!

He heard footsteps coming to the entrance of his shabby tent and then they stopped.

…

Jason Morgan rubbed his hands, then turned to the person beside him and asked, “Are you sure this is the place?”

“I’m sure!” replied the man, cradling the food that Morgan had given him, “I was deathly ill, starting to develop pus-filled bumps like those Aberrant Beasts, running a high fever, delirious. And this man, in just a few minutes, cured me. Today I saw him again; his whole family lives here.”

“Fine, that’s all I need from you.” Jason Morgan sent the man away, then cleared his throat twice and approached the ramshackle tent.

He wanted to knock but found there was no door to knock on. He could only reach out and shake the curtain that served as the only barrier.

At that moment, the curtain was pulled back from the inside.

An ordinary-looking middle-aged man appeared before him, his expression wary.

Jason Morgan tried to glance behind the man, but was blocked from seeing anything.

So, he cleared his throat again and said, “I hear you are a skilled doctor; how may I address you?”

The man didn’t answer but countered, “And who might you be?”

His tone was less than polite, leaving Jason Morgan somewhat taken aback.

He was now a ‘big shot’ in the northern part of Green Valley Region, having been there for almost two months. Especially recently, respect and flattery were all he heard, with hardly anyone speaking to him in such a manner.

However, there was no change in his expression, just a slight air of self-satisfaction as he said, “I am Jason Morgan, a D4-level official of the Rage Owl Star Alliance, commissioned to establish the Survivors Mutual Aid Self-Governance Committee in the northern part of Green Valley Region. I am currently an observer on the Mutual Aid Committee.

In the past two months, the Mutual Aid Committee has united over five hundred plantations, sheltered a large number of civilians, and provided a temporary refuge for millions of impoverished people who have lost their homes.”

“All this is your doing?”

“Uh…” Jason Morgan was taken aback, his expression becoming somewhat unnatural, “not all of it.

It’s mainly due to the governor’s wise and valiant leadership, and next are the military observers and diplomats of the Alliance, who have gathered the refugees, coordinated with the plantations, and with military aid from the Twin Cities of the Alliance, helped them establish basic military self-defense capabilities.

Then come the civil servants of the department, bringing in vast quantities of living and medical supplies to stabilize the situation… Damn, why am I telling you all this?”

As he spoke, Morgan adjusted his conspicuously red cap, and with a solemn expression, he stated, “We are in dire need of manpower right now. We need all the help we can get for the people of Green Valley Region to settle down. And you, you are such a force.”

“Me?”

“I’ve heard you’re a very good doctor,” Morgan continued, “We have a large supply of medicine, but we’re in dire need of people who know how to use them. You can help those infected recover without medicine, so imagine what you can do with it.”

“Are you trying to recruit me?”

Morgan hesitated, then said, “If that’s how you want to interpret it, that’s fine.”

Hu Ke laughed.

He had thought that the Nature Salvation Society was approaching him, but instead, it was the Alliance.

How coincidental. Just as he was considering whether to join the governor, someone from the governor’s office came to him.

“What’s in it for me, then?”

Jason Morgan looked at the man’s smile across from him. It was somewhat inexplicable, and he had no idea what Hu Ke was thinking. He was just doing his best to try to recruit this talent: “The benefits are plentiful!”

He tried to look behind Hu Ke again, and this time he vaguely saw the figures of two children.

Morgan showed what he thought was a gentle smile to the two kids, and then said to Hu Ke, “Let me start with what I can offer you. The shelter is temporary, and we provide basic food supplies to all refugees, but… our resources are limited, we are already trying to feed more people with the little we have, but there are still occasional deaths from starvation, and we’ve done our best.”

“I am sorry I can only offer you and your family thin porridge to fill your stomachs, only to let you sleep in rudimentary tents under such poor conditions. But if you are willing to make a greater contribution to the entire Green Valley Region, then I guarantee that you and your family will receive better treatment. A real roof over your heads, ample and varied food; these are all a given.”

“There’s more that I can’t guarantee, but I believe you have the ability to secure. After a pause, Jason Morgan continued, “You might have noticed that in my self-introduction, I mentioned that I am a D4 level employee of the Alliance.

If you really are a capable doctor, even after the calamity in the Green Valley Region is over, you could move to the newly established Alliance Hospital in the Twin Cities. With your own abilities, you could secure a high-ranking position. For someone like me, a D4 level employee, the food supply is enough to feed the whole family.

I still have money left to buy various appliances to improve the quality of life, a bigger and brighter house, a friendly, clean, and stable neighborhood… You can even send your children to school. In short, your life could become very fulfilling."

"In fact, you see so many people here in the refugee camp, everyone is waiting for a chance to join the Alliance, even just being an E level employee is enough to live worry-free under the premise of hard work."

"What do you think?"

After listening to Jason Morgan's lengthy speech, Hu Ke thought for a while and smiled, "I must admit, you've persuaded me."

"That's good…" Morgan also smiled.

"However…" Hu Ke drew out his words, bringing up a question that Morgan had never anticipated, "I do have another question: what rank could a specialist in gene engineering, an 'Engine Seer,' hold in your Alliance?"

Jason Morgan was stunned.

What?

What the heck is gene engineering? And an Engine Seer?

What is this doctor talking about? Why don't I understand?