

Scholar's Advanced Technological System - Chapter 724 - Setting Foot in the Starry Sky

Chapter 724: Setting Foot in the Starry Sky

Ever since the Apollo 17 lunar mission in December 1972, no one had ever ventured beyond Earth's orbit and stepped on the surface of the Moon. The Skyglow sailing on the Earth-Moon orbit was like a lonely boat in the sea.

The view out of the porthole was pitch black; it was different from the night on earth, a different kind of silence and cold. This kind of darkness seemed to come from another world. The kind of dark that was 10-kilometer deep in the sea.

After nearly forty hours of the voyage, they were getting close to the dark grey planet.

Nie Yun, who was holding the joystick, looked at the Moon and took a deep breath.

"This is Skyglow, we have entered the 12-hour orbit, closing in on the Moon..."

Liu Zhengwen was sitting behind him in the passenger seat. As he stared at the approaching planet, his heartbeat increased.

This was a feeling he couldn't describe.

After five minutes, he suddenly remembered something.

"Speaking of which... Who's going first?"

Liu Zhengwen blushed. Even though he didn't want to sound greedy, he felt like he came off as rather gluttonous for the "first Chinese on the Moon". He just felt like this might turn into an argument, so it'd be better to solve it before the mission began.

After hearing him, Nie Yun smiled.

“You can go first.”

Liu Zhengwen awkwardly replied, “No, you should go.”

After all, Nie Yun was the one who drove Skyglow all the way here.

Nie Yun smiled and said, “I have to stay on Skyglow. I’m afraid I can’t leave.”

During the moon mission, the main pilot had to remain on Skyglow to ensure that all systems on Skyglow were operating normally. Even though there was an autonomous cruise mode, for which Skyglow could automatically orbit a given track, the system wasn’t very reliable. Therefore, an experienced pilot would have to remain on Skyglow at all times.

Hence, he could only witness the glorious moment of inserting China’s flag on the Moon.

However, he didn’t really care about this.

Liu Zhengwen said nervously, “I’m going alone?”

Nie Yun pointed at Nie Yan and said, “Don’t worry, she’ll go with you and bring you back.”

Liu Zhengwen said, “Then she should go first.”

“Don’t worry about me. It doesn’t matter if I go first or second,” Nie Yan smiled and said. “Regardless, I’ll still be the first female on the Moon.”

Nie Yun said, “Are there no female astronauts on Apollo?”

Liu Zhengwen: “... I don’t think so. I think all of the 12 astronauts are male.”

Nie Yun nodded.

“I see...”

No wonder the higher-ups asked for a female astronaut.

In addition to investing in the future, the space race is about being first.

So why didn’t the Americans bring a female astronaut to the Moon?

...

Even though Skyglow was near the Moon, it was impossible for them to release the lunar module at their current speed.

After a week of orbiting at the 12-hour orbit track, with the help from the ground command center, Nie Yun piloted Skyglow into a 127-minute orbit. The magnitude and the direction of the velocity were now at a safe level.

Nie Yun pressed on his helmet. He then took a deep breath and spoke.

“... This is Skyglow. We have successfully entered the 127-minute orbit. We will reach the landing point in 25 minutes, requesting approval to release the lunar module.”

“This is ground command center. Release approved.”

“Roger that.”

Nie Yun looked back at Liu Zhengwen, who was sitting in the passenger seat.

“25 minutes until moon landing. You guys should get ready.”

“Okay!”

The two other astronauts unlocked their life support systems and helped each other put on outer-spacesuits. With Nie Yun supervising, they checked the statuses of their spacesuits.

“Oxygen systems activated!”

“Checking oxygen levels.”

“100% oxygen left, enough for 4 hours!”

“Test the astronaut propulsion unit.”

“Yes, sir!”

Just like what Liu Zhengwen learned during his training, he hooked himself onto a nearby railing. He then reached out and pressed a button on his left arm. His jet backpack made a quiet noise, and he could feel a gentle force pushing him forward.

However, this gentle force didn't push him too far.

"... Astronaut propulsion unit is working!"

Nie Yun nodded, and he looked at Nie Yan, who was sitting next to him.

After Nie Yan completed her tests, she nodded and said, "Everything is normal."

Nie Yun nodded.

"Begin boarding, good luck!"

"Thanks."

Nie Yan smirked, and she fist-bumped her brother. She then stepped through the hatch.

Liu Zhengwen nodded at Nie Yun. He then followed Nie Yan's footsteps.

Nie Yun saw the hatch close, and he went silent for a while. After that, he raised his hand and saluted.

He spoke to himself in a solemn voice.

"Take care!"

This was it.

After a five-minute voyage, Skyglow reached its target airspace. A black egg-shaped object was separated from Skyglow.

With the help of two pairs of chemical rockets, the lunar module flew toward the Moon like a meteorite and landed on the barren Moon soil.

The dust on the Moon billowed.

Whether it was Nie Yun sitting in Skyglow, or the ground command center staff 380 thousand kilometers away, everyone staring at the live-streamed footage clenched their fists.

Finally, the lunar module door opened.

A figure stood at the hatch.

Everyone held their breaths.

Except for Liu Zhengwen, who was standing at the hatch. He took a deep breath.

He gently jumped out of the cabin.

It was like his body was made of feathers, and he gently fell on the Moon.

The moment his feet touched lunar soil, he felt his entire body on fire.

The moment he stepped on the Moon, deafening cheers were heard 380 thousand kilometers away.

People hugged each other and burst into tears.

They did it!

They landed on the Moon!

They were rewriting history!

Chapter 725: Special Blessing

The day before Chinese New Year.

A family sat around the dining table while eating Chinese New Year's Eve dinner.

The dishes were beautifully laid out on the table. There were braised trotters, which was Lu Zhou's favorite, crispy and tender bream, as well as leek dumplings.

The dumplings were especially tasty.

Lu Zhou nearly started to tear up after he tasted his mother's dumplings.

This was the most delicious thing he ate all year...

Old Lu saw that Lu Zhou already finished two plates of dumplings. He grabbed a piece of braised beef into his plate and spoke.

“Don’t eat too much, you’ll overeat.”

Lu Zhou replied while chewing, “I only get to eat this once a year, so just let me eat.”

“What do you mean once a year, if you want, your mom can cook more,” Fang Mei said as she looked at her son. She then stared at Old Lu and said, “Our son wants to eat, what’s your problem?”

Old Lu said, “I’m just worried he’s going to overeat.”

“What do you mean overeat, he’s clearly gotten skinnier. Stop worrying about him, how about you do the dishes instead?”

Lu Zhou looked at his parents arguing and said, “No, it’s fine. Just put the plates in the kitchen. We have a dishwasher.”

His phone vibrated.

Lu Zhou knew Xiao Ai was messaging him again.

However, he didn’t have time to reply. He had to eat.

Xiao Tong looked at her brother furiously eating and smiled as she said, “We just started eating. Slow down, Brother.”

“Ok! I’ll slow down.”

However, Lu Zhou didn’t slow down at all.

As for overeating...

That was impossible for him.

The system had strengthened his physical abilities a long time ago. Even if he ate twice the normal amount, his metabolism could easily handle it. The excess calories would be converted into things other than fat.

Because of this, he could never get fat.

After being ridiculed by his wife, Old Lu shut his mouth.

Lu Zhou's phone had been vibrating non-stop.

He couldn't take it anymore, so he put down his chopsticks and took out his phone.

As expected, Xiao Ai was the one messaging him.

There was only one message.

[Master, I want to eat as well. ~ (´ ̇`)]

Lu Zhou: "..."

This request was too difficult.

Lu Zhou sighed and replied.

[You're still young, let's talk about this later.]

Xiao Ai: [QAQ]

Lu Bangguo stared at Lu Zhou's phone, but Lu Zhou quickly turned his phone away.

Old Lu drank some alcohol and smiled.

"Hey, why are you so shy? Girlfriend?"

Before Lu Zhou could answer, his mother happened to walk out of the kitchen while holding a fresh batch of dumplings. Her eyes immediately lit up, and she put down the plate of dumplings and asked, "What? Girlfriend? Oh my, why didn't you let us meet her?"

Sitting across the table, Xiao Tong sighed and said, "You guys don't know my brother at all."

Lu Zhou: "..."

Xiao Ai: [(· ∇ · *)?]

The New Year's Gala show began.

Even though no one was interested in watching the show anymore, this show almost became a Chinese New Year tradition.

It made the atmosphere more lively.

It would feel like something was missing if they didn't watch the New Year's Gala show.

Before the show began, the host gave new year blessings to the entire country.

The male host stood on the stage while holding a microphone, and he stared at the cameras as he said enthusiastically, "... We have a special new year's blessing this year."

The female host pretended like she didn't know what was going on.

"A special blessing? From who?"

The male host raised his voice and said, "Not from who, but from where! It comes from the Moon!"

The TV screen quickly switched to a scene of the lunar orbit, 380,000 kilometers away.

Nie Yun was floating inside the Skyglow cabin, and he smiled as he waved at the camera.

"Hello, everyone, this is Skyglow. We are currently 380,000 kilometers away from Earth.

"My two teammates have already set foot on the Moon. On behalf of my teammates, I'd like to wish you all a happy new year!

"Also, Dad, Mom, happy new year!"

The TV scene quickly switched back to the New Year's Gala.

The New Year's Gala live audience was cheering and applauding.

Old Lu stared at the big TV screen and suddenly asked, "You built that spacecraft?"

Lu Zhou was also staring at the TV, and he smiled as he replied, "Obviously I didn't build it myself. That was the joint effort of all of the aerospace research institute engineers and the staff members at the launch site."

Not to mention those who were still working at the launch site.

Forget about a family dinner, those people didn't even have time to eat some instant noodles.

Old Lu: "So you built it."

Lu Zhou made a helpless expression. He didn't answer.

I guess I'll just agree with Dad.

Old Lu looked at his son and said, "Not bad, son."

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "It's alright."

Old Lu nodded and said sincerely, "Nicely done."

Lu Zhou smiled and spoke.

"Thanks, Dad."

Air and water weren't the only precious resources on the Moon, communication was also a scarce resource.

After all, the ground command center needed to communicate with Skyglow, and the data collected by the lunar module also had to be sent in real time. Therefore, it wasn't realistic for them to send a live broadcast of the moon landing. Sending the 57mb Chinese New Year's greeting video already occupied a significant amount of the data stream, which was originally allocated to scientific research missions.

However, traditions were important.

The same applied to aerospace.

If everything were done for scientific research, then life would be pretty boring.

After all, not everything had quantifiable value.

Lu Zhou continued to watch the New Year's Gala, and he quietly smirked.

Communication from the Moon is quite difficult.

But that's only for now.

After the communication base or communication satellite is set up on the surface or the orbit of the Moon, the communication bandwidth problem will ease significantly.

Chapter 726: A Moment of Celebration

Moon landing successful!

After this short video clip was shown at the New Year's Gala, the entire country was moved.

For thousands of years, people had looked at the Moon as a mythical place; a place written in poetry and songs.

Ever since China successfully became the third country to send astronauts to space, setting foot on the Moon had always been a dream of the Chinese people.

But, all of this wasn't easy.

Even though China had caught up with America and Russia in terms of manned space flights, China had always been behind America and Russia in terms of high-thrust rocket technology. Not just that, but China was also behind the EU and Japan.

However, Skyglow's successful test flight completely changed the situation. The advanced ion thruster propulsion technology was able to send Chinese astronauts to the Moon!

People sitting in front of their TVs had their eyes wide open.

Tears of excitement were rolling down their faces...

Inside a house in Beijing.

Yuan Huanmin was sitting in front of the dinner table eating New Year's Eve dinner. Two drops of tears rolled off the corners of his eyes as he watched the TV.

As the chief engineer of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, seeing China's lunar module and Chinese footprints on the Moon was his lifelong dream.

And now, his dream came true.

His son noticed the tears. "Dad, what's wrong? Are you okay?"

His granddaughter quietly said, "Don't cry, don't cry."

"I'm fine, you guys... Don't have to worry about me," the old man took off his glasses and wiped his tears. He said, "I'm just... a bit emotional."

He thought back to his attitude toward Lu Zhou and the Skyglow project, and he couldn't help but feel ashamed.

Even though he knew his intentions were good, he still couldn't live with himself if the Skyglow project failed because of him.

Maybe...

He was a little too harsh on himself.

At the same time, inside a house in Changan, another family was also eating dinner.

The old man looked at the TV and smiled as he patted his thigh.

"Haha, I knew it, this kid is a genius!"

The only downside was that Lu Zhou didn't think carefully about the consequences. But after all, all 20-year-olds were immature. It was rare for a 20 something-year-old to stay humble while becoming famous and rich.

Not to mention that the world was always more forgiving to people with extraordinary abilities.

The woman sitting across the old man smiled and said, "Look at how happy you are. The guy already won a Nobel Prize, of course he's a genius."

The old man said, "Many people have won the Nobel Prize. But I'm afraid he's the only scholar who has achieved this much at his age. Unfortunately, no award in China can match his achievements."

These three astronauts were definitely going to be awarded at the commendation conference.

As for the scientific researchers and heroes working behind the curtains, they would receive awards as well.

As for what award should be given to Lu Zhou...

The old man contemplated for a while.

The woman sitting across the table smiled and said, "He has already won the highest award in the scientific world, he probably doesn't care anymore. Instead of worrying about what medal to give him, you should focus on providing him with a good academic environment and creative resources."

"You're right, but awards aren't only for the recipients, it's also to motivate and inspire others." The old man suddenly looked up and said, "Forget about it, I can't think of a solution. I'll have a meeting and discuss with others."

Regardless, the important thing was that the astronauts were still on the Moon.

They could postpone the commendation conference until next year.

On the other hand, the news that Chinese astronauts had landed on the Moon spread across the internet.

Within ten minutes, Skyglow was trending across major social media platforms.

This was just as exciting as the Beijing Olympic.

Lu Zhou opened Weibo and saw that Skyglow was trending above the New Year's Gala. He couldn't help but smile.

[It's really been a hard and long ride. (cry) (cry)]

[This is the most exciting news I've heard this year! (excited)]

[Everyone knows that landing on the Moon isn't that difficult. The reason why the Americans aren't landing on the Moon is that their target is the sun! This isn't big news, go to bed, everyone.]

[Yeah! I heard American scientists are very smart, they'll land on the Moon at night!]

1[I'd like to thank the Skyglow scientific researchers!!!]

[...]

After closing Weibo, Lu Zhou took a glance at Twitter.

Surprisingly, the official NASA Twitter account didn't tweet anything.

For a long time, every time China made progress on the moon landing, NASA would send almost patronizing encouragement and praise.

Because they knew that China was significantly behind them in the field of aerospace. NASA had already explored half of the solar system and even began to launch detectors outside of the Kuiper belt.

However, not only had China completed a 50-ton low-Earth orbit carrying capacity, but their astronauts had landed on the Moon.

Obviously China was rising in the aerospace industry.

Of course, the NASA directors might be in a meeting right now, and that's why they weren't tweeting.

Lu Zhou smiled and scrolled through Twitter. He read the comments from foreign netizens. He then turned off his phone and lay on the sofa.

The first stage of the manned moon mission was complete. He could enter the system space and press the mission complete button if he wanted to.

However, Lu Zhou wasn't in a hurry to enter the next mission stage.

After all, there were many easy and rewarding side missions in his mission panel. He just had to wait for the astronauts in the sky to help him complete these missions...

Chapter 727: Space Plant Growth Unit

Landing on the Moon was only the first step.

For those researchers who sent the astronauts to the Moon, what really mattered was what happened after the moon landing.

Some of the materials from the lunar module were loaded on the lunar rover. Nie Yan sat in the driver's seat, and she started the engine and drove toward the closest crater. Liu Zhengwen was sitting in the co-pilot seat.

Liu Zhengwen stared at the craters in the distance. When he looked back at the blue planet, he couldn't help but speak.

"It's quite lonely here."

"Yeah."

The two didn't talk a lot.

The lunar rover stopped next to an impact crater. Liu Zhengwen got out of the car and looked around. He saw a pole standing on the ground near the crater.

"This is..."

"This is probably the flag of the United States. Apparently, they used nylon flags back then. The flag was damaged by cosmic rays, and the pole is the only thing left... Turn on your body camera."

Liu Zhengwen had a moment of realization on his face.

He obviously was aware of the damage of cosmic rays on nylon materials. After all, he had the highest academic qualifications out of the three astronauts. Because of the solar wind, the flagpole was probably brittle as well.

"I already turned it on after I left the lunar module."

Nie Yan took out a flag from the lunar rover and nodded.

"Oh yeah? Good."

Liu Zhengwen watched Nie Yan walk toward the center of the crater while carrying a flag pole.

“Then what about us?”

“We learned from their mistakes. As long as it is not hit by a meteorite, this flag can stay here for a hundred years.”

That bright red flag was firmly inserted into the Moon soil, and a triangle mount on the bottom of the pole was deployed.

Nie Yan smirked. She raised her arm and wiped away the Moon dust on her mask. She said, “This is the first step... One day, the entire Moon will be filled with bright red flags.”

Liu Zhengwen felt his heart rate increase.

He thought back to why he chose this profession...

He thought back to his oath when he signed up for the astronaut selection process...

“The Moon is too small.”

Nie Yan looked at Liu Zhengwen and raised her eyebrows.

“Oh yeah?”

Liu Zhengwen stared at the blue planet in the sky and smiled.

“The Moon is boring. One day, we will insert this flag on planets beyond the Kuiper belt.”

Nie Yan smiled and started to walk back to the lunar rover.

“Okay, enough of this, let’s get to work.”

They didn’t come here for a vacation.

Inserting the flag was only the first step.

They had a lot of things to do.

...

Time on the Moon was very precious.

The food, fresh water, and oxygen on the lunar module were only enough to sustain the two astronauts on the lunar surface for 48 hours. Each out of cabin activity could only last 4-6 hours. They had to return to the lunar module every so often to eat and drink. There was very little time left for them to perform missions.

After they planted the flag, the two got back in their rover and drove around the crater. They stopped at a relatively flat area near the ridge.

According to the computer calculations, the chance of this area hit by a meteorite was low.

Even though this was only a probability estimation, this area was still worthy of study.

After the rover came to a stop, just like Liu Zhengwen was trained, he took out an infrared beacon transmitter and placed it on the ground. He then went into the lunar rover and left this area.

Soon after, a black square object separated from Skyglow. With the help from a weak jet flame, it slowly landed on the surface of the Moon.

After the Moon dust cleared away, the lunar rover returned to the area.

Liu Zhengwen got out of the car and pulled out a special data cable from his spacesuit. He then connected it to this black device.

Soon after, a progress bar appeared on the screen, which was attached to his arm.

The progress bar completed, and a simple interface appeared in front of his eyes.

"... This is the lunar scientific research team. The plant growth unit has been successfully deployed. The device is normal."

Nie Yun's voice was heard on the communication channel.

"Check the condition of the specimen."

“Roger that.”

The entire space plant growth unit covered an area of 15 square meters. It was actually quite spacious after the plant growth unit was fully deployed.

The core components were divided into two parts, most of which were planting cabins for cultivating crops such as potatoes and carrots. A small segment was located at the corner of the planting unit, which held ten white rats.

Six of them were divided into three rooms, with one male and one female in each room. The rest of the rats were sterilized, and they lived in separate rooms.

As long as there was electricity, the gas circulation system would continue to supply oxygen. There was also a year worth of freshwater and food. When the device detected the death of a rat, it would activate its freezing function. This would, in turn, freeze the rat and prevent it from decaying.

As for the rats that lived longer than a year...

There was no need for that.

This space plant growth unit was only an experiment to test whether or not crops could be self-sufficiently planted on the Moon's surface. This was also to test the effects of long-term low gravity environments on the organisms' health.

As long as these rats lived longer than three months, the experiment could be considered a success.

After Liu Zhengwen ran diagnostics on the plant growth unit, the first thing he did was to check the health of the rats.

Perhaps because they were unable to adapt to the low gravity environment of the Moon, a few of them seemed quite perturbed. Fortunately, they were still alive and were moving.

Liu Zhengwen wasn't sure if they could survive. He silently prayed for the little guys that sacrificed their lives to science.

After he confirmed that all the specimens were in good condition, he checked the operating status of the plant growth unit. Finally, he disconnected the data cable from his spacesuit and reported the situation to Nie Yun and Skyglow.

“... This is the moon scientific research team. All specimens on the plant growth unit have survived. Pressure, temperature, and carbon-oxygen balance are at normal levels.”

“Nicely done! Prepare for the next mission.”

“Roger that.”

Next up was to collect lunar soil.

For a long time, lunar soil and lunar meteorite samples preserved by the Chinese Academy of Sciences had been collected by remote-control space probes. This was the first time China collected lunar soil by hand.

Liu Zhengwen stared at the gray mountains and smiled.

Because he used to work at the Chinese Lunar and Planetary Laboratory, he was well aware of how valuable this soil was.

This couldn't even be measured in monetary value.

If it weren't for the weight carrying limit, he would have gladly dug more soil.

“Hurry up, we don't have all day.” Nie Yan placed a set of lunar soil into a sample bag. She glanced at her locator on her arm and said, “Our next sampling spot is at a crater two kilometers away. We have to move faster.”

Liu Zhengwen used his shovel and started to dig.

“Roger that.”

Chapter 728: Return!

“5!

“4!

“ ...

“0!

“Let’s go home!”

The thrusters lit up.

The return cabin on top of the lunar module was ignited.

The hemispherical aircraft separated from the huge module, and it easily overcame the Moon’s gravitational force and began to fly upward.

On the other hand, Skyglow began to decelerate and change its orbit. It welcomed the returning cabin.

380,000 kilometers away, two white dots were presented on a large screen inside the ground command center. They flew side by side and gradually approached one another, before finally merging into one...

After that, a refreshing voice was heard on the communication channel.

“... This is Skyglow, the return cabin has been successfully connected. Requesting instructions.”

Hou Guang was standing on the podium, and he said, “This is the ground command center. Please return immediately.”

Two seconds after, a response was heard.

“Roger that.”

After receiving orders from the ground command center, the five thrusters lit up with blue lights, gradually accelerating Skyglow. Skyglow went from the 127-minute orbit to the 3.5-hour orbit, then from the 3.5-hour orbit to the 12-hour orbit.

After several hours of acceleration, Skyglow finally reached the moon escape velocity of 2.4 kilometers per second, successfully entering the Earth-Moon transfer orbit.

Nie Yun, who was sitting in the pilot's seat, skillfully shut down the engine and transitioned into cruise mode. With the help of Earth's gravity, Skyglow successfully entered the 48-hour orbit.

This was the optimal return route, which was calculated by the ground command center supercomputer.

With only 9% of the working medium left, this was the only safe way for re-entry!

The flight lasted more than 50 hours.

Finally, six days after Chinese New Year's Day, Skyglow began to approach the edge of Earth's atmosphere.

Until yesterday, the American media were still sticking with their story. They posted headlines such as "successful moon landing leaves the question of successful return" and accused China of disregarding the safety of the astronauts. They claimed China was using human lives to test immature technologies.

Skyglow's successful entry into the atmosphere made the NASA experts and American journalists look stupid.

It wasn't just America, space centers and space enthusiasts all around the world were focusing on Skyglow; even normal civilians were paying attention to Skyglow.

Especially Chinese people.

Countless hearts and minds were praying for that spacecraft.

This was the last hundred meters of a marathon.

Landing on the Moon was an accomplishment, but bringing the victory back from the Moon was the ultimate victory!

"... This is Skyglow, we have successfully entered the return orbit," Nie Yun said as he took a deep breath. He said in a calm voice, "Re-entering the atmosphere in 5 minutes."

Soon after, the ground command center replied.

“... Message received, good luck.”

Five minutes quickly passed by. Skyglow began to make contact with the atmosphere, and the deceleration plates on the wings opened in hopes of counteracting Earth’s gravitational pull.

Skyglow finally entered into the troposphere, the densest part of the atmosphere.

50 kilometers!

10 kilometers!

5 kilometers!

2 kilometers!

It’s there!

Skyglow broke through the clouds.

The moment Skyglow appeared in the sky, the staff on the runway, the engineers, and the technicians in the command center couldn’t help but cheer for this hard-won victory.

The giant fuselage landed slowly and smoothly onto the runway.

A parachute was ejected, dragging Skyglow to a stop.

The ground crew and reporters swarmed to the spacecraft.

The sound of air leaking was heard. The heavy hatch slowly opened, and three astronauts appeared in everyone’s sight.

Liu Zhengwen held the handrails and walked down the airstair. When he looked at all of this happening in front of him, he felt like he was dreaming.

I’m...

A hero?

Tears filled his eyes.

That moment, he realized that the responsibilities and pressure he had to endure over the past few days were all worth it.

...

The moment the spacecraft successfully landed, the ground command center's work was done. The engineers and technicians working there either ran to the runway or went to the lounge for some rest.

Some of them had worked for more than 24 hours straight.

Especially Hou Guang, the chief commander of the ground command center. He hadn't had a second of sleep ever since the aerospaceplane entered the 24-hour orbit. After seeing Skyglow successfully land, it was almost like he was on drugs. He dropped his headset and ran out of the command room.

It seemed like before taking a break, he had to see it with his own eyes.

Lu Zhou was standing in the command center, and he watched from a distance as the three astronauts were surrounded by the ground crew and reporters. He couldn't help but smirk.

Yan Yan, who was standing behind him, teased.

"Aren't you gonna let the reporters take some photos of you?"

She was quite worried. She thought that Lu Zhou would become overly excited after the spacecraft landed. Fortunately, Lu Zhou's health had been stable.

Yan Yan couldn't help but feel relieved.

It seemed like Lu Zhou finally started to take care of his health.

Lu Zhou stared at the crowd outside and smiled.

"I'm good.

"I already received my rewards."

Yan Yan was confused. Before she could ask, Lu Zhou turned around and walked out of the command room.

Two minutes ago, he received a reminder from the system that his side mission had been completed.

He could finally collect his side mission branch awards, and he couldn't wait to find out what the next phase of the mission chain was...

Chapter 729: Second Stage

Inside Lu Zhou's private resting lounge.

Lu Zhou hung the Do Not Disturb sign on the lounge door. After locking the door, he walked to the bed and lay down on it. He closed his eyes and summoned the system.

Soon, a familiar feeling surrounded him.

When he opened his eyes again, he was in a pure white space.

How long has it been since I last came here?

A month?

Two months?

Or maybe half a year.

Lu Zhou didn't remember when was the last time he came here.

Ever since the long-term scientific research mission chain began, he rarely returned to the system space.

He walked in front of the holographic panel, a line of blue text appeared in front of him.

[Congratulations, user, for completing the first phase of "Control of Earth and Moon": landing on the Moon.

[Requirements: User has to lead a project in sending at least one astronaut to the Moon and successfully bring him back to Earth safely.

[Rewards: 100,000 engineering experience points, 50,000 materials science experience points, 50,000 energy science points. 500 general points. One lucky draw ticket.

[Secondary goals:

A barrel of gold: Collect and bring back 1kg of lunar soil. Reward: 50,000 experience points. (completed)

Overlooking Earth: At an altitude of 100-2000 kilometers, manually operate a camera and capture a photo of planet Earth. Reward: 50,000 experience points, one lucky draw ticket. (completed)

Life Of Farming: Deploy a 10-square-meter unmanned planting module on the Moon's surface. Observe and record the growth of crops under conditions of low gravity and the absence of a magnetic field. Reward: 50,000 experience points. One lucky draw ticket. (completed)

Crazy Jerry: Plant ten rats on the surface of the Moon. Observe and record the activities of the specimen under the conditions of low gravity and the absence of a magnetic field. Reward: 100,000 experience points. One lucky draw ticket. (completed)

]

This mission's experience point rewards were plentiful. In addition to the main mission experience points, the 250,000 branch mission experience points were assignable to any subjects. He also received four of the precious lucky draw tickets.

Lu Zhou was as excited as the astronauts who had just stepped out of the aerospaceplane.

Of course, it was too soon to celebrate.

Whether or not this was worth celebrating still depended on the lucky draw.

“System, open my characteristic panel!”

A blue light swept across the screen, and his characteristic panel soon appeared in front of him.

He didn't have to worry about mathematics and physics right now; one was level 8, the other was level 7. Their level up requirements were all in the millions of experience points range, so the 250,000 wouldn't do anything.

Engineering and biochemistry, which were both on level 5, seemed to be a pretty good investment. However, the level 3 energy science and level 2 information science were also cost-effective choices. If the helium-3 mining or lunar communication bandwidth problem were solved, information science and energy science might be useful.

Lu Zhou stood in front of the characteristic panel and contemplated it for a while. He suddenly felt like 250,000 experience points wasn't enough.

"I guess I didn't complete enough branch missions? I guess I have to pay more attention to the second mission stage..."

Lu Zhou took a deep breath and pondered for a second. He quickly made a decision. He spent 200,000 of the experience points on biochemistry, then allocated the remaining 50,000 experience points to information science.

Soon, his characteristic panel was updated.

[

A. Mathematics: Level 8 (774,000/3 million)

B. Physics: Level 7 (13,215/1.2 million)

C. Biochemistry: Level 6 (10,000/600,000)

D. Engineering: Level 5 (10/300,000)

E. Materials science: Level 6 (63,000/600,000)

F. Energy science: Level 3 (50,000/100,000)

G. Information science: Level 3 (3,000/100,000)

General points: 4,835 (four lucky draw tickets)

]

Biochemistry was upgraded from level 5 to level 6, while information science was upgraded from level 2 to level 3. He was getting closer to mastering biochemistry and was no longer a novice in information science.

The reason he chose to allocate the experience points this way was mainly that biochemistry was closely related to materials science. Because his biochemistry level was lower than his materials science level, the benefits of leveling up his biochemistry level were quite large.

As for why he chose information science and not energy science, it was mainly because second-generation controllable fusion technology was still nowhere to be seen, and helium-3 mining wasn't an urgent project.

Of course, there was another thing he could have done, which was to level up his engineering to level 6.

However, so far, Lu Zhou felt like he didn't require a high-level understanding of engineering. After all, there were many excellent engineers at the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study who could make up for his shortcomings in the engineering field.

All of the experience points had been allocated; next up was the exciting lucky draw.

Lu Zhou stared at the information screen and took a deep breath. He silently prayed for a bit before focusing his attention on the roulette wheel.

He pressed the button, and at the same time, he spoke.

"... Let's go!"

The wheel began to spin.

Without hesitating, Lu Zhou spun the wheel three times in a row, giving him three prizes.

After he saw the prizes, he was appalled.

Three lucky draws; two pieces of garbage and one sample. One was a Future brand liquid meal replacement, the other was the long-lost Future branded coke. There was also a Future brand... pajama?

Even though the label said it was a sweater, it was clearly a gray pajama.

What surprised Lu Zhou the most was that this “pajama” was a sample...

Lu Zhou thought this item was no different from a piece of garbage.

Lu Zhou took a deep breath and looked at the lucky draw button.

He only had one shot left.

Lu Zhou clenched his teeth and pressed the button.

The wheel spun quickly. He pressed the button again, and the wheel slowly came to a stop.

[Congratulations, user, sample is given!

[Received: “Crawler”, an all-terrain remote-controlled exploration vehicle!]

Lu Zhou: “?!”

Lu Zhou’s eyes immediately focused on this weirdly-shaped exploration vehicle.

Even though there weren’t any instructions, his intuition told him that he just struck gold!

He felt a little better.

Lu Zhou looked at the holographic panel.

After all of his lucky draws were finished, he could finally see what the next stage of the mission was.

“Time to move on to the next stage.”

Lu Zhou took a deep breath and opened the mission panel.

The blue light swept across the screen, and the mission “Target 2” was presented in front of his eyes.

[Target 2: Permanent Station on the Moon

[Requirements: Build a semi-permanent scientific research station on the surface of the Moon. This station is for astronomical observation, observation

of geohydrological and climate activities, as well as high-energy physics experiments. The basic requirement is to place more than 100 tons of man-made objects on the surface of the Moon.

[Secondary goals:

Crowded Planet: 24-hour active population on the Moon has to exceed 100.
2: Spark of the Future: Large Hadron Collider on the Moon.

<ol start="3">

Three Feet Deep: Collect 50 tons of rare lunar soil.

Alchemist: Produce 100 tons of titanium alloy.

5 Look Back on the Earth: Establish a semi-permanent Earth meteorological observation station in the Moon's orbit.

6: Look Far Away: Establish a large space telescope for detailed observations of planets in the solar system, as well as extraterrestrial stars.

...

]

Lu Zhou: "..."

The manned moon landing was still realistic, but these missions were on a completely different level.

Even if Skyglow picked up trash from the low-Earth orbit and threw them on the Moon, it would take several trips to place 100 tons of man-made objects on the Moon. If he really did that, he could forget about receiving any mission rewards. Not to mention how scary the next mission stage would be.

Lu Zhou had a headache.

Why do I feel like this damn system...

Is becoming more and more difficult to deal with.

Chapter 730: Mysterious Coke

Aerospace launch site.

The excited crowd formed a circle.

Nie Yun and the other astronauts tried to adapt to Earth's gravity. With the help from the ground crew, they walked down the airstairs.

The reporters swarmed around these three heroes with their cameras.

"Mr. Nie Yun, as the pilot, how are you feeling right now?"

Nie Yun didn't talk a lot, even at a moment like this.

"I feel alright."

The reporter said, "Is that it? The entire country is waiting to hear your thoughts."

Nie Yun stopped his footsteps and looked at the lens. He then said, "This is broadcasting to the entire country?"

"There is an hour delay. We'll edit it before it goes live."

After hearing the reporter, Nie Yun nodded.

He stood up straight and spoke.

"Dad, Mom, I'm back."

On the other hand, Liu Zhengwen, as the first Chinese to step foot on the Moon, was also surrounded by reporters.

"Mr. Liu Zhengwen, as the first Chinese to step foot on the Moon, what would you like to say to the audience who is sitting at home watching TV?"

Liu Zhengwen: "... I'd like to thank my fellow citizens."

Of course, compared to the other two astronauts, the media was more interested in Nie Yan.

She was the first female astronaut to step foot on the Moon.

However, because of the astronauts' health conditions, the reporters didn't stay for long. After a five-minute interview, they all cooperated and left the launch site.

Wang Peng stood next to the command tower as he stared at the aerospaceplane.

He heard footsteps behind him.

He looked back at Yan Yan.

"Where is Lu Zhou?"

Yan Yan stared at the crowd in the distance and spoke casually.

"He is resting."

Wang Peng: "Sleeping?"

"Yeah."

Wang Peng gave her a strange look and said, "Forgive me for asking, but are you sure he isn't in a coma again?"

Yan Yan paused for a second. She didn't know what to do.

I hope not...

"Then... Should I... check on him?"

Wang Peng said in a serious manner, "I think you should."

I hope he is okay.

...

The white system space faded away, Lu Zhou's consciousness returned to reality.

He climbed down from the rigid bed and stretched his body. He then sat on the bed again.

Those were some pretty good rewards.

He planned on taking the exploration vehicle and the weird piece of clothing to the underground laboratory at the Institute for Advanced Study.

As for right now...

He obviously had to celebrate this victory with a bottle of champagne!

Lu Zhou concentrated on the coke in his mind, and the thirst-quenching can of coke appeared in his hands out of thin air.

The can felt similar to the familiar Coca-Cola cans.

Does this really come from the future? Why hasn't the packaging changed?

Maybe they specifically made the can like this?

He tried looking for the production date and ingredients list, but he wasn't able to find it.

Lu Zhou was about to open the can and take a sip, but the lounge door was suddenly pushed open. Yan Yan appeared at the doorsteps, and when she saw the coke in Lu Zhou's hand, she immediately snatched the can from him.

"Why are you drinking this, it's bad for you."

Yan Yan opened the can and took a sip herself.

What?

It's pretty good.

She realized that even though the can looked like Coca-Cola, the brand was completely different.

"Future?" Yan Yan muttered. She looked at Lu Zhou and said, "What brand of coke is this? I've never seen it."

“... It’s a Coca-Cola custom can, of course you haven’t seen it,” Lu Zhou said as he stared at the can of coke in Yan Yan’s hand. He was secretly heartbroken.

“Okay, big man, you’re rich, we get it.”

Yan Yan couldn’t help but think.

What a waste of money!

Who cares about your custom coke can?

Lu Zhou couldn’t help but laugh.

Yan Yan knew what Lu Zhou was thinking, and she rolled her eyes and placed the coke on the table.

“... Fine, here you go.”

If he’s willing to drink Coca-Cola, his health should be in good condition.

Not to mention that after she heard this can was custom made, she felt a little guilty drinking it...

After making sure Lu Zhou was in good health, Yan Yan told him about the “danger of carbonated drinks”. She left the lounge and hung the “Do Not Disturb” sign on the door.

Seeing how Yan Yan didn’t notice anything, Lu Zhou sighed in relief.

Wang Peng or Yang Guangbiao wouldn’t have been fooled so easily...

Even though it wasn’t a big deal if other people knew he had some kind of special coke, he should be more cautious in the future.

Lu Zhou picked up the can of coke and was about to have a “victory drink”. However, after he saw the opened top ring, he hesitated for a second.

Even though he wasn’t a germaphobe, he still didn’t like to drink from other people’s can.

What do I do now?

After pondering for a while, Lu Zhou decided he didn't want to waste the precious coke. He went to the nearby cupboard and found a cup.

I'll just pour it in the cup...

On the other hand, Yan Yan was walking in the corridor outside the resting lounge. She whispered to herself as she reminisced about the coke, "I've never heard of custom Coca-Colas... It tastes pretty good."

Her impression was that coke was divided into sugar-free and the ordinary version; neither of which was good for the body.

After a while, she shook her head and put this problem aside.

Forget about it, rich people are weird.

I'm just happy Lu Zhou is healthy...

She didn't know why, but she felt her mental state was exceptionally good. It was almost like she was injected with a stimulant...

Why do I feel so good? Is it an illusion?

Yan Yan slapped her face and tried to forget about what just happened.

Chapter 731: The Exhausted NASA

While China was cheering for the triumphant return of their heroes, the news of Skyglow's successful return spread throughout the world through media reports and public statements from NASA, ESA, Roscosmos, and other agencies.

Almost everyone was shocked after hearing the news.

Prior to this, American media outlets were publishing interviews with relevant NASA experts. NASA experts believed that the Skyglow did indeed have a 25-ton Earth-Moon transfer orbit carrying capacity, but, due to the rushed moon landing plan, China might end up facing the same failure as the Russians.

However, this reality was like a slap to their faces.

Not only did Skyglow successfully return to the Jin Ling city launch site, but it also safely brought back the three astronauts and one kilogram of lunar soil.

Even though they were reluctant to accept the truth, they had to face reality.

China had shocked the aerospace industry with its ion thruster propulsion system, and the Chinese were catching up to the Americans at an incredible speed.

If China landed on the Moon today, then what was going to happen tomorrow? Or the day after that?

Even though over the past half-century NASA had some amount of success, their progress speed had undoubtedly slowed down. NASA's lunar space station plan was set in 2022. Even though the Ares plan caused a huge sensation, there wasn't any practical action yet to be seen.

All of the Americans who were concerned about the aerospace industry were full of doubts; some were even furious.

They were wondering what the hell NASA was doing?

The American media's opinion gradually started to change.

No longer was the patronizing tone directed toward China's aerospace technology; rather, the media was outraged against NASA. This was especially true for The New York Times. This time, they didn't interview NASA experts. Rather, they pointed their guns toward NASA and had a rather interesting headline on their latest newspaper.

[China is landing on the Moon, what are we doing?]

Coincidentally, while The New York Times was aggressively attacking NASA, the Los Angeles Times and the Washington Times also attacked NASA from different perspectives. They questioned exactly how NASA spent their giant budget.

CNN even suggested having a special investigation team check NASA's budget spending over the years. They claimed there might be something shady going on.

On the other hand, NASA was perplexed by the attacking crowds.

Objectively speaking, the United States had achieved quite a lot in the aerospace industry over the past couple of decades. Their exploration boundaries even reached Pluto, and two of their space probes had set foot outside of the solar system.

However, all of these achievements didn't sound as impressive as putting a man on the Moon.

After all, the space probe was just a lifeless machine. It wasn't as exciting as putting humans beyond planet Earth.

NASA wasn't the only one under attack. This issue divided the country into two sides. This was no longer just a technical problem, it was a political problem.

The American government promised to make America great again.

However, these promises were not fulfilled.

Not only was the media attacking NASA, but they were attacking the White House as well...

...

White House.

Inside a conference room.

Other than a few unfamiliar faces, the same crowd sat at the conference table.

When the president walked in, everyone stood up to show their respect.

"Ladies and gentlemen, take a seat."

The president sat down and looked around the conference table. He stared at the NASA director, Carson, and said, "I need an explanation."

Carson looked at the NASA deputy director. He then took a deep breath and stood up.

"We underestimated China's determination in the aerospace field... as well as their technical strength. Their application of ion thruster propulsion systems exceeded our expectations. We never imagined that ion thrusters could go

hand-in-hand with traditional chemical thrusters. This goes to show that ion thruster propulsion systems are more than capable of escaping Earth's gravitational pull. So far we have collaborated with the PPPL, MIT, and other research institutes on improving our ion thruster technology..."

The president slammed the table and interrupted Carson. He frowned and said impatiently, "How long?"

Carson paused for a second and forced a smile.

"Um... We don't have estimates. We have to miniaturize controllable fusion reactors first."

Before they could miniaturize controllable fusion, they had to figure out controllable fusion first. Even though Carson's intuition was that the miniaturization of controllable fusion wasn't as difficult as imagined, they were still far from developing the technology.

After all, according to the technology negotiations with China, they would have to wait until next year to reach an agreement.

Not to mention that the price of the negotiation was not small...

The president said, "I need a solution now, I don't want to hear about your incompetence!"

Carson nearly spat out blood.

The f*ck?

Weren't you the one that wanted an explanation?

Of course, Carson didn't dare to say this out loud.

He went silent for a while before speaking, "Of course, we have come up with a response strategy... I've talked about it with the vice president prior to this meeting."

When the president looked at the vice president, the old man sitting in the vice-president chair nodded and spoke.

"Before the conference, I spoke with Mr. Carson. His proposal is quite good, albeit a bit risky."

Even though the vice president was only a political mascot, he still played a useful role sometimes.

For example, in the case of the revival of the National Space Council.

In many cases, the president didn't directly control matters in the aerospace field. Most of the time, it was handled by the president's administrative office and the vice president.

"Risky?" The president frowned and looked at Carson. "What kind of risk?"

Carson took a deep breath and said, "My proposal is to immediately begin the first phase of the Ares project and send a life support system to Mars!"

The president frowned and said, "You call that a proposal? If I recall correctly, the life support system is still in its testing phase."

"You're right, but we can't wait any longer. Just like you said, we should trust our engineers." Carson took a deep breath and said, "If we remove some of the more cumbersome procedures, we can send a life support system to Mars in two months!"

Quiet discussions were heard at the conference table.

Carson was sweating from his forehead.

He knew how risky his proposal was.

It wasn't just risky; he was straight up gambling with the astronauts' lives.

Especially after Columbia's tragedy, this seemed like a terrible idea!

Sure enough, a serious-faced middle-aged man stood up and stared sharply at Carson. He said, "Director Carson, I want to ask if by cumbersome procedures, are you referring to the necessary testing procedures?"

Carson looked at the president's executive office adviser and said, "The testing procedures aren't necessary... Actually, we are confident we can operate the life support system for at least two years."

The man asked, "How are you so sure?"

Carson was speechless. Before he could reply, the president spoke first.

“He’s right.

“We should be more flexible, especially in the face of adversary. Isn’t this what the National Space Council is for?”

The vice president smiled and adjusted his tie.

This was one of the rare situations where he felt impactful.

People in the room were whispering, and the man who previously attacked Carson hesitated.

He then said, “Mr. President, I have to tell you, this is not a good idea.”

“Maybe, maybe not. The testing doesn’t have to be done in the Arizona desert. It can also be done on Mars,” Carson said. He continued, “We can send the life support system to Mars first, then confirm whether or not it works. If it works, then we can send astronauts.”

Even though he wasn’t sure of this risky idea, he didn’t care anymore.

NASA needs a victory.

America needs a victory!

If something goes wrong, I’ll just take the blame and resign.

Carson had no other choice.

“Do what he said, and send the life support system to Mars for testing,” the president said as he tapped the conference table with a metal pen. He said, “We don’t have any more time to waste. China is going to war with us! Every minute is precious!”

The president cast a thoughtful look at Carson.

“Mr. Carson, I hope to open a bottle of champagne with you in two months’ time. Don’t let me down.”

A drop of cold sweat rolled down Carson’s forehead.

However, he still pressed his right hand against his chest and made a promise.

“I promise you.

“God is on our side!”

Chapter 732: Unbreakable Clothes?

The entire country cheered for the successful manned moon landing.

China became the second country to land a person on the Moon, and a lot of other countries were envious.

Especially Russia.

As the second strongest aerospace nation, in 2017, the Roscosmos State Corporation for Space Activities issued a four-step strategy for landing on the Moon. It claimed to put a man on the Moon in 2031 and carry out a 14-day scientific research mission... as well as building a research base on the Moon in 2034.

Even though this was widely regarded as a response to the United States' Lunar Gateway program, the fact was that the Roscosmos was going through with its own program.

After all, aerospace wasn't just the pride of the Americans, it was also the pride and joy of the Russians.

Even though it was impossible to recreate the greatness that was the Soviet Union, if the Roscosmos could accomplish what the Soviet Union failed to accomplish, many Russians would be satisfied.

Everyone thought that Russia would become the second country to land a man on the Moon.

However, that didn't happen...

From the successful launch of Skyglow to the landing of the lunar module, and finally, to the successful return of the astronauts. Not only did this series of achievements scare the Americans, but it also frightened the Russians.

Russia felt like China was getting the upper hand...

The Roscosmos gave its congratulations in regards to China's successful moon landing. It also quickly convened a closed-door internal meeting. It re-scheduled its moon landing program and applied for an increase in the budget.

Russia wasn't the only country reacting this way; the European Space Agency also quickly held a press conference. It stated publicly that "it is time for us to land on the Moon". The European Space Agency also announced a new set of manned moon landing plans, as well as cooperation projects with the United States in its Ares plan.

Like the life support system project...

Regardless, the underdog that was China completely changed the international aerospace field. Gone was the geopolitics and governance conflicts, and in came a new era of aerospace competition.

It was very hard to predict what would happen in the future...

The day after the heroes returned, the news channel was still playing videos filmed on the Moon, as well as documentaries on the Moon landing.

As for the three heroes who landed on the Moon, they were sent to the 301 Hospital in Beijing.

Even though their health was in good condition, they still had to go through the usual inspection procedures. After all, there could be hidden health problems.

Because they stayed in a low-gravity environment for a long time, it would take them a couple of days to adjust to Earth's gravity.

As for Lu Zhou, he left the aerospace industry alone for the time being. His attention was on something else...

...

Underground basement in the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study.

Inside Lu Zhou's personal private laboratory...

A black sweater was placed on the experiment table... There wasn't anything special about it, other than the fact that it was extra-soft and smooth.

No matter how Lu Zhou looked at it, it was just an ordinary piece of clothing. He even felt pretty comfortable wearing it.

He touched the sweater inside out and didn't find any special mechanisms.

"Is this really just for wearing in the summer? What if people think I'm crazy for wearing this on the street?"

Lu Zhou believed that there was something else about this sweater. He refused to believe that the future generations had such a simple taste in fashion.

And given that the system had classified it as a sample, there had to be something different about it.

"... Thickness of 1.72mm, thermal conductivity of 2000w/ (m·k)," Lu Zhou said as he looked at the data measured on the high-precision thermal conductivity meter. He thought for a moment, then suddenly said, "Xiao Ai, fetch me my toolbox."

[Okay! (๑•̀ㅂ•́) ✨]

A string of text popped up on the screen two meters away. Right after that, the robotic arm connected on the wall began to move. It accurately grabbed the toolbox on the ground, then placed it on the logistics vehicle. The vehicle quickly drove itself next to Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou reached out and took out a pair of scissors from his toolbox. He found a spot near the sleeve. He then cut the sweater.

He was shocked.

It was like the pair of scissors was cutting a piece of steel plate. No matter how hard Lu Zhou tried, the scissors didn't make a dent.

"This is weird."

Lu Zhou threw the scissors aside and looked at the perfectly good sweater. He was full of surprise.

Seeing how Lu Zhou was perplexed, the flying drone flew over.

[Master, do you want Xiao Ai to help? 0.0]

Lu Zhou thought for a moment and said, "What idea do you have?"

[Why don't we try a water jet cutter?]

Lu Zhou immediately slapped his head.

I almost forgot about that!

A long time ago, in order to keep Xiao Ai entertained, Lu Zhou added a bunch of industrial and experimental equipment in the underground laboratory. He obviously had basic equipment like a water jet cutter.

Lu Zhou immediately said, "Okay, cut 1cm off the left sleeve for me."

[Okay! (๑•̀=•́) ✧]

The drone grabbed the clothing on the table and flew to the corner of the laboratory. The drone then placed the sweater on the water jet cutter, which was connected to the laboratory central server.

After the drone accurately placed the sweater on the processing station, Xiao Ai controlled the water jet cutter to release a high-pressure jet of water. A 1cm square of fabric was cut off from the sleeves.

After the device finished cutting, Lu Zhou stepped forward and picked up the 1cm square with a pair of tweezers. He carefully observed the fabric before placing it into a sample bag.

Even though there were quite a lot of different types of experimental equipment in the underground laboratory, large equipment such as the transmission electron microscopes were only found in specialized departments in the upper-floors.

Lu Zhou planned on giving this piece of fabric to Yang Xu and let him take a transmission electron microscope image and do an infrared spectrum analysis.

Lu Zhou quite trusted Yang Xu.

Both in terms of talent and trustworthiness...

Lu Zhou tidied up the laboratory. He put on his coat and was about to leave.

However, when he reached the door, he suddenly remembered something. He quickly returned to the experiment table.

“I nearly forgot about this.”

He picked up two sealed test tubes from the test tube rack; one was filled with a green liquid, the other was filled with a black liquid. Lu Zhou smiled and put the two test tubes in a sample bag, together with the piece of fabric. He then turned around and walked out of the door.

Chapter 733: Component Analysis

Ever since the establishment of the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study, the experimental facilities have been gradually improved. Because of the relaxed academic atmosphere and funding, the institute successfully attracted a large number of overseas talents.

The Institute for Advanced Study used to be a small private institute with four major institutes, namely mathematics, physics, computational materials, and information science. Because of the fresh talents, it gradually evolved into a large institute, with a large range of subjects.

After the second and third phase of the research institute was completed, teams inside the institutes branched off from their former institute and formed their own research institutes.

For example, the Institute of Biochemistry used to be part of the Institute of Computational Materials.

After Lu Zhou gave Yang Xu the fabric sample, he brought the two test tubes to the composition analysis laboratory at the Institute of Biochemistry. He found the person in charge, which was Xu Wenhao.

“Professor Lu? Oh, come on in, I’ll get some drinks from... What do you want? We have...”

“No, it’s fine,” Lu Zhou said as he looked at how excited Xu Wenhao was. Lu Zhou smiled awkwardly and said, “I have some test tubes that I need you to do some component analyses on. I hope I’m not disturbing your work.”

Xu Wenhao shook his head and said, “No no, I just finished my experiment. If you have any samples you want me to measure, just tell me!”

For a noob researcher like him, he felt honored that he was able to help a Nobel Prize winner.

Not to mention that any thesis with Lu Zhou’s name on it would be blessed!

Lu Zhou felt like this guy was a bit overenthusiastic, but he didn’t take it too seriously.

Lu Zhou happened to notice some samples placed on the experiment table, and he raised his eyebrows.

“What is this?”

Xu Wenhao looked at the samples and immediately knew what Lu Zhou was talking about. He smiled and replied, “Oh, these are some carbon-based chip samples sent from the Institute of Computational Materials. They asked me to do a component analysis, so I was just fiddling with it.”

Carbon-based chips?

There was suddenly a tinge of surprise on Lu Zhou’s face.

It has already been two years, he nearly forgot about this project.

He still remembered that shortly after he left America, the Jinling Institute of Computational Materials cooperated with Baosheng Group and developed the SG-1 superconducting material by improving the graphene overlap angle.

Last year at the conference in California, Baosheng Group demonstrated the superconducting technology at the controllable fusion summit. This surprised many foreign fusion research companies, and Baosheng Group received countless orders.

Before Lu Zhou left America, he told the boss of Baosheng Group that silicon-based chip research was entering a bottleneck. Even though Intel and Qualcomm were still continuously improving their silicon chip technology, they

were still limited by the laws of silicon physics. If China wanted to overtake the computer chip field, they had to find another material to replace silicon.

Graphene semiconductor was one of the possible materials.

Graphene had almost all of the characteristics required for electronics. Its only flaw was finding a suitable energy band gap. However, the energy band gap could be adjusted by changing the graphene overlap angle.

Even though the boss of Baosheng Group promised to begin research on graphene chips, he never got around to it.

However, Lu Zhou didn't blame him too much. After all, the Baosheng Group boss only wanted to focus on the SG-1 material and get a promotion.

Not to mention that graphene semiconductors research had only just begun. It might take years or decades before the maturity of graphene chip technology. Even if Baosheng group spent a bunch of money on researching the technology, they might not receive any profits.

Therefore, the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study was the one that worked on this project.

This project was partly funded by the state scientific research funds, and the rest was funded by Star Sky Technology.

After all, if they wanted to have a patent on the technology, they had to put some skin in the game.

Lu Zhou was intrigued, so he asked, "How is the project going?"

Xu Wenhao scratched his head awkwardly and said, "I'm not sure about their progress, but I heard Professor Yang's team has developed a method for preparing graphene semiconductors. But the synthesis is still not stable... I've heard Professor Yang complain several times, that if you were to help him, this problem would have been solved a long time ago."

Lu Zhou coughed.

"What do you mean a long time ago... I'm not a god, what am I supposed to do..."

Xu Wenhao quickly said, "I didn't say that, Professor Yang said it."

“Okay, whatever.” Lu Zhou shook his head and took out two test tubes from his pocket. He placed it on the empty test tube rack on the experiment table and said, “I have two samples here, I need you to do component analyses on them.”

One of the test tubes contained a sample of the liquid meal-replacement.

After Lu Zhou took the liquid out of the system space, he drank half of it and felt like it tasted pretty good. It tasted like a mixture of yogurt and lemonade, but it was thicker than lemonade.

Of course, the taste wasn't important. The important part was that after drinking half of the bottle, he was totally satiated.

Lu Zhou was curious about the nutritional content, so he placed the remaining liquid in a sample test tube.

If he could figure out the formula of this liquid, it could be used for food in space.

The other test tube was obviously the remains of the can of Future coke.

In the past, Lu Zhou didn't have the means to test this stuff, but now, he finally could. He obviously would never pass up on an opportunity to experiment. Every time he drank the coke, he felt refreshed and energized. The ingredients might be interesting...

Of course, maybe he was just overthinking.

For example, maybe the manufacturer just added some extra taurine and caffeine...

Xu Wenhao looked at the two test tubes and smiled.

“No problem, when do you need it?”

“As soon as you can. Send the report and the remaining samples to my office...”

The phone in Lu Zhou's pocket suddenly began to ring.

“Let me take this.”

Xu Wenhao immediately started to kiss a*s as he said, “No worries, go ahead, I’ll start testing right away!”

Lu Zhou nodded and replied, “Okay then, thanks!”

Lu Zhou turned around and left the laboratory. He picked up the call as he walked toward the end of the hallway.

“Hello?”

He heard Director Li’s voice through the phone.

“It’s me, how have you been?”

Lu Zhou could tell from his voice that Director Li was in a good mood. Clearly, the successful moon landing was a huge accomplishment for the State Administration for National Defense and the China National Space Administration.

But Lu Zhou didn’t really care, so he smiled and replied, “I’m good, what’s up?”

“Do you have time to come to Beijing?”

Lu Zhou: “Beijing? Why?”

“Why?” Director Li smiled and said, “To give you an award, why else?”

Chapter 734: Use It as an Antique

Beijing.

More than 3000 people sat in the majestic Great Hall of the People.

Most of the people sitting here were academics from the Chinese Academy of Sciences or Academy of Engineering, senior officials from various government departments related to the manned moon landing program, and other high-level officials. Everyone sat here for one purpose—to give thanks and blessings to the hero of the moon landing program.

After a solemn opening remark, the commendation ceremony for the manned moon landing project officially began. A kind-faced old man walked on stage.

The applause gradually subsided.

The president paused for a second. He then spoke in a calm and solemn voice.

“Our Dong Fang Hong I was successfully launched 51 years ago. That was our first satellite, and it was our first milestone in aerospace.

“18 years ago, our Shenzhou 5 spacecraft was successfully launched. We became the third country to master manned space technology, ahead of the Europeans... This was our second aerospace milestone.”

The auditorium went silent.

After a pause, the old man spoke.

“We are now the second country to land on the Moon! This is undoubtedly our third and greatest accomplishment yet!

“Allow me to speak on behalf of the whole country. I’d like to thank the vast number of scientific and technological staff members who have made great sacrifices to the manned moon mission!”

The thunderous applause spread like a tidal wave, instantly filling the entire conference hall.

The president nodded and went off stage.

The conference entered its next stage.

Academician Yuan, the chief engineer of the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation, looked at the three astronauts receiving their medals on stage. He was overwhelmed with emotion.

These past six months felt like a dream to him.

He never thought that he would live to see the day ion thruster propulsion systems come to life. He didn’t know if he was remorseful or thankful.

Academician Wu Kang, the chief engineer of the Air Force Equipment Research Institute, was sitting next to him. Wu Kang spoke quietly.

“That guy is pretty amazing.”

Yuan Huanmin glanced at him.

“You’re talking about...”

“Professor Lu. Who else could I be talking about?” Academician Wu smiled and said, “The State Administration for National Defense called the Air Force Equipment Department, and Minister Qin called me. They told me someone created an ion thruster aerospaceplane, but there were funding problems. They asked me to find out if it was reliable... Guess what was my first reaction?”

Yuan Huanmin: “I don’t know.”

Academician Wu said, “I said to hurry up and arrest that person! Who dares to lie to the Air Force Equipment Department! Arrest them now!”

Yuan Huanmin felt a little embarrassed.

Speaking of which, he had something to do with this.

However, the things he did were justified.

“Thank God you didn’t arrest him.”

“Haha, of course now.” Academician Wu shook his head and smiled. He said, “Minister Qin told me that this was a special person and that no one would dare to arrest him. I immediately knew who he was talking about, so Minister Qin immediately took me to see the aerospaceplane in person.”

Academician Wu was embellishing.

He stared at the podium, and there was a hint of fascination in his eyes.

“... I will never forget what I saw.”

In the midst of the applause, the president shook the three astronauts’ hands on stage. He awarded them the “Aerospace Gold Medal of Excellence” and

the “Aerospace Medal of Honor”, in recognition of their determination and courage in the manned moon landing program.

Next up was the awards for the researchers who contributed to the moon landing program.

Even though the three astronauts were the ones who landed on the Moon, without these heroes working behind the curtains, these astronauts couldn't have landed on the Moon.

They were also awarded the Aerospace Gold Medal of Excellence.

This was the highest medal in the field of aerospace, and it was the lifelong dream of many astronauts. This award was generally only given to astronauts and researchers who had made outstanding contributions to aerospace projects.

The president took out the shiny gold medal from the award box, and he draped the medal on Lu Zhou's chest before shaking Lu Zhou's hand.

“Thank you.”

Lu Zhou: “Thank you!”

Ever since Lu Zhou received the Ling Yun medal, he stopped caring about awards. His wants were very simple. He only needed people to support his experiments so that he could continue his journey in scientific research.

The president stared at Lu Zhou for a while and smiled.

“Unfortunately, this is all I can give you.”

Lu Zhou smiled and said, “Oh, you're too kind, this is more than enough.”

“One medal is not enough to represent the country's gratitude.” The president thought for a while and said, “Everything I can give you, you already have. You're probably not interested in anything else. I thought for a while... Since there's nothing I can give you, I have decided to give you a calligraphic work.”

The president grabbed a rolled piece of paper from the staff member next to him. He unrolled the paper and presented it to Lu Zhou.

There was a magnificent line of text on the Xuan paper.

[A propitious and auspicious omen comes to those who are talented!]

There was also a square name stamp on the corner.

Lu Zhou stared at the line of calligraphy and looked astonished.

Even though he didn't know a lot about art, he could still feel the power from the brush.

"Well written," he said.

The president smiled and waved his hand. "If you like it, find a place to hang it."

Lu Zhou took the Xuan paper and the medal box from the president. He then bowed as a show of thanks.

Even though Lu Zhou didn't know what this meant, when he saw Director Li's envious eyes, he knew this wasn't just an ordinary piece of calligraphic work.

Speaking of which, wouldn't it seem too arrogant if I were to hang this in my office?

Emm...

Forget about it, I'll just store it as an antique.

Chapter 735: Worthy of Bragging

Academician Wang Zengguang was applauding as he looked at Lu Zhou, who was on stage. He then spoke.

"Old Li..."

Academician Li Jiangang was still clapping when he stared at Wang Zengguang and said, "What?"

Wang Zengguang said emotionally, "I think we can brag about controllable fusion for the rest of our lives."

“Of course,” Li Jiāngāng smiled and said, “we’ll brag about it until the end of time.”

“I think so too.” Wang Zēngguāng sighed and said with a sullen voice, “It’s not easy to achieve something earth-shattering in one’s lifetime.”

Li Jiāngāng: “Of course, how many earth-shattering things do you want to achieve?”

Wang Zēngguāng sighed and said, “I don’t know, but look at this kid. Maybe there really are true geniuses on Earth; those that are uncommon among uncommon people. Those that do things people don’t even dare to think of.”

Li Jiāngāng went silent for a while. He then spoke emotionally.

“He’s an exception... Forget about him.”

After the commendation conference finished, a grand celebration dinner was held in the same venue. The dinner started as a formal event, but it became more and more lively. In the end, everyone walked around drunk as they socialized.

Lu Zhōu didn’t plan on drinking, but there were too many people who were enthusiastically forcing him to drink... So enthusiastic that he couldn’t refuse. Therefore, he ended up getting wasted.

He didn’t control himself and drank too much. He felt dizzy and could barely stand up straight. Fortunately, a beautiful young waitress brought him hot towels and took him to the back of the venue to rest.

Lu Zhōu wiped the hot towel on his face while sitting down on the sofa. He felt sweat coming out of every pore in his body. Because of his fast-metabolic abilities, he quickly recovered.

The beautiful waitress stood next to him as she spoke softly.

“How are you feeling?”

“I’m okay.” Lu Zhōu shook his head and said, “Thanks, I feel a lot better. You can go now.”

“I’ve been told to take care of you. If you need anything, please tell me.”

“I don’t need anything. I’ll sit here for a bit, then go back to the hotel.”

If he went back to the conference hall, he would be fed alcohol again.

Academician Wang was the biggest culprit. Lu Zhou didn’t know why, but Academician Wang kept feeding him alcohol. In the end, Academician Wang collapsed first.

The waitress said softly, “I don’t feel safe letting you stay here alone. How about I drive you home?”

Lu Zhou smiled awkwardly.

Even though he knew she had good intentions, he already had a ride home.

“No, it’s fine, I have a driver.”

Waitress: “...”

...

The banquet continued to go on. The guests were still having a blast, but Lu Zhou was exhausted.

After Lu Zhou said goodbye to his friends, he walked to the main entrance of the Great Hall of the People and got in Wang Peng’s car.

Lu Zhou let the wind blow on his face during the drive back. He could feel himself getting sober again. He took a hot shower in his hotel room, changed his clothes, and lay on his bed.

However, the moment he lay on his bed, his phone started to ring.

Lu Zhou picked up the phone from the nightstand and yawned. He answered the call.

“Hello?”

A voice traveled through the phone.

“Hey, Professor Lu, I didn’t wake you up, did I?”

Lu Zhou scratched his head and rolled on his bed.

“Who are you?”

“It’s Director Qian!”

When Lu Zhou heard this name, he paused for a second.

“Director Qian?”

Emm...

Who is that?

He contemplated for a while, but he didn’t remember meeting this person.

Lu Zhou hesitated for a while and tried to ask politely.

“Who... are you?”

Director Qian was baffled, and he said, “I work in the Chinese Academy of Sciences...”

Lu Zhou was probably the only academician election candidate who didn’t know who Director Qian was.

Director Qian’s role at the Chinese Academy of Sciences was directly related to the academician elections. He was responsible for coordinating the standing committees of various academic departments. His a*s was kissed by every single scholar who wanted to become an academician.

After all, if a scholar could become an academician, then they would receive the highest academic honor possible. They would be at the top of the “academic food chain”, and they would be able to receive enormous amounts of research funding!

However, Director Qian wasn’t angry at Lu Zhou for not knowing who he was.

He cleared his throat and spoke in a congratulatory tone.

“Oh... Professor Lu, I’m calling you to inform you that your name has passed the academic review!”

“Academic review?” Lu Zhou paused for a second and said, “I thought that is in early July?”

If he recalled correctly, the academic review results would be released in June. It wasn't even March yet, and the deadline for the application was still in a month. Some people hadn't even finished writing their applications, but Lu Zhou somehow passed?

More importantly, Lu Zhou didn't even apply...

Director Qian smiled and said, "The results are announced in early June, but we have already started the review process! The results would be made known to the candidates after the review is completed, so we don't have to wait until June."

Lu Zhou said, "But I didn't submit the three-thousand-word application essay..."

"It's fine, we are well aware of your achievements and medals. Taking into account your contribution to our country's aerospace industry, I asked my office secretary to write it for you."

"Okay... Thanks," Lu Zhou said. He didn't know what else to say.

It's not like I can ask him out for dinner...

It'd be fine if I were friends with him, but this might count as bribery.

But speaking of which, is ghostwriting the application essay even allowed?

Even those nutty professors wrote the essay themselves, right?

Lu Zhou was very confused by what the Chinese Academy of Sciences was doing.

Director Qian pretended like nothing weird was going on. He smiled and said, "You're welcome! If that's all, I'll talk to you later?"

Lu Zhou: "... Oh, okay, talk to you later."

"Okay then, bye!"

Click.

The phone call ended.

Lu Zhou looked at his phone screen and muttered, "This is weird."

However, he didn't take this too seriously.

He was a bit hungover, and he just wanted to sleep.

Not to mention that the title of an academician was just the icing on the cake...

Lu Zhou placed his phone on the bedside table and closed his eyes, and he fell asleep soon after...

Chapter 736: Research Progress on the Lunar Hadron Collider

It was ten o'clock when Lu Zhou woke up.

He took a shower and put on some fresh clothes. When he walked downstairs, he found out that the breakfast buffet was already close. The chefs were busy preparing for lunch.

However, after the hotel lobby manager heard that Lu Zhou hadn't eaten his breakfast yet, he thoughtfully told a kitchen chef to prepare a separate breakfast for Lu Zhou. However, Lu Zhou didn't want to bother other people, so he declined the manager's proposal. Lu Zhou said he was going to take a walk and eat outside.

Lu Zhou sat on the sofa at the hotel lobby and called Wang Peng. He asked Wang Peng to drive to the hotel entrance.

After Lu Zhou got into the car, Wang Peng skillfully drove the car and asked Lu Zhou, "Where are we going?"

Lu Zhou thought for a bit and wanted to ask Wang Peng if there were good places to eat nearby.

However, he suddenly remembered that Luo Wenxuan had been here for almost half a year. Therefore, Lu Zhou decided to visit him.

"Head to the Chinese Academy of Sciences Institute of High Energy Physics."

“Okay.”

...

It was already the end of February, and spring was nearly here.

The air in Beijing was still a little chilly, but there was no need to wear a puffer jacket anymore; a sweater and a coat would be enough.

Fortunately, the traffic was pretty good today. The two reached their destination in less than 20 minutes.

After Lu Zhou got out of the car, he walked to the entrance of the Institute of High Energy Physics. He registered his name at the security entrance and asked where the “lunar hadron collider project team” was located. The security guard then pointed him toward the building.

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Lu Zhou knocked on the door, and the door quickly opened.

A lady wearing glasses opened the door. She was probably an assistant. She was a little surprised when she saw Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou looked at the surprised lady and politely asked, “Hello, is Professor Luo Wenxuan here?”

The lady stuttered nervously, “Oh... You’re looking for Professor Luo? He’s here...”

Before she could finish speaking, Luo Wenxuan’s distinctive voice was heard.

“Xiao Juan, who is it?”

Lu Zhou smiled and walked inside the office.

“It’s me, I’m here to visit you.”

Suddenly, there was a thumping noise in the office, like something had fallen to the ground.

Luo Wenxuan sat up straight in his chair. He was astonished.

“F*ck, God Lu?! Why are you here?”

Lu Zhou nearly fell onto the floor. He couldn't help but complain, “I tolerate other people calling me this, but why are you calling me God Lu?”

“The name fits you.” Luo Wenxuan scratched his head and said, “The people at the Institute of High Energy Physics have been talking about you. They always refer to you as God Lu, so I picked up on it.”

Lu Zhou thanked the lady who brought him tea. He then sat down on the sofa and asked with a smile, “What are they talking about?”

Luo Wenxuan looked at Lu Zhou and said, “You don't know? Did you not look at the website of the Chinese Academy of Sciences?”

“... What's on the website?”

“The Chinese Academy of Sciences and Academy of Engineering have announced the primaries of the academicians elections! Both of them have your name listed. I know you don't care about this kind of stuff, but the academic forums have been going crazy over this matter.”

Lu Zhou didn't say anything. He only smiled.

Lu Zhou wondered what Luo Wenxuan would do if he were to tell Luo Wenxuan that not only did he enter the primaries, but he also passed the academic essay review in June. Lu Zhou was only one review process away from the official voting.

However, he should keep things like this to himself. After all, Director Qian did him a favor telling him, and Lu Zhou felt like he should stay low-key.

Luo Wenxuan picked up the cup and took a sip. He put down the cup and asked Lu Zhou.

“So you came all the way to Beijing to see me?”

Lu Zhou: “Not quite. I mainly came here to receive an award.”

Luo Wenxuan rolled his eyes and leaned on his office chair. “I f*cking knew it! Couldn't you just lie to me?”

“What’s the point of lying to you?” Lu Zhou smiled and said, “Speaking of which, how is the design of the lunar hadron collider going?”

Luo Wenxuan waved his hand and said, “The design itself isn’t difficult. The difficulty is how to actually build the design. The Chinese Academy of Sciences is taking this project quite seriously, and many experienced engineers from the BESII project team were transferred to our team, which made things much easier.”

Even though the Beijing Electron–Positron Collider II wasn’t huge, it still had all of the essentials. The engineers who had participated in the BESII project were all top talents in the field of experimental physics.

Even though these people didn’t rank high in the international academic community, that had nothing to do with their own abilities. After all, it wasn’t as easy to publish articles in experimental physics compared to high-energy physics. Therefore, they mostly worked behind the scenes. This was evident from the fact that most world-class awards were given to theoretical scholars.

After hearing that Lu Zhou planned on building a collider on the Moon, even though they knew this project would be difficult to implement, experts from the Institute of High Energy Physics still took this project seriously.

After all, the Chinese theoretical physics community had a shortage of research funding. It was very rare for someone to willingly invest in a collider. No matter how impractical this plan sounded, they still didn’t want to give up this opportunity.

It would be a shame if they didn’t try at all.

“... Also, our project team contacted CERN. After CERN heard about our plan, they were extremely interested. They sent several engineers from the LHCb to help us solve technical problems.”

Lu Zhou was surprised.

“They sent people from CERN?”

Luo Wenxuan smiled and said, “They weren’t as enthusiastic at the beginning. When the group of Europeans heard that we were building a hadron collider on the Moon, they thought we were joking. But after they

heard that you were the person in charge, they immediately signed the cooperation agreement.”

Lu Zhou smiled and said, “What do they want?”

Luo Wenxuan: “They want us to purchase space probes from their partners, and if possible, let them have a few researchers on the lunar hadron collider after completion.”

Lu Zhou nodded.

These were reasonable requests.

Compared to other competitive fields, theoretical physics was relatively innocent. Most research institutes had a close relationship with other research institutes. Even though there was a certain amount of competitiveness between the institutes, cooperation was very common.

Lu Zhou had no reason to refuse the European scholars in participating in the lunar hadron collider project.

After all, the field of high-energy particle physics benefited humanity as a whole. It was a cause that humans should fight for together, as a species.

Seeing how Lu Zhou didn't speak for a while, Luo Wenxuan said, “Oh yeah, there's something I want to ask you.”

Lu Zhou: “What? Go ahead.”

Luo Wenxuan said in a serious manner, “Actually, no matter how we improve the design scheme, the entire project will weigh in the thousands of tons. If we really design this thing, can we even send it to the Moon?”

Lu Zhou looked at Luo Wenxuan and spoke confidently.

“I promise you we can, I will try my best.”

Even with the current technological capabilities of Star Sky Technology, there was no way Lu Zhou could send thousands of tons of equipment to the surface of the Moon. Not even if he sold all of his East Asia Energy stock and lithium-sulfur battery patents...

However, that was the present.

The future could bring unexpected solutions.

After Starlight was built, Star Sky Technology's Earth-Moon orbit delivery capabilities would increase to another level. At the same time, the Aerospace Science and Technology Institute of the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study and other domestic research institutes were researching industrial equipment that could automate outer-space mining, smelting, and production.

There were tons of titanium and other resources on the surface of the Moon. It was entirely possible to automate the industrial process of mining these materials.

Of course, Lu Zhou didn't know how long this would take.

After all, even though he was an excellent scholar, he wasn't an equally excellent engineer.

He still had a long way to go.

"Let's forget about all this for a second." Lu Zhou put his teacup on the table and said, "The reason I came to see you is to see how you're fitting in, also to buy you dinner."

Luo Wenxuan was surprised.

"When did you become so generous?"

Lu Zhou was speechless. "What do you mean, when have I been selfish? Are there good restaurants nearby?"

"Okay then," Luo Wenxuan stood up from his chair and said, "There's a nice place nearby, come with me."

Chapter 737: Amazing News

Lu Zhou thought Luo Wenxuan was planning on breaking his wallet, but the place wasn't fancy at all; it was just a normal small restaurant.

Most of the people here were students, professors, and researchers from nearby institutes, such as the Chinese Academy of Sciences or the Institute of High Energy Physics.

Even though it wasn't lunchtime yet, the place was already crowded.

They sat down in a corner, and the waiter quickly came over with some tea and three menus.

While Luo Wenxuan and Lu Zhou were ordering food, Wang Peng went to the kitchen and wandered around. He then calmly sat back down.

Luo Wenxuan was already accustomed to Lu Zhou's bodyguard, so he wasn't fazed. He chatted with Lu Zhou while waiting for the food.

"... The owner of this place is from Hubei. My team and I eat here pretty often, and we always get the Du Chicken. One of my guys said that the Du Chicken here is the most authentic, and it pairs really well with alcohol."

Lu Zhou drank some warm tea and said, "The boss is from Jiangling city?"

"I think so, I'm not sure... Have you been here?" Luo Wenxuan said. He was slightly surprised.

"Of course not, it's my first time." Lu Zhou smiled and said, "It's because Du Chicken is a famous dish in Jiangling, so when you said authentic, I thought that the boss came from Jiangling."

Luo Wenxuan scratched his head and said, "Oh, so the dish is from Jiangling, you must have eaten it before then."

Lu Zhou shook his head and spoke emotionally.

"We were poor growing up, so I never had the chance to eat it. After I grew up, I never had the chance to eat it as well... Forget about it. How's theoretical physics going? Are there any new discoveries?"

Lu Zhou had been focusing on the moon landing program, and other than paying attention to the latest mathematics news, he didn't have time to keep up with the latest trends in academia.

"The biggest discovery last year was the general solution of the Yang-Mills existence and mass gap." Luo Wenxuan looked at Lu Zhou and said, "It's actually quite unlucky. A lot of professors felt like this accomplishment is worthy of a Nobel Prize in Physics. They didn't expect the Nobel Prize

Committee to award the prize to the Quantum-confined Stark effect achievement.”

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Lu Zhou looked at Luo Wenxuan and smiled.

“It’s not unlucky at all. I’ve already won the Nobel Prize once, so I’m satisfied. If the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences wanted to give me the Nobel Prize again, I’m afraid people in the academic community aren’t going to be happy.”

For most scholars, the Nobel Prize was their lifelong pursuit.

Most people achieved their accomplishments in their 30s and 40s, but there were plenty of people in their 80s and 90s who were still waiting for a Nobel Prize.

Being able to receive a Nobel Prize in one’s 20s was an achievement in and of itself.

Soon after, the waiter came over with a pot full of garlic chicken and green onions. The waiter placed the pot on the rack.

Luo Wenxuan sniffed the delicious pot of food and immediately picked up his chopsticks. He then asked the waiter to bring a few beers.

He still had to work in the afternoon, but a few drinks were fine.

Wang Peng was sitting next to them, stiff as a mummy. He quietly drank his tea. He had to drive later, so he obviously couldn’t drink alcohol.

“What’s next? You landed a person on the Moon, what now?”

“Me?” Lu Zhou drank a glass of beer and said, “Landing on the Moon is only the first step.”

Luo Wenxuan sighed and said, “Wow, I really don’t understand how your genius brain works.”

Luo Wenxuan studied under Witten at Princeton, and he was quite the genius himself.

But ever since he met this “Lu Zhou” guy, his definition of genius had changed.

There were always bigger fish in the sea.

The two chatted while eating. The table next to them drank too much and started to get rowdy.

Lu Zhou didn't pay attention to what they were talking about, but he couldn't help but notice their loud voices.

“Do you know that Professor Lu made Skyglow?!”

“Of course I know, my friend works at the China Aerospace Corporation. We were just talking about this. Jesus, he really is insane, casually sending people to the Moon.”

Lu Zhou raised his eyebrows when he heard them say his name.

Even though he didn't care what they were talking about, he was very much interested in other people's opinions of him.

A man with dark-rimmed glasses poured himself another drink and said, “Pfft, he's nothing... The Americans sent a man to the Moon in the 60s, and now that we finally sent someone there, the Americans are already preparing for Mars.”

His friend laughed and said, “Mars? Are you drunk?”

The man with glasses said, “Hey, go on Twitter yourself. NASA tweeted that they are planning to launch a 25-ton life support module to Mars. There's going to be a press conference soon.”

The other people sitting at the table were stunned.

“25 tons? How is that possible? They must be exaggerating!”

“There's no f*cking way, let me turn on my VPN and hop onto Twitter.”

Even though these people didn't major in aerospace at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, they still had common sense. They knew that there was no way for NASA to send a 25-ton object to the surface of Mars.

The man in glasses knew his friends wouldn't believe him, so he smiled and spoke.

"Apparently, Space-X is going to use their BFR rocket, which is equipped with 31 Raptor engines! Apparently, after they send the life support module to Mars, they'll send 1 to 5 people to Mars. They're already recruiting volunteers worldwide."

Luo Wenxuan was super surprised, and he looked at Lu Zhou.

"... Really?"

Lu Zhou was even more surprised than Luo Wenxuan.

The f*ck...

Landing on Mars?

Are these Americans for real?!

Chapter 738: NASA Press Conference

9 a.m., Washington time.

In a green room at the NASA press conference.

NASA Director Carson stood in front of the mirror. He adjusted his tie and suddenly spoke.

"Gerstenmaier, do you believe in God?"

Gerstenmaier was sitting in a chair nearby. He hesitated for a moment before speaking.

"I... Sorry, I don't believe in God."

"So you're a materialist?"

“I guess so.” Gerstenmaier shrugged and said, “I mean, I deal with rockets and satellites all day. I doubt there are any Christians in NASA.”

“It seems like we are different people then.” Carson smiled and slowly said, “I’m an idealist.”

“... So you’re a monotheist?”

“No, I believe in a different kind of idealism. It’s more of a spiritual awakening kind of belief. How to make America great again? It’s not about how to make it great again; it’s about making people believe in America again.”

Carson looked at Gerstenmaier and spoke.

“It’s almost time. The reporters are waiting for us, let’s go.”

...

The lights were turned on.

Director Carson was wearing a suit. He stood in front of the reporters and cameras, and he soon announced the beginning of the press conference.

Normally, this kind of press conference would be done by a dedicated spokesperson, but after considering the incident caused by the poor spokesperson last time, Carson felt like it would be better for him to do it himself.

“Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for participating in our press conference. A week ago, the Congressional Budget Office approved our budget for the first stage of the Ares program. The BFR super rocket will carry the 25-ton life support module system to Mars. A month after that, we will head toward our new home, Mars.”

Director Carson looked at the projector screen behind him.

“This is the life support system.”

The projector screen changed slides.

There was a white dome building in the center of the screen.

The hemispherical white building was divided into two parts, the inner and outer circle. The inner-circle was divided into four blocks, two of which were living quarters, which could accommodate up to four people. Each person was provided with a living space of 5.3 square meters. The other two quarters were used for experiments and living space. One was for scientific research, the other was for comfort.

The outer ring of the life support system could be inflated and folded. It was similar to a vegetable greenhouse, and it was used for cultivating drought-resistant crops and to provide the astronauts with additional food. This was going to reduce the need for transporting supplies from Earth.

There was also a conceptual map of the Mars colony area.

Rows of white hemispherical “tents” were linked together through transparent pipes. 3D rendered human figures were walking between the pipes, and a giant Mars rover was driving nearby on the red desert.

The media members exclaimed.

Even though they had heard the news from NASA’s official Twitter account, NASA didn’t disclose any details about the Ares plan, nor did they explain the life support system.

Now that they were witnessing the life support system on the big screen, people couldn’t help but be shocked.

Especially when they saw the BFR rocket!

The largest carrying capacity rocket was the Saturn V rocket, which had a moon carrying capacity of 47 tons.

However, Ares’ target wasn’t the low-Earth orbit, nor was it the lunar orbit. It was the planet 55 million kilometers away—Mars!

The reporters were shocked by NASA’s grand plan, and the 300 people in the conference room went into chaos.

Carson was satisfied with the reporter’s reaction, and he coughed before beginning the explanation.

“... After the life support system is successfully deployed on the surface of Mars, it will be able to sustain the needs of 5 astronauts for two to five years. During this period of time, the astronauts will perform many Mars scientific research activities, like exploring the minerals and water reserves on Mars. They will collect first-hand information for our researchers on Earth and pave the way for follow-up projects. Eventually, we will build a self-sufficient community on that red planet!”

The atmosphere of the conference was at a climax.

It was soon the Q&A session.

All of the reporters raised their hands.

Director Carson looked at the reporters, and he naturally chose one from the Washington Post.

The Washington Post was an established media outlet, and there was a lower chance they would give Carson a difficult question to answer. This was the safest option for the NASA director.

A well-known reporter from the Washington Post took this valuable opportunity and spoke.

The reporter reached out with his microphone in his hand and said, “Hello, Mr. Director, we all know that the Ares plan was created recently. Do you think we have enough time to execute this grand plan? Or rather, how confident is NASA at achieving the first stage of the Ares plan?”

Just like Carson had expected, the Washington Post’s question was focused on “preparation time” and “success rate”.

Carson looked at the reporters and said, “It’s true that the Ares plan was created recently. But we have prepared for a Mars landing for a long time. For example, research on the life support system has begun as early as ten years ago. The first test flight for the Space-X BFR was completed two years ago.

“Colonizing Mars is a well thought out plan. I can assure you that we will take all of the precautions!”

Deafening applause filled the venue.

British journalists from the BBC were fortunate enough to have the opportunity to ask questions.

“Mr. Director, we all know that a week ago, China successfully landed a man on the Moon. I want to ask if NASA’s recent Ares plan is a response to China’s behavior?”

The answer was quite obvious.

If it weren’t for China sending astronauts to the Moon, the United States Congress would never in a million years agree to this expensive aerospace project.

NASA really had to thank the Chinese.

After all, if it weren’t for China’s development in the aerospace field, there was no way the Congressional Budget Office was going to be so generous.

Of course, Carson wouldn’t admit to something like this.

“That is ridiculous. We sent an astronaut to the Moon half a century ago. China trying to catch up to us does not make them a worthy opponent.

“Remember, landing on the Moon is old news. Our new goal is to land on Mars, where there are infinite possibilities.”

Click clack!

Photos were being taken in the press conference room.

It was almost like the American reporters were injected with caffeine. They were thrilled. The British reporters were interested, whereas the Russian reporters looked worried.

Regardless of how anyone interpreted it, the NASA director didn’t speak kindly of China.

The Americans didn’t even think of China as a competitor.

While China was trying to catch up, the Americans were already onto bigger and greater things!

Chapter 739: Round Two?

NASA's press conference was like a nuclear bomb. It received a strong international response.

The BFR rocket had a 550-ton low-Earth orbit carrying capacity!

The Ares was going to launch in a month, sending the life support system to Mars!

China wasn't even a competitor!

All of Carson's statements were well received by the Americans.

Media outlets such as The New York Times were criticizing NASA not too long ago, but now, their stance totally changed. They instantly praised Space-X and the Ares project.

Aerospace was the future of humanity; it was the pride and joy of Americans.

Ever since they defeated the Russians in landing on the Moon, China had been slowly creeping up.

People thought it was ridiculous that NASA sat around while China was catching up.

Now that NASA finally had something to respond with, the Americans didn't criticize them anymore. Rather, they gave them applause and praise.

China landed on the Moon?

Taking away our pride and glory?

Sorry, but we did that sixty years ago, our new goal is Mars!

China can't even send a space probe to Mars!

After the NASA press conference, Space-X, Blue Origin, and other high-tech aerospace held their own press conferences, presenting their unique skills in the field of aerospace.

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For example, Elon Musk's BFR rocket was being tested. Blue Origin's BE-4 rocket was in development.

Many pharmaceutical companies also joined in on the fun. Johnson & Johnson announced a "frozen slow-release agent" project, which was designed to prevent cell fluid from freezing and puncturing under low temperatures.

This project was supported by the United States Department of Health and NASA as a sub-project of the frozen chamber project, which was jointly being developed by NASA and SpaceWorks.

The market cap of the space companies reached an all-time high, and people felt nostalgic about the night sixty years ago.

One year, Yuri Gagarin went to space on Vostok 1. Seven years later, the Americans landed on the Moon...

British media outlet BBC also reported on NASA's press conference.

Compared to the American's enthusiasm, the BBC report looked at the situation from a more objective angle.

After all, the space race was between China and the United States. It didn't have anything to do with the UK. Even if they wanted to participate, they couldn't.

In contrast to America's enthusiasm, after NASA's press conference, Chinese media outlets were silent.

Chinese media outlets received instructions by the state to promote the moon landing, but no one expected NASA's response.

They didn't know if they should report on NASA's plan or just ignore it.

If they were to report it truthfully, it would undoubtedly cast a shadow on the national moon landing success. However, ignoring it seemed a bit petty.

They also thought about briefly reporting it and trying to sweep it under the rug.

Regardless, this wasn't the choice of major TV stations and newspapers.

This was decided by the state!

While the mainstream media outlets stayed silent, online media outlets captured this opportunity and reported this news online.

The United States was going to execute the first stage of the Ares project next month, and the news of the life support system caused a sensation on Chinese social media sites.

Most people were still immersed in the victory of the manned moon landing, but now, they were wide awake.

China's opponent had begun the preparation to land on Mars.

This news left a distaste in many people's hearts.

They knew it was going to be difficult to defeat the Americans.

Some people were worried; some people were happy. The pessimistic people that were ridiculed because of Skyglow's successful Moon landing, finally had a chance to speak.<segm

Who cares about landing on the Moon!

The Americans are going to Mars!

This pessimism spread throughout the country...

[Ah... The Americans are planning to land on Mars, and we only just landed on the Moon. I thought we caught up with their footsteps, I didn't expect us to be this far behind.]

[What happened to the people who said we could defeat the Americans? Where are they now? (laugh) (laugh)]

[I said a long time ago that landing on the Moon isn't difficult anymore. The reason why western countries aren't landing on the Moon is that their goal is Mars. We shouldn't be proud of Skyglow for landing on the Moon.]

[Yeah, we should land on Mars as well.]

[Ah, I'm so jealous... I applied for Ares recruitment. Apparently, they recruit globally. I hope I get chosen.]

[Where are those people bragging about Skyglow? Where are they now?
(laugh) (laugh)]

The discussion went beyond Weibo, and this topic began to trend on other social media sites as well.

For example, an anonymous user posted an article analyzing the reason why China lost the space race...

[The successful test flight of the BFR super rocket shattered our dreams. The 42 Raptor engines have a vacuum thrust of 138 Meganewtons and can be reused more than a thousand times. It's on a completely different level than Skyglow.

[This is a slap to the face. The Americans are showing us that chemical rockets are not outdated at all. Liquid oxygen methane engine with a full-flow staged combustion cycle is still the preferred propulsion scheme for interplanetary travel. That's how they are going to colonize Mars.

[Actually, we can think about it this way. If ion thrusters are good enough, why are the Americans still using chemical propulsion? It's not because they can't create ion thrusters, it's because they know it's not necessary.

[The so-called success of Skyglow is making us arrogant and ignorant. China is too focused on the Earth-Moon system.

[Inventing new technology is always good, but sometimes, new technology can be tricky...]

The article received tens of thousands of likes. It was reposted on We-media, Weibo, and other social media sites.

Even though some people thought this article was biased against China's aerospace industry because of the pessimistic atmosphere, it resonated with a lot of people.

People thought, We are losing this race.

Chemical propulsion is going to destroy us.

Even though the Americans hadn't launched their rocket yet, China was already losing hope...

Chapter 740: Route Choice

Lu Zhou usually didn't have any special hobbies. His only special hobby was probably scrolling through Weibo and clicking like on some comments.

Like some comments that called him handsome.

Over the past few days, he searched up the Ares plan on Weibo, and he found that a lot of people had tagged him in that article.

Out of curiosity, Lu Zhou clicked and read the article in its entirety.

He couldn't help but laugh.

"This guy really is something."

Being able to analyze the "Raptor" engine meant that he was probably in the aerospace field.

However, the article was overly biased. Lu Zhou was well aware that the Skyglow thrust was nowhere near Long March 5's thrust, but not mentioning the push-to-weight ratios and flight endurance was plain prejudice.

Saying that the Americans weren't interested in ion thruster propulsion systems at all was absolutely wrong. Before Lu Zhou left Princeton, the PPPL was researching ion thrusters.

Also, the article author probably thought the Long March 5 was the Long March 9. Even though Skyglow was successful, that didn't mean Long March 9 was going to be abandoned. Because ion thrusters were more expensive, it was still feasible to use chemical rockets for low-Earth orbit missions.

Even though the French invented the steam tricycle, they still used horses for more than a century. Technology changes didn't happen in a few days.

If Skyglow didn't successfully send a man to the Moon, Lu Zhou would receive a huge amount of blame.

Lu Zhou didn't know how academically accomplished this person was, but this person was good at fooling the public.

Wang Peng looked at Lu Zhou, and he suddenly asked, "Do you want me to handle this?"

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Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "How are you going to handle it? What, are you going to track his IP address?"

Wang Peng hesitated for a bit and said, "We can capture him for misconduct... Slandering a national hero, lock him up for a couple of weeks."

Lu Zhou had an Aerospace Gold Medal of Excellence and a Ling Yun medal, so there was no doubt he was a national hero.

When Lu Zhou saw how serious Wang Peng was, he said, "It's fine, I was just kidding. It's kind of ridiculous for the state to censor his speech. Just let him be."

Lu Zhou was quite an easy-going person, and he didn't really care what other people said about him.

He had been on Weibo for a long time, and he could handle a little criticism.

Wang Peng looked at Lu Zhou and said, "What do you mean... let it be?"

"My time is valuable, and I don't have time to waste it on people like this." Lu Zhou smiled and turned off his phone. He then stood up from his chair and said, "It's about time. I have a meeting to attend. Let's go."

"Okay."

Wang Peng didn't say anything else. He merely nodded and walked toward the door.

...

Lu Zhou exited the hotel and got into his car. He asked Wang Peng to drive him to the Great Hall on Changan road. He leaned back in his seat and closed his eyes.

It was already early March.

He originally planned on going back to Jinling after accepting the award. He didn't expect that he would still be in Beijing after that.

The reason was obvious.

This was because of America's Ares program.

Lu Zhou walked into a conference room inside the Great Hall.

He entered from entrance A, and when he found his seat with his name tag on it, he sat down. He took out his phone and opened a recorder app.

This conference wasn't confidential. A lot of the things discussed would be made public after the conference, so electronic devices weren't confiscated.

Lu Zhou sent Xiao Ai a message and asked it to organize the conference notes. This saved him a lot of time.

Lu Zhou flipped through the conference notes and waited for the conference to begin. An old man sitting next to him kept looking at him. The old man put on a serious face and spoke calmly.

"The Americans are planning to land on Mars, what do you think of this?"

Lu Zhou turned and saw that Academician Yuan Huanmin, the chief engineer of the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, was sitting next to him.

Back at the manned moon landing conference, this old man harassed him quite a bit. However, after the Skyglow test flight was successful, he disappeared.

Lu Zhou didn't know what the old man meant, so he smiled and asked, "What does that have to do with me?"

Yuan Huanmin paused for a second before saying, "So what you're saying is, we should ignore them and focus on ourselves? I see..."

Lu Zhou: "...?"

What is this?

Lu Zhou didn't have the chance to finish reading the conference notes since the conference already began.

The secretary of the China National Space Administration went on stage and talked about the conference process and content. He then gave the microphone to the director of the State Administration for National Defense—Director Li.

Director Li stood on stage and cleared his throat. He then spoke sternly.

"First of all, I would like to apologize for making everyone take time out of their busy schedules and sit here. This conference was supposed to be held next month, but due to various reasons, it has to happen now."

Even though Director Li didn't explain why the conference was advanced forward, everyone knew why.

NASA's announcement of the Ares program was an attack on China. Whether it was the timing of the launch or the size of the investment, they were obviously trying to one-up China's manned moon landing project.

Even though neither side acknowledged this new space race, everyone could see that this was going to be a fierce battle.

"Yesterday, the Communist Party of China had a meeting. They had two conclusions. One is to follow the Americans and prepare to land on Mars. The other is to continue our lunar strategies.

"As for the specifics, I'd suggest you all consult experts. I hope everyone can speak freely. If anyone disagrees with these two conclusions, or have a better idea, feel free to tell me."

Whispers were heard in the conference room.

It was no exaggeration to say that the outcome of today's meeting was going to determine China's aerospace strategy over the next five or even ten years. Various aerospace companies would shift their focuses to landing on Mars and lunar exploration.

People in the conference room began to think more seriously about this issue.

There was a voice from the front row of the conference room.

“I’ll say a couple of words.”

Director Li looked at the old man sitting in the front row and spoke politely.

“Academician Yuan, please.”

Yuan Huanmin stood up slowly and said, “The Americans want to land on Mars, that’s their business. We don’t have to try and catch up to them. We should focus on our own projects. I think that the future of aerospace is still the Moon. There is nothing more important than building on top of the success we had with the moon landing.”

Yuan Huanmin was quite reputable in the aerospace community, and his opinion immediately received the approval of many people.

Of course, some people didn’t agree. They wanted to catch up to the Americans, increase China’s Mars landing technology, and develop more powerful rockets.

This was because these people were from entities that developed rocket technologies; therefore, they were more inclined to choose the rocket-intensive Mars route.

After Director Li signaled Yuan Huanmin to sit down, he turned his attention to Lu Zhou, who was sitting in the front row and reading Xiao Ai’s conference notes.

Lu Zhou didn’t notice Director Li looking at him, so Director Li spoke.

“Let’s see what Professor Lu has to say.”

Chapter 741: No Stone Left Unturned

Lu Zhou was reading the conference notes when he was suddenly called out by Director Li. He didn't realize at first, but he soon noticed that people were staring at him.

Emmmm...

I didn't ask to speak...

Even though Lu Zhou didn't prepare anything, he didn't want to embarrass Director Li.

Therefore, he stood up and spoke.

"I agree with Academician Yuan's opinion. The Moon is huge, and there are a lot of things that we can do there. Since the Americans are interested in Mars... We'll accomplish things on the Moon instead. We can grow plants on the Moon, or study how to mine the Moon's resources."

Should I be saying this?

Screw it, who cares.

When Lu Zhou sat back down on his seat, he could hear voices of approval behind him.

He was correct, landing on the Moon was just the first step. There were many things to do on the Moon. They didn't have to follow America's footsteps and try to land a man on Mars. There was no point planting a flag on Mars or bringing back a few Mars stones.

There was no need for the discussion to continue.

A veteran in the aerospace industry and a big name in academia both agreed to focus on lunar development. Even if other people disagreed, it wouldn't matter.

Besides, most people agreed with their proposal.

Director Li had a rough idea of what the conference attendees thought, and he asked if anyone else had any other opinions. No one raised their hand, so Director Li spoke.

“It seems like there is no need to argue about whether to go the Moon route or the Mars route. The Communist Party of China has similar opinions. Compared to futile honors, practical things are more worthy of accomplishment.”

Director Li paused for a second and continued, “Then our next stage of aerospace will still be focused on the Earth-Moon system.

“After consulting with other agencies, such as the China National Space Administration, our plan is to build a space station in outer space to replenish resources for spacecraft, such as fuel. This space station will also be used for scientific research tasks.

“The China National Space Administration came up with two plans for the space station. One is in low-Earth orbit, similar to the International Space Station. The other is in the lunar orbit, similar to the United States’ lunar space program.

“Where should we build a space station? I hope you all can express your opinions.”

People in the conference room began to discuss with one another.

What was different from the previous discussion topic was that, whether it was the experts or the company representatives, everyone now had a higher desire to speak. The debates were also stronger.

The reason was that this kind of national strategy program was directly related to everyone’s interests, both in academia and in industry.

Some people were more conservative, and they believed that they should build a low-Earth orbit station first, then wait a couple of years before trying to reach lunar orbit.

Other people were more optimistic. They thought that since China had mastered a 25-ton Earth-Moon transfer orbit delivery capacity, it was entirely possible for them to build a space station in lunar orbit. They didn’t need to build another space station similar to the ISS since they could just share the ISS with other countries.

After all, one of the most important aspects of the controllable fusion negotiations was to loosen the barriers of entry for international scientific

research cooperation projects, such as the ISS, and for China to participate on equal terms.

Lu Zhou obviously wanted to put the space station in lunar orbit.

After all, he wanted to complete his system mission. Without state funding, there was no way he would be able to complete the second stage of his system mission.

Furthermore, even though the international situation was a bit tense right now, he had always supported openly-cooperative, mutually-beneficial, win-win projects. Projects that used science to achieve prosperity for all of mankind.

However, he was still a bit hesitant. He didn't know if they should accumulate more experience on low-Earth orbit technology first, or if they should be brave and directly target the lunar orbit.

Lu Zhou listened to the intense debates happening nearby. He saw Academician Yuan, who was lost in thought.

Yuan Huanmin noticed Lu Zhou looking at him, and he looked up and asked, "What do you think?"

Lu Zhou didn't expect to be asked this question. He suddenly said, "You go first."

Academician Yuan went silent for a while and sighed.

"Honestly, I don't know."

Lu Zhou was surprised. "You don't know?"

You don't know?

Aren't you quite the opinionated old man?

"Yeah..." Yuan Huanmin nodded and said emotionally, "Our country's aerospace development started much later than other countries. You might laugh at me for this, but back in the day when Columbia was successful, we planned on building a space shuttle as well, then look at what happened? Sure, Qian Xuesen favored rockets more, but the real reason was that the Americans gave up on their space shuttle."

Lu Zhou nodded and thought for a bit.

“I understand, but this isn’t something I would laugh at.”

Scientific research was a process of learning and discovery. No one was born with knowledge in their brain. It wasn’t shameful to follow others’ footsteps. What’s important was to apply the knowledge one learned.

When Lu Zhou was studying in Princeton, he met many respectable scholars and learned a lot from them. This knowledge contributed greatly to his current success.

Lu Zhou knew what Academician Yuan was concerned about.

Now that China had successfully sent astronauts to the Moon, their international position was at the top of the world.

But because they were ahead or on-par with everyone else, they didn’t have any past examples to use as a reference.

They had to go blind from now on and try to find the right way by learning from their mistakes.

Lu Zhou looked at Academician Yuan and suddenly smiled as he said, “I think this could be a good thing for us.”

Academician Yuan frowned and asked, “What do you mean?”

Lu Zhou: “This means that we will go from a follower to a leader, and we will set the standards for the world.”

Academician Yuan paused for a second and smiled.

“You millennials think quite differently. Aren’t you satisfied with the low-Earth orbit?”

“Of course I am,” Lu Zhou sighed and said, “but we can do better.”

Academician Yuan smiled and said, “Okay then, brag to me when you put a space station in lunar orbit.”

Lu Zhou: “...?”

What?

We're close enough that you are now making jokes with me?

The debates continued.

An expert from the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation stood up. His beard trembled as he said, "We should choose the low-Earth orbit!

"First of all, we can use the ISS as a reference. Even though there are engineering difficulties, it won't be too difficult. Secondly, we can use our experience and knowledge gained from the low-Earth orbit station for the future Moon orbit station!"

A lot of people in the conference room nodded with approval.

Representatives from companies that were focused on rocket launching projects all nodded their heads.

Suddenly, a voice was heard.

"Disagree."

Everyone in the room looked toward the voice.

The man that sent three astronauts to the Moon, Professor Lu, stood up.

Director Li was stressed by the chaotic situation in the conference room, and he immediately lifted his head and said, "Please explain."

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "Since we're building a space station anyway, we might as well put it in lunar orbit!"

1The conference room was in mayhem.

Chapter 742: Conquer the Future

Lu Zhou didn't just put out an argument.

After he expressed his opinion, he also explained in detail the economic and scientific impacts.

Considering the fact that the carrying capacity of the Skyglow Earth-Moon transfer orbit had now reached 25 tons, the significance of building a space station in lunar orbit was far greater than building an ISS clone in low-Earth orbit.

“... The Moon has an abundance of resources such as titanium and helium. If we have the capabilities to mine these resources, building a space station on the Moon is undoubtedly the better choice.”

After hearing Lu Zhou’s words, the expert who spoke before couldn’t help but stand up and speak.

“But we have to learn to walk before we run. I never said we shouldn’t build a space station in lunar orbit. But why don’t we take it step by step, and build one in low-Earth orbit first? Can you guarantee that the Moon space station is going to be successful?”

Lu Zhou replied calmly, “I can’t guarantee it, but I can answer your question. It’s because we can’t afford to wait.”

The expert frowned and said, “What do you mean?”

Lu Zhou smiled and continued to speak.

“You might not know this, but the lunar orbit space station is included in the 2018 NASA Lunar Gateway program. Even though their focus is now on the Ares program, the Lunar Gateway program is set to execute before Ares. We have reason to suspect that the Congressional Budget Office has already approved the Lunar Gateway program. Lunar Gateway will begin in 2022. If the Americans begin their lunar space station construction, things will be more difficult for us.”

Whispers were heard in the conference room. The expert that spoke looked like he wanted to say something, but he hesitated and couldn’t find a counter-argument, so he sat back down in his seat.

The lunar orbit was much narrower than the Earth orbit.

Perhaps with developments in aerospace technology and software technology, the space station orbit capacity of the Moon could be increased. But with the current technology available, one space station was the limit for lunar orbit.

If the United States 2022 lunar space station program began as scheduled, it would be nearly impossible for China to send another space station into lunar orbit.

Director Li had a serious look on his face.

Lu Zhou looked at him and said, “Correct, just like this gentleman said, we should learn to walk before we run. But we have the opportunity to conquer the future. If we don’t take this opportunity now, we will have to pay the price eventually.

“That is my opinion, thank you all for listening.

“Not only will the outcome of this debate affect this current space race, but it will also forever impact our country’s aerospace industry.”

People in this room were already under a lot of pressure. After they heard Lu Zhou’s words, the experts and scholars had an even more dignified look on their faces.

Forever impacting our country’s aerospace industry...

Jesus, if I choose the wrong decision, I’ll be shamed forever in history...

What if...

I let other people make this decision?

The “low-Earth orbit” and “lunar” supporters were divided somewhat equally into two groups. However, after Lu Zhou’s speech, the groups were no longer balanced.

Everyone looked at the front row, at the person sitting beside Lu Zhou—Academician Yuan. Especially for the supporters of the low-Earth orbit, they were hoping the old man would have a counterargument.

However, Academician Yuan sat there motionlessly. He didn’t say anything, and he didn’t react. He was in a neutral position.

Director Li repeatedly looked at Academician Yuan, but it seemed like Academician Yuan had no intention to speak.

All of the people in the conference hall that supported the low-Earth orbit station had a look of despair on their faces.

This old gentleman staying silent meant that Professor Lu had all the power. Even if other people disagreed with Professor Lu, no matter who they were, they would lose.

Not to mention that most people actually supported Lu Zhou's proposal...

The conference continued for a while, and several other people stood up to speak, but it seemed like the decision was settled. Director Li announced the adjournment of the meeting.

After the conference was over...

Academician Zheng Xiangdong, the vice president of the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, immediately stood up and walked toward Exit A of the conference room. He caught up with Academician Yuan and asked, "Oh, my dear friend, you were sitting right next to that kid, why didn't you persuade him?"

Academician Yuan looked at him with a strange look.

"Persuade about what?"

Zheng Xiangdong immediately said, "Did you hear what he said?"

Academician Yuan smiled and replied, "I think he spoke pretty well."

Vice President Zheng stared at Academician Yuan like Academician Yuan was a monster.

After a while, he pinched his eyebrows and said, "Wait a second, I'm confused... Haven't you always been against that Professor Lu?"

"Who said that?" Academician Yuan stared at Vice President Zheng and said, "When did I say I'm against Professor Lu?"

Academician Yuan didn't like Lu Zhou initially, but that was the past.

He didn't like people who brought up the past.

It was like Vice President Zheng was constipated, he didn't know what to say.

"That kid is crazy, he's making you crazy as well.

"That project is worth tens or even hundreds of billions! If we build this space station in lunar orbit, none of the Chinese companies will be able to get a piece of the pie! Do you know what this means? Do you know how many jobs will be lost?"

Of course, what worried him the most wasn't the jobs, it was also the rocket research and development projects at the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation.

If for the next five years, China's demand for rocket technology shifted from low-Earth orbit to lunar orbit, even though the Long March 9 project might survive, more than half of other chemical rocket projects would be killed.

Zheng Xiangdong sighed and patted his leg.

"This kid is ruthless!"

Academician Yuan stared at Vice President Zheng and frowned.

"What are you talking about?"

Zheng Xiangdong began to explain to Academician Yuan.

"Do you not get it? If we build a space station on lunar orbit, there is only one Chinese company that will be able to deliver payloads! Other companies, including us, won't even have a chance in the contract bidding wars! Why else do you think he wants to put the space station on the Moon? Do you really think he's just that selfless for his country?"

If they decided to build the space station in low-Earth orbit, they might be able to use the Long March 5. It wouldn't be cheap, but it would work.

However, if they decided to build the space station in lunar orbit, it wouldn't be about the cost, as they wouldn't be able to do it at all.

If they wanted to participate in the bidding wars, they would have to wait for the Long March 9. However, even if they upped the pace, they would have to wait until 2025 for the Long March 9 design and manufacture to be completed.

By then, the space station project would almost be complete.

Academician Yuan's expression didn't change. He shook his head and said, "He's not that kind of person."

Zheng Xiangdong was baffled, and he asked, "How do you know that? Are you his uncle?"

The only way for Zheng Xiangdong to change the space station project was to convince Academician Yuan and other academicians. Then they would have to write a letter to the Communist Party of China.

However, Academician Yuan wasn't budging.

Haven't you always been dissatisfied with Professor Lu's involvement in our aerospace industry?

What is wrong with you?!

Academician Yuan saw how flustered Vice President Zheng was, so he spoke slowly.

"I'm not his uncle, and I don't know him well. But he put his life on the line and flew on Skyglow. I can promise you he is not that kind of person.

"I know what your intentions are. I suggest you to give up."

Lu Zhou was a national hero; an academic scholar!

There was no way Yuan Huanmin would believe someone like Lu Zhou was doing all this for monetary gain.

That was the kind of person Yuan Huanmin was.

Once he had a reason to believe in something, he would never change his belief.

Academician Yuan turned around and walked away, leaving Vice President Zheng behind.

Chapter 743: The Wheel Is Moving Forward

After the manned moon landing mission was successful, China quickly decided on its next national aerospace strategies. It was about time for Lu Zhou to return to Jinling.

After hearing that Lu Zhou was planning on leaving Beijing, Academician Wang Zengguang quickly found him and took him to a restaurant near the hotel. Wang Zengguang ordered some food and began to talk about the past.

“I wanted to buy you dinner a few days ago, but I heard you had a meeting to go to, so I thought I’d wait a few days. I didn’t expect you to leave right after the meeting.”

Lu Zhou smiled and said, “Yeah, work is getting really busy, I don’t have time to waste.”

Academician Wang took a sip of liquor and spoke.

“You must have offended a lot of people with the moon space station.”

Lu Zhou put some food in his bowl and said nonchalantly, “It doesn’t matter, anything I say will offend some people.”

Any argument would have a counterargument, that was inevitable.

If he didn’t want to offend anyone, then he could forget about expressing his opinion.

Academician Wang smiled and said, “Seems like you don’t care then.”

Lu Zhou put down his chopsticks and said, “It’s mainly because there’s no reason to care.”

Academician Wang filled his glass with some beer and said, “Cheers to not caring!”

“Cheers.”

Lu Zhou smiled and downed his glass.

After eating, Lu Zhou bade farewell to Academician Wang. He returned to his hotel and packed his luggage. Wang Peng then drove him to the high-speed rail station.

Before the conference even began, the State Administration for National Defense already bought him a business-class train ticket. Even though Lu Zhou didn't need them to be this polite, he still appreciated the gesture.

Lu Zhou was sitting on the high-speed rail train. He asked the stewardess to make a cup of coffee. He then took out his laptop.

He was looking through the documents stored in his mailbox when he suddenly received a call.

"Hello?"

"It's me, where are you?"

Through her pleasant voice, Lu Zhou could immediately tell Chen Yushan was the one calling.

Lu Zhou leaned in his chair and said, "I'm nearly back in Jinling, what's up?"

Chen Yushan smirked and said, "Nothing, I just wanted to call you. I always thought you didn't have any business talents, but it seems like I have underestimated you."

"Haha, you definitely did."

Did you call me just to kiss my a*s?

Why?

Lu Zhou smiled and rubbed his nose as he said, "By the way, what made you change your mind?"

Lu Zhou was actually a little embarrassed.

He always knew he didn't have any business talents, but he didn't think Chen Yushan would notice.

Chen Yushan: "Didn't you see? The State Administration for National Defense published on its website the information for the space conference in Beijing.

China will focus on the lunar space station as its next aerospace development plan.”

Lu Zhou paused for a second and said, “... Oh, what about it?”

He attended that conference before, and he was actually the one who suggested this route.

What does that have to do with business talents?

“I asked people in the aerospace department to do an industry report for me. Yesterday, I took a closer look at the report and found that if we bid for the lunar orbit space station, we are the only one qualified to bid for the entire spacecraft transportation project.”

Chen Yushan said emotionally, “To be honest, I was never optimistic about aerospace. It requires a large investment, it’s a high risk and low return project. But you, it’s like you saw the future. We are now the industry leader in aerospace. I’m really impressed.”

Honestly, before launching the Skyglow project, she even helped the company formulate countermeasures, in case of bankruptcy.

She didn’t expect everything to go so smoothly.

Lu Zhou replied, “Oh, I see...”

Seeing how he wasn’t excited, Chen Yushan asked, “... What’s wrong?”

“Nothing...” Lu Zhou pinched his forehead and sighed. He said, “I just think that people are going to hate us for eating the entire pie.”

He finally realized why the head of the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation gave him a death stare when he was walking out of the conference room.

Also why CEOs of private companies, such as i-Space and Zero One Space, had such dismal expressions on their faces when they walked out of the conference room.

Even the state-owned corporations couldn’t win the bidding war... They could forget about winning the bids. They only had two options.

They could either try to develop new space launching technologies, or they could focus on the business aspect and invest more money into research and development on outer space equipment.

Chen Yushan heard Lu Zhou's sigh, and she chuckled. "Why are you worried about this?"

Lu Zhou: "I'm not worried, I just think..."

Chen Yushan: "Beta!"

Lu Zhou: "..."

Beta?

Am I being a beta?

Chen Yushan smiled and said, "Don't worry, you should worry about something more important. I have a meeting soon, I'll talk to you later."

"Okay then, see you."

Chen Yushan was right, Lu Zhou's worries were superfluous.

The market will eventually adjust itself back to a sustainable position.

If companies are unable to adapt in this era, they will be abandoned. If the companies can find another profitable pathway, then they will survive.

There is always someone better to take their place.

As for people hating me...

I guess it doesn't matter.

After thinking about this, Lu Zhou felt a lot better.

He put his phone back into his pocket. The stewardess came over with his coffee.

"Sir, your coffee."

"Thank you."

Lu Zhou took the coffee from the stewardess. He nodded as a show of thanks and took a sip. He then continued to stare at his computer screen.

When he opened his browser, a news headline caught his attention.

Lu Zhou was intrigued, and he clicked on the article and began to read.

“... Johnson & Johnson has made a major breakthrough in human frozen dormant slow-release technology. The CEO of Johnson & Johnson said that if the technology matures, not only will it be used for ultra-long distance interplanetary travel, but it will also allow some terminally ill patients to survive into the future, where medical technology is more advanced.

“... This is quite interesting.”

Lu Zhou’s eyebrows rose.

If controllable fusion were the discovery of fire, then aerospace would be like the invention of the wheel. It reignited people’s enthusiasm and desire to see new technologies.

Just like how the Americans ignited the Europeans’ desire to explore, exploration of outer space would leave people longing for more.

Ever since the end of the Cold War, most technological fields outside of computer technology had stagnated. Now, it seemed like the wheel of technology was finally moving forward.

Lu Zhou felt a little emotional.

He looked forward to seeing what the world would look like half a century later.

I’m certain the next half of the century will be more exciting than the last half of the century.

If everything goes well, I will get to witness this technological revolution...

Chapter 744: Arrogant Opponent

New York.

The New York Times building.

The editorial office door was opened. A man in a black suit soon walked in briskly, and he placed a handful of documents on a desk nearby.

“Anders, here’s a survey about the Ares program. I hope you can integrate it into the next interview and hand it to me before the end of the day.”

“Okay, boss.”

The man named Anders took the documents, licked his index finger, and began flipping through the documents.

Even though this action seemed unsanitary, it was one of his professional habits. Whenever there was exciting news, he would lick his finger, even if the document was in electronic form.

Anders finished reading the survey data. He sat up straight and spoke with excitement.

“... I can’t believe it, the approval rate for this administration increased by 14.3%.”

The editor-in-chief, Duke, took out a document from his desk drawer. He grinned as he quickly wrote something with a pen.

“That’s right, people are very interested in the Ares program and the volunteer selection. Columbia TV has contacted us. They want to do a talk show.”

Anders looked up and said, “Talk show? With who?”

Duke: “Of course it’s the three lucky people who got chosen for the Ares program.”

Anders’ eyes were wide open. He stood up and said, “Oh sh*t, have the three already been chosen?”

Duke: “They were chosen last week, but they haven’t announced it yet. My friend at NASA told me that the three astronauts are already training in the Arizona desert, as well as learning some basic space knowledge.”

Anders said, “They’re all normal people?”

Duke: "Apparently, two of them are normal civilians, and the other is a professional."

Anders shook his head and sighed as he said, "... Alright then, it seems like I wasn't chosen... This is the first time I've paid for a volunteer project like this, guess my US\$100 is down the drain. I was hoping to be the first reporter in history to be on Mars, but it seems like all hope is lost."

Duke was in a good mood, and he said with encouragement, "Not necessarily, this is only the first group of colonists, there are many opportunities in the future."

While the two were chatting, the office door suddenly opened.

Duke watched the lady step in, and his eyebrows furrowed.

"Camille, you forgot to knock."

"Sorry, but there's no time for that," Camille said as she walked to Duke's desk. She flipped her blonde hair and perched her laptop on Duke's desk. She said, "Something big happened in Asia! Trust me, this is definitely going to make headlines tomorrow!"

When Duke saw how excited Camille was, he paused for a second and began to take this more seriously.

Camille was no longer the rookie.

Duke knew that Camille had a calm personality, he guessed that something incredible must have happened for her to be this excited.

Duke looked at the laptop, and less than ten seconds later, he froze.

He immediately asked, "Is this reliable?"

"I am certain!" Camille excitedly said, "I contacted an old friend in Beijing and confirmed it with them. Yesterday, China held a conference. The State Administration for National Defense and the China National Space Administration published the meeting content on their official website!"

Anders was still sitting behind his desk, and he asked, "What is it?"

Camille: “In response to our Ares plan, China has announced plans to construct a space station in lunar orbit. Apparently, it’s going to be called the Moon Palace!”

Moon Palace?

What a weird name.

Anders wasn’t only surprised by the name...

“Are they crazy? Do they even know what a space station is?”

“I don’t know?” Camille took a deep breath and calmed herself down. She looked at Duke and said, “There is no doubt that this is going to make headlines tomorrow.”

Duke stared at the laptop for a long time. He took a deep breath and spoke with a trembling voice.

“Good job, nicely done!”

Duke became more and more excited. He even began to think about what tomorrow’s headline should be.

China Wants to Build a Space Station? Can They Do It?

The only word I can think of to describe this situation is arrogance. The Chinese are out of their minds.

...

China’s announcement of its lunar space station plan caused a worldwide sensation.

The New York Times, the Washington Times, and other American media outlets reported on this matter.

Compared to landing a man on the moon, this piece of news was obviously more eye-catching. After all, building a space station in lunar orbit was much more difficult than throwing a lunar module on the Moon.

Even the Americans were still in the research stage, and their lunar projects wouldn’t launch until 2022.

There was no doubt that for most Americans, China's plan was nothing short of impossible.

They thought, China only just landed on the moon, and now they're running before they learn how to walk?

The media outlets and newspapers were slightly biased when reporting on this matter, but the daytime and late-night talk shows teased and ridiculed China.

Of course, even though the Americans said China was overconfident, there was still reason to believe in China's plans.

After all, the Skyglow flight was a success. Even the radical media outlets did not rely on NASA experts' quotes, and they outrightly claimed China's Lunar Gateway program was going to fail.

Even though there was a 80% chance China was going to fail.

What was more interesting was that most of the criticism came from inside China...

Lu Zhou didn't know if he offended someone or not, but he didn't care.

Even if he did offend someone, so what?

Most intelligent people weren't offended.

And as for the non-intelligent people...

Lu Zhou didn't have anything to do with them.

After Lu Zhou returned to Jinling, he gradually became busier and busier. He didn't have time to pay attention to things on the Internet.

He was sitting in his office, reading documents. He heard a knock at the door.

He looked up and asked, "Who is it?"

"I am Xu Wenhao, from the Institute of Biochemistry laboratory. I am here for a report!"

Lu Zhou nearly laughed out loud.

What is this, the military?

Lu Zhou remembered he asked the biochemistry laboratory for a favor. He adjusted his facial expression and spoke.

“Come in.”

The office door was pushed open. Xu Wenhao walked in with a pile of documents in his hand.

“Professor, the tests you wanted are here. The rest of the samples are here as well!”

The young man solemnly placed the test results and remaining samples on Lu Zhou’s desk. Lu Zhou was a little fazed.

“... Oh, thanks.”

“No need to thank me.” Xu Wenhao smiled and scratched his head as he said, “Um... Can you sign something? Just sign this electrochemistry textbook.”

Like magic, an electrochemistry textbook appeared out of nowhere.

Lu Zhou said, “... Okay, bring it over.”

Xu Wenhao smiled and said, “Sure thing.”

Signing a textbook wasn’t a big deal for Lu Zhou. He signed plenty of documents a day.

Lu Zhou flipped through the textbook and saw there were notes written inside, so he asked, “You’re studying electrochemistry by yourself?”

Xu Wenhao smiled and said, “Yeah, I’m on the grind! I want to work at the Institute of Computational Materials.”

The Institute of Biochemistry used to be part of the Institute of Computational Materials. Even though they had a decent amount of research funding, they were nowhere near the level of the Institute of Computational Materials.

After all, one was a newly-born research unit, while the other was a world leader in the computational materials field. Forget about domestic scholars, even foreign PhDs had a hard time getting into the institute.

Most of the people in the Institute of Biochemistry had PhDs or master's degrees. All of them were motivated to get into the Institute of Computational Materials.

After all, materials science was similar to biochemistry. They wanted to go where the research funding was.

Lu Zhou knew what Xu Wenhao was thinking of. He shook his head and smiled. He then signed his name in the textbook.

He suddenly remembered something and said, "I remember you're in biochem, right?"

Xu Wenhao didn't think Lu Zhou would remember a nobody like him.

He was flattered by it.

"Yeah, I am."

Lu Zhou put down his pen, thought for a bit, and spoke.

"Actually, you don't have to worry about getting into the Institute of Computational Materials. The Institute of Biochemistry is going to be one of the key development institutes in the next coming years."

Xu Wenhao's eyes widened, and he said, "Really?"

"Why would I lie?" Lu Zhou smiled and gave Xu Wenhao his textbook back. Lu Zhou patted his shoulder and said, "Do your best, son, I look forward to seeing your success."

Chapter 745: Finding Treasure

As Lu Zhou looked at Xu Wenhao happily walking out of his office, he smiled and shook his head. He reminisced for a second about his younger days. He then picked up the analysis reports on his table.

The analysis results were quite interesting.

The first analysis was the liquid meal replacement.

Even though Lu Zhou had never done any biology research, he still knew a little bit about biology. Also, Xu Wenhao's report abstract was written in relatively simple language, so he could still understand it.

According to the composition analysis, the liquid meal replacement food contained almost all nutrients required by the human body. It also contained a special active substance, which improved the activity and absorption of the human intestine. This increased the absorption of nutrients and reduced the excretion quantity.

Basically, if someone ate this for three meals a day, they would only have to sh*t once every three days, but they would urinate more often.

This thing could definitely be applied in spacecraft, where excretion was troublesome.

Also, in addition to being used in aerospace food, the active substance could be made into a health supplement.

As for the toxicology test of this active substance, the clinical experiments proved there were no obvious signs of toxicity. Xu Wenhao didn't do any experiments on humans, but Lu Zhou guessed it was probably fine.

After all, the future process of clinical and pharmacological tests was bound to become more and more sophisticated.

There was no reason for Lu Zhou to worry about "food safety".

After Lu Zhou finished reading the liquid food report, he began to read the report on the Future branded coke.

This report was slightly longer, and it was around a dozen pages long.

Other than the ingredient testing, Xu Wenhao also conducted clinical trials on mice for some of the most interesting substances.

It was worth mentioning that, like Lu Zhou's prediction, the coke had athletic enhancing abilities.

However, there was one part he was wrong. There wasn't a large amount of taurine; rather, a special amino acid substance was added.

This amino acid had stable chemical properties. It was insoluble in organic solvents, such as ethanol, and belonged to a special non-protein amino acid group. After being ingested into the human body, it did not participate in biological protein synthesis.

This amino acid had a special R group, which was more likely to bind to insulin receptors. This promoted cell glucose uptake and accelerated glycolysis.

Also, the amino acid could also accelerate the secretion speed of various human body glands. It improved the human body's metabolism level and stimulated nerve cells for a certain period of time.

More importantly, there was no toxic side effect!

But, Lu Zhou obviously knew that...

Because he had drunk this coke many times.

"This is basically NZT-48... The kind with no side effects."

Lu Zhou put down the report.

He was only curious about one thing. Which was whether or not the energy medicine contained similar ingredients.

Unfortunately, he drank all of the energy medicine when he was working hard. He had to wait until next time to test the ingredients.

After reading the component analysis reports, Lu Zhou contemplated for a bit. He opened his computer and opened a new Word document. He began to type up two patent document drafts.

Even though he didn't plan on selling coke, the interesting substances in the two liquids had interesting applications.

Regardless of whether or not it would come in handy, Lu Zhou decided to register a patent first.

The two patent drafts didn't take him too much time. He didn't have to write in detail. Star Sky Technology had a professional patent management department that could do the miscellaneous work for him.

Considering the fact that Star Sky Technology was in the patent licensing field, the examination and approval procedures weren't much of an issue. It wouldn't take long for the patent to be approved.

Lu Zhou leaned in his office chair and stretched his back. He placed the two reports aside and saw a notification on his laptop screen.

[Master, you have mail!]

"Okay."

Lu Zhou sat up straight and clicked the notification, which opened his email.

The email was from Yang Xu.

Lu Zhou could tell that the material analysis of the piece of clothing was completed.

He downloaded the PDF report from Yang Xu's email and began reading it. He started to get intrigued.

He glanced through the abstract and saw the transmission electron microscope image. He was in disbelief.

"... This is incredible."

Nano-thin wires were tangled intricately as they weaved into a solid mesh structure.

The wire was made of hexagon-filled carbon nanotubes!

No wonder this material is so tough and has good thermal conductivity properties. It is wrapped in carbon nanotubes!

Other tests such as compression and tensile resistance tests were also in the report.

Without using an actual gun for testing, just by looking at the data alone, Lu Zhou estimated that assault rifles would have difficulty penetrating through 2.2mm of this carbon nanofiber material.

If there were another layer of ceramic chip added to the clothing to disperse the impact force of the bullet, this piece of clothing would be impenetrable.

Lu Zhou couldn't help but mutter, "I can't believe this kind of material is made into a sweater, what a waste."

The SG-1 superconducting material used in the Pangu reactor was a similar kind of carbon nanotube. However, that material was so expensive that it was only used in controllable fusion reactors or atomic colliders.

But now, there was someone using carbon nanotube fiber thinner than SG-1, to make clothes. Lu Zhou couldn't even imagine how expensive that would cost.

This thing could be applied in marine and industrial fields as high mechanical property cables. It could be made into bulletproof clothing or even tank armor. It could even be used in fighter jets and other aerospace applications. Lu Zhou had countless application ideas...

However, maybe in the future, this kind of material would become cheaper, and that's why they made it into clothes?

It's just like how aluminum was as expensive as gold a century ago, but now it's used in soda cans.

However, for now, Lu Zhou couldn't imagine using this kind of material to make clothes.

In short, this thing was an absolute gem of a treasure.

I guess I underestimated this sweater!

Lu Zhou immediately had an idea, and he stood up from his chair.

The Lunar Gateway moon space station program is about to begin.

What if I use this material on the lunar space station!

Chapter 746: Arizona Dome

Jinling Institute for Advanced Study.

Inside a laboratory at the Institute of Computational Materials.

Yang Xu was meticulously doing an experiment. He looked up and adjusted his glasses. When he saw Lu Zhou standing at the laboratory entrance, he spoke.

“Oh, you’re here? I was about to look for you. Where did you... get that piece of fabric?”

“From a certain state department. It’s confidential. I can tell you after the confidentiality period passes.” Lu Zhou placed the report on the table and asked, “Is there a way to make this thing?”

Yang Xu had heard the “confidential” excuse countless times, so he rolled his eyes and decided not to ask any more questions. He placed a test tube in a test tube rack and asked, “Are you talking about laboratory preparations or industrial preparations?”

Lu Zhou: “Both.”

Yang Xu thought for a bit and said in a serious manner, “I can make it in the laboratory now, but making it in a factory... I’m afraid it’s going to be difficult.”

Lu Zhou immediately said, “Compared to the SG-1 superconducting material?”

Yang Xu said, “They’re not even on the same level.”

Lu Zhou had a solemn expression on his face.

Just like he had expected, this fabric wasn’t easy to recreate.

Because Yang Xu often worked in laboratories, his experimental abilities were stronger than his theoretical abilities.

Therefore, if Yang Xu said it was difficult, then it would be damn difficult.

“Set up a project team for this material. I don’t care if it’s difficult, we have to try... Oh yeah, there’s something else I have to ask you.”

Yang Xu: “What?”

Lu Zhou thought for a bit and asked, “Are there any pharmaceutical companies we’re in good relationships with?”

“Pharmaceutical companies?” Yang Xu rubbed his chin and contemplated it for a bit. He then shook his head and said, “Probably not, we’re mainly working with chemical and material companies. We don’t work with any pharmaceutical companies... Why?”

Lu Zhou nodded and said, “I have two interesting compounds. I might need a professional institute to help with clinical experiments. Also, they can become our OEM¹.”

Lu Zhou also wanted the pharma company to help market the product.

After all, if they could apply the liquid food amino acid and the coke active ingredient into other food and health products, he could earn a considerable amount of money.

Not to mention that this kind of meal replacement food could be used in the aerospace field.

Yang Xu adjusted his glasses and asked, “Is it profitable? Or is it just used for experiments?”

Lu Zhou nodded and said, “It’s definitely profitable. In my opinion, it can be applied in food and medicines.”

“Then this is easy.” Yang Xu smiled and joked, “There are a bunch of companies lining up to work with a Nobel Prize laureate like you.”

...

Arizona.

A Hummer roared on the barren desert.

Elon Musk was sitting in the back of the Hummer as he looked at the desert and cacti outside the window. He spoke to NASA’s Director Carson, who was sitting next to him.

“... In fact, Mars is much more suitable for human life than the moon. It has a rich atmosphere... though the air density is low. There are rich resources, such as methane, which can be used by our colonists for industrialization. If

we want, we can also consider melting the dry ice at the poles and release the carbon dioxide stored in the Mars bedrocks. The greenhouse effect will then revive the planet's atmosphere."

Carson smiled and asked, "How many centuries do you think that will take?"

Musk smiled and said, "Maybe a dozen? Or even a hundred? But that's not the main point. That's not Space-X's job. My vision for Space-X is clear. We will be the 'railway' company of space. Our job is to create space transportation systems and put humans on Mars."

Director Carson raised his eyebrows and said, "Sounds a little ridiculous, even childish."

Honestly, he didn't want to think about the far-distant future.

If future generations really had that kind of technology, instead of colonizing a planet tens of kilometers away, Carson would rather turn the Arizona desert into a forest. That seemed more practical than colonizing Mars.

Of course, he didn't say this out loud.

After all, he was the director of NASA, the leader of the Ares program. The success of this operation was directly related to the glory of the country and his future career.

Even if he didn't see any benefit in colonizing Mars, he would still fully support this plan to the end.

After all, he betted all of his chips in this plan.

Musk didn't really care about Carson's comments. He had heard many snarky comments in the past.

He looked at the red sand outside and said, "When the Union Pacific Railroad was built, people said it was a stupid project. Looking back at it now, no one can deny that this project has brought benefits to the United States. This is the same for Mars. Mars will bring huge opportunities for mankind. It will also give us motivation and courage to challenge the future... We're here."

While the two were chatting, they arrived at their destination.

A white egg-shaped building was sitting in the burning desert.

Next to it were several pieces of engineering equipment and engineers who were wearing safety hats. They were making final adjustments to this weirdly-shaped building.

Director Carson opened the Hummer door and got out of the car. He stared at the white dome in the desert and squinted his eyes.

“This is it?”

“Yes.” Musk said and opened his arms, “Welcome to Arizona. This will be our new home for future colonists. Even though it isn’t aesthetically pleasing from the outside, I am certain you will be surprised by the interiors.”

Carson stared at the dome and said, “I don’t care about that. What I want to know is, are you sure our colonists can safely spend 26 months in this building?”

Musk smiled and said, “Of course, even though we don’t have time for long-term testing, judging from the food, water, and oxygen consumption data, even if our colonists do not engage in any resource refueling activities, they will be able to survive for 30 months.”

Carson said, “How do you plan on sending it to Mars?”

“Through our BFR super rocket.” Musk patted Carson’s shoulder and said, “Believe me, we are winning this space race. Everything is under control.”

Chapter 747: Make It a Habit

Just like Yang Xu had said, after Star Sky Technology expressed they were interested in cooperating with a pharmaceutical company, numerous offers came in the mail.

There were at least four or five calls a day, which annoyed Chen Yushan.

Chen Yushan called Lu Zhou and couldn’t help but complain.

“You plan on selling health supplements or what?”

Lu Zhou knew what she was referring to, so he smiled and replied, "... I just found some by-products in an experiment. I thought they were quite interesting. So, I plan on benefiting the public."

"... I'm the sacrifice then? I'm being drowned by these calls."

Lu Zhou: "Yeah, thanks."

Chen Yushan said, "It's fine, this is my job. But next time, remember to give me a heads-up. I'm still busy with the state aerospace project. When I suddenly got a call, I thought it was a supplement marketing scam."

Lu Zhou said, "I'll give you a heads-up next time."

"Yeah, it's fine. Oh yeah, I researched some of the companies that called us and listed some of the more qualified companies. I've sent the list to your email. Look through it if you have time."

"Okay, I'll look at it right away."

After Lu Zhou hung up the phone, he opened his email and found the report sent by Chen Yushan.

He had to admit, the report was very detailed. Not only did it contain information such as market value, business model, and operating status, but some of the more esoteric pieces of information were also listed in the report.

After carefully reading through the report, Lu Zhou chose Hengrui Medicine as their partner.

It was one of the few Chinese pharmaceutical companies that were willing to invest in drug research and development. The company was owned and controlled by its parent company, Hengrui Group. It had the largest antitumor production base in China. It was also involved in research on diabetes, heart disease, and cancer drugs.

In fact, other than Hengrui Medicine, there were many foreign-owned pharmaceutical companies that were suitable partners. For example, Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer, and Roche. These were all top-100 companies.

However, most of these companies' research and development units were located overseas. After what happened with Sarrot's laboratory, and with the

possible foreign policy risks, Lu Zhou carefully excluded these companies as potential partners.

As for why Lu Zhou chose Hengrui Medicine, that was mainly because it had its own research and development team. The Jinling Institute for Advanced Study planned on entering the biochemistry field, so there were many future cooperation opportunities between the two.

The specific cooperation agreement was negotiated by a dedicated patent management team. The Jinling Institute for Advanced Study was only responsible for sending the registered patent samples to the other party.

Two weeks had gone by... Lu Zhou nearly forgot the whole Hengrui Medicine thing when someone suddenly came to visit him...

“Hello, Professor Lu! It’s a pleasure to meet you!”

Inside his office at the Institute for Advanced Study, Lu Zhou met Professor Zhang Jiafu, the Chief Technology Officer of Hengrui Medicine’s new research and development department. Since he also taught at Zhi University, he had the “professor” title.

After Professor Zhang met Lu Zhou, he extended his right hand and shook Lu Zhou’s hand.

“Hello, you’re Professor Zhang, right? Please sit.”

“You’re too kind!”

After some small talk, Professor Zhang sat on the sofa.

Lu Zhou’s office assistant came over with a pot and poured two cups of tea.

Professor Zhang took a sip of the hot tea and put down the cup. Without wasting any time, he started to talk about business.

“Everyone knows that we are currently developing a diabetes treatment drug. After we received the component analysis report and sample from you guys, we tested it in our laboratory, and...” he gulped and said, “the clinical trial was shocking.”

Three years of research, and tens or even hundreds of thousands of compounds. Countless trial and error. Professor Zhang never expected that

the answer would come from the Institute of Biochemistry, which was established less than a year ago.

This...

Made Professor Zhang slightly uncomfortable.

After hearing this, Lu Zhou was astounded.

“This thing can cure diabetes?”

The f*ck?

“Is this worth a Nobel Prize?”

However, after hearing Lu Zhou, Professor Zhang had an awkward expression on his face.

“... A complete cure is unlikely, but if it really is a cure, the Nobel Prize Committee might consider giving you another award. Even if it's not a complete cure, we found that the amino acid has synergistic effects with insulin and insulin analogs. It accelerates glycolysis and lowers blood sugar levels.

“We conducted experiments in diabetic mice, and we found that the amino acid directly prevents islet β -cell damage, and it maintains its structural integrity and helps endocrine function while also effectively inhibiting streptozotocin-induced islet β apoptosis.”

Lu Zhou's expression gradually became more and more serious.

He knew about streptozotocin. It was listed on the WHO list of 2B carcinogens. However, the scary part wasn't its carcinogenic properties, but its ability to induce diabetes in many organisms. It was the culprit that caused diabetes in many diabetic patients.

Professor Zhang said in a serious manner, “We plan on using this amino acid as our newly developed drug. Can you tell us what you named the amino acid?”

“Name?” Lu Zhou paused for a second and said, “Can't you guys just use its chemical nomenclature?”

Professor Zhang paused for a second and said, "Have you not named it yet?"

Lu Zhou: "... I haven't thought about it."

In the component analysis report, Xu Wenhao used the chemical nomenclature to name this amino acid. In order to save time, Lu Zhou abbreviated the name into letters and numbers.

Professor Zhang said, "If you don't know how to name it, just name it from wherever you extracted the amino acid from. That's more convenient."

Lu Zhou was a little worried.

What do I do now?

I got it from a can of coke, I can't call it coke-aline, right?

Hmm...

Wait a minute, it sounds pretty good.

Lu Zhou said, "Let's call it cokealine!"

"Cokealine?" Professor Zhang paused for a second. "Is there... a reason?"

Lu Zhou: "No reason... Can I not call it cokealine?"

Professor Zhang said, "No, of course you can."

It's just kind of a weird name...

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "Okay then, I think it's a good name."

Professor Zhang wanted to convince Lu Zhou otherwise, but it seemed like Lu Zhou had no intention of changing his mind. Professor Zhang shook his head and gave up.

After Professor Zhang walked out of the office, he looked at the institute researcher who brought him to Lu Zhou's office. He asked, "Don't you think... Professor Lu has weird naming habits?"

He wanted to say "horrible", but he felt like it would be disrespectful, so he changed it to "weird".

After hearing Professor Zhang's words, the researcher smiled.

"... You'll get used to it."

Professor Zhang: "..."

Chapter 748: BFR Rocket Launch!

Florida, America.

A 32-floor high super-rocket sat on the launch pad at the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.

The American flag, NASA logo, and Space-X logo were printed on the side of the rocket, as well as the three large letters "BFR". Also, several Wall Street investment banks also had their logos printed on the rocket.

It took nearly a month for the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station to assemble the entire rocket. It then took another week to finish the final launch preparations.

Now that the rocket was equipped with the life support system, all of the preparations were in place. It was finally time to begin the launch. Countless pairs of hopeful eyes were focused on this rocket. They had been waiting for this moment.

The ignition countdown began.

After the ten-second countdown, billowing smoke was seen from the launch platform.

The 42 Raptor engines consumed liquid oxygen and methane at an incredible rate. They provided an astonishing take-off thrust of 128 trillion Newtons across the entire spacecraft. It propelled the 100-meter-tall rocket slowly off the launch platform and toward the blue sky.

The engine roared like a giant monster.

This monster was called chemical propulsion.

It contained the world's most advanced liquid oxygen methane propulsion technology. This monster once again displayed its strength to the world...

Musk looked at the rocket through a telescope. He smirked and gave the telescope to his assistant. He looked at Director Carson, who was staring into the distance, and said, "I told you, there's nothing to worry about. We have the best aerospace research and development team in the world, and it is the most experienced team as well. We just have to wait for the team's good news from 60 million kilometers away."

"I hope it's good news." Carson put down the telescope and asked, "What about the BFS spacecraft? Is it ready?"

If the life support system could be successfully deployed on Mars, then the three lucky volunteers would board the ship in June and begin the greatest expedition in human history.

The BFS spacecraft played an important role in the Ares program, which was to send astronauts to Mars safely.

Musk: "We're not going to use the BFS spacecraft."

Director Carson looked at Musk and said, "But in your PowerPoint, you said..."

Musk waved his hand and said, "That thing has a 100-person capacity. We'll use it for the last stage of the Ares program. We only need to send three astronauts. We'll use a smaller, more reliable transportation method. Guess what it's called?"

Carson: "... What?"

"Heart of Gold!"

Carson paused for a second. He then responded, "Like in The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy?"

If he recalled correctly, the spaceship in the novel was called the Heart of Gold. However, the spaceship in the novel didn't use chemical propulsion. Instead, it used some kind of "Infinite Improbability Drive", which claimed to be able to reach any corner of the universe instantly.

Musk smiled.

“That’s right. Douglas Adams’ sci-fi masterpiece. It will be the first manned spacecraft to land on Mars!”

Director Carson smiled and shook his head.

“... I think a more appropriate name will go down in history better.”

Musk said, “History is written by people. When we succeed, the name won’t matter.”

While the two were talking, deafening cheers were heard nearby.

Standing there were people invited by NASA; people such as company representatives and reporters. Everyone’s face was full of nothing but excitement.

The BFR rocket carrying the life support system was heading toward Mars, which was more than 60 million kilometers away. If everything were to go according to plan, it should land on the surface of Mars in a month.

The reporters stood at their designated shooting location. They were excited to have finished taking photos of the rocket taking off. They held their cameras and left the launch site.

They couldn’t wait to get back to their computers and start editing tomorrow’s headline.

Tomorrow...

The entire world would be astounded by America’s achievement...

...

The news of the successful BFR launch reached headlines across the world.

According to NASA’s report, the “Heart of Gold” spacecraft carrying the life support system had successfully reached the escape velocity, leaving the Earth-Moon system.

The United States had once again demonstrated to the world its ambitions and strengths in the aerospace field. Major newspapers, TV, and talk shows had also run relevant reports.

Because Space-X was one of the main protagonists in the Ares program, its stock price began to rise.

According to a financial trader who worked on Wall Street, not only did this launch plan bring in billions of dollars of revenue for Space-X, but it also brought tens of billions of market value growth for the US stock market.

The lithium-sulfur battery market and electric vehicle market was already expanding, and it wouldn't take long for Elon Musk to be one of the world's top 10 richest people.

Because of the successful BFR rocket launch, the Chinese community began to debate on the lunar orbit space station.

A lot of people claimed that this billion-dollar project was destined to fail and that even if the project was successful, it was all for a show. They even claimed that the space station itself was useless.

Lu Zhou didn't pay attention to what people were saying. After he returned from Beijing, he kept himself very busy.

The most difficult part of constructing a space station in lunar orbit was sending the components to space.

So far, it seemed like Star Sky Technology was the only one that could handle these kinds of payloads.

Therefore, it was not an exaggeration to say that the success of this project was entirely dependent on Lu Zhou himself.

A lunar orbit engineering meeting was happening inside a conference room at the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study.

"... If we want to complete the construction of the lunar space station, we have to deliver at least 500 tons of materials to lunar orbit," Lu Zhou said while looking at the projector screen. He tapped his pen on the table and said, "And this is just the first phase of the project. There's at least another 2,000 tons of payload waiting for us. We have to increase our delivery capacity."

Because the lunar orbit space station was a highly valued project of the Communist Party of China, it was easy for Lu Zhou to receive funding. Plenty of banks were happy to give out loans.

Even though the project hadn't even begun, Lu Zhou already received a 50 billion yuan loan from a major bank. Part of the money would be used for the construction of the new Skyglow aerospaceplane. The rest of the money would be used for research and development of space transportation vehicles.

Lu Zhou paused for a second and said, "I think we can create a special spacecraft, designed to specifically travel between the Earth-Moon transfer orbit and the geosynchronous orbit."

Quiet chatters were heard in the conference room.

The idea of building a spacecraft specifically designed to travel between the geosynchronous orbit and the Earth-Moon transfer orbit was so novel that many experts had no idea that this was possible.

Hou Guang's eyebrows furrowed, and he contemplated for a second before asking, "So what you're saying is... Use Skyglow to complete the ground to the geosynchronous orbit, and then use the other spacecraft to go from the geosynchronous orbit to the Earth-Moon orbit?"

Lu Zhou nodded and said, "Correct."

COMMENT

Hou Guang said, "In theory, this is possible. However, transferring cargo like that might be risky."

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "Aerospace itself is risky. Every flight is an adventure. If we do this, not only will our moon delivery capacity increase substantially, but we can even outsource the surface to geosynchronous launch to other aerospace companies. This will cut our costs."

After hearing Lu Zhou's thoughts, Hou Guang went silent. After a while, he finally spoke.

"I'll do some research. I'll give you a detailed report by tomorrow night."

Lu Zhou nodded his head solemnly.

“Ok, thank you.”

This kind of decision couldn't be made during meetings. He was just brainstorming. The experts in charge had to do the real work.

Hou Guang didn't try to reject Lu Zhou's idea. He even expressed that it was theoretically possible. He thought that the pros and cons were debatable, but at least, they were enough to make Lu Zhou feel intrigued.

The meeting lasted until noon.

After the meeting ended, Lu Zhou went to the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study cafeteria. He was looking for a seat to enjoy his barbecue meat and rice when he suddenly received a phone call.

COMMENT

When he saw that Director Li was the one calling, he answered the call, “Hello, what's up?”

Director Li replied in a serious tone, “The Americans launched their BFR rocket!”

Chapter 749: Lunar Orbit Committee

The Americans launched their BFR rocket?

Lu Zhou's mouth was wide open. He silently placed his chopsticks on the table and asked, “They... launched it? When?”

“Last night! NASA issued a public announcement, and we also received confirmation through our satellites. BFR is currently leaving low-Earth orbit, and it was already on the news... When was the last time you checked the news?”

“Probably last night... I was preparing the material for the conference all night, so I didn't have time to look at the news.” Lu Zhou frowned and contemplated it for a second. He then said, “Is it manned? Or is it just cargo?”

“It’s just cargo. It is carrying a life support system made by several aerospace companies, like Space-X and Blue Origin,” Director Li replied in a regretful tone. “How is the Garden plan going? Is there any progress?”

Lu Zhou: “We’re still in the early stages... Why?”

So far, the Garden plan was mainly done by several research institutes, such as the China Agricultural University and the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences Institution of Bio-technology. Star Sky Technology wasn’t in charge of many projects yet.

A while ago, Lu Zhou contacted the project leader, Professor Hu Yang. So far, the Biosphere A had just finished construction, and none of the personnel or equipment had been moved in yet. It would take a while before they could use the biosphere to develop new technology.

The other end of the phone went silent.

Ten seconds later, Director Li lowered his voice and asked, “Hypothetically, if I gave you another 2 billion yuan of funding, do you think we can make a biosphere and place it on Mars?”

Even though he was just presenting a hypothetical situation, it was obvious that there was a hint of seriousness in his phone. Director Li couldn’t make this decision by himself; many higher-ups had to agree to this proposal.

After Lu Zhou heard Director Li’s words, he nearly choked on his water.

2 billion in funding?

Even though this sounded tempting, money couldn’t solve anything.

Do you really think money alone can put something on Mars?

Lu Zhou didn’t hesitate, and he immediately responded, “Forget about it, our technology is not there yet. The Americans are relying on more than half a century of experience. It’s a miracle we can even send people to the moon. We should go one step at a time.”

Lu Zhou could sense a hint of urgency from the Americans.

Seems like the successful Skylight mission triggered the Americans.

Otherwise, forget about launching the life support system, the congress would take two years just to approve the construction of the life support system.

Director Li went silent for a while. He then sighed.

“Okay then, I know it’s not realistic... How long until our lunar space station project begins?”

Lu Zhou thought for a second before saying, “Soonest by the end of the month. We can send the ‘Moon Palace’ core module first. If the core module orbit is stable, then we can also send the unity module and working module... As for the specific launch plans, that will depend on the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation.”

The “Moon Palace” core module was the main component of the entire lunar orbit space station. It provided power, propulsion, navigation, communication, altitude control, temperature control, and other functions. A year ago, the two Chinese aerospace giants completed the design, and they successfully tested the module earlier this year.

In addition to the basic functions, this core module also had four spacecraft dockers. This allowed the core module to be connected with the unity module, working module, and other modules.

The core module mainly relied on solar energy, of which the power was stored by large lithium-sulfur batteries.

Even though some people had suggested using a small controllable fusion energy device as a power source, due to various factors such as heat, cost, maintenance, and technical difficulty, this plan was abandoned. The traditional and reliable solar power solution was implemented.

Director Li was astonished. “End of the month?”

Lu Zhou said confidently, “End of the month.”

Even though the new Earth-Moon orbital transport system was still being developed, that didn’t prevent Star Sky Technology from using their old spacecraft for module transport.

Director Li: “Okay then, I’ll ask the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation to finish the final round of testing and send the core module to the

Jinling launch site... Oh yeah, there's one more thing I have to ask your opinion on."

Lu Zhou said, "What?"

Director Li cleared his throat and said in a solemn manner, "In order to facilitate the construction of the lunar orbital space station and the mining of lunar resources, the high-level officials at the Communist Party of China decided to establish a Lunar Orbit Committee. This committee will manage and coordinate funding for various lunar resource development projects."

Lu Zhou: "Yeah... and?"

"The Lunar Orbit Committee will also contain a chief designer..."

Director Li paused for a second. He then said, "The Communist Party of China has decided for you to be the chief designer of the committee!"

Lu Zhou: "...?"

Even though there was no reason for Lu Zhou to be against this arrangement...

Couldn't they ask for my opinion first?

...

Skyglow's next launch mission was scheduled to be at the end of the month. In order to display China's determination to win this space race, the Communist Party of China greenlit various supporting policies.

At the same time, with the establishment of the Lunar Orbit Committee, the lunar orbit space station project was no longer controlled by the State Administration for National Defense or the China National Space Administration, but rather, it was directly under the Communist Party of China.

This was just like the first controllable fusion reactor.

It was obvious that China had big ambitions this time.

Interestingly enough, even though the establishment of the Lunar Orbit Committee caused a sensation in the aerospace industry, it didn't attract any attention from foreign media outlets.

After all, the news that China was building a lunar orbiting space station was announced a long time ago. The international community had a negative opinion on this project, and they thought it was an impossible project.

Even with the most advanced ion thruster propulsion technology, just from the cost perspective alone, sending 500 tons of material into lunar orbit was nearly impossible.

Not to mention China had no experience building large orbital space stations.

Even with Professor Lu's help, people thought this was unfeasible!

The Chinese aerospace community had similar opinions.

Successfully landing on the moon was an amazing accomplishment, but planning on building a lunar space station right after seemed overly ambitious.

Some of the more radical activists even thought that the Chinese aerospace industry was being fooled by Professor Lu's ego.

The establishment of the Lunar Orbit Committee was an exciting event for the aerospace industry. However, when they saw who the chief designer was, at least a third of them felt worried.

It's over...

Nothing can save us.

Chapter 750: Heat Accumulation

China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation.

A large cylindrical core module was placed in the center of an aerospace warehouse in Tianjin.

The final inspections were about to begin. The engineers were doing safety inspections on the core module.

After checking the core cabin door wires and confirming that the password was working correctly, Sun Yuanpei smirked and chatted with the engineer next to him.

“Professor Lu is the chief designer of the Lunar Orbit Committee... He really is involved with everything.”

Zhao Xianpu was still working. Without raising his head, he said, “I know...”

Because of Lu Zhou, the launch was scheduled to the end of month. They gave up their weekend holiday and immediately started working.

Sun Yuanpei shook his head and said, “Sometimes, I really don’t understand this guy. Can’t he just focus on controllable fusion energy? I heard he rejected the offer to be the director of the China International Nuclear Fusion Energy Program Execution Center. He even gave someone else the chief engineer role for East Asia Energy. All these just for aerospace... He must be crazy.”

In his opinion, no matter what happened to the aerospace industry, it would never be as huge as the controllable fusion industry.

Just by looking at how much benefits controllable fusion technology and East Asia Energy brought to China, it was obvious that the controllable fusion field was going to grow.

However, Professor Lu didn’t seem to care about this at all. He tossed controllable fusion aside, as if it were an old toy.

Most scientific researchers thought his actions were incomprehensible.

They wondered why Lu Zhou didn’t want to indulge in his victory.

Just when Lu Zhou could finally taste the success that he worked so hard for, he went to aerospace instead.

Zhao Xianpu adjusted his hard hat and muttered, “God knows what he’s thinking.”

A slightly younger engineer next to them said, “Maybe he is different from us?”

Sun Yuanpei said, “He’s human as well, what’s so different?”

Footsteps were heard from the warehouse, and the three people immediately stopped chattering.

Not long after, Zheng Xiangdong, the deputy manager of the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, and chief engineer Academician Yuan walked into the warehouse with a group of people.

Academician Yuan walked in front of Sun Yuanpei and glanced at the core module. He then asked, "Are you done with the inspection?"

"It's done. Everything is functioning," Sun Yuanpei said while standing up straight. He handed the old gentlemen a form.

Academician Yuan looked at the form. He then looked at Systems Director Zhang.

"Begin testing."

"Okay!"

Systems Director Zhang nodded.

This inspection was originally scheduled for two days later, but because Star Sky Technology was already ready to launch, the China National Space Administration advanced the schedule.

However, engineer Sun Yuanpei wasn't worried at all. The Moon Palace core module contained the most advanced technology from the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, and it was an improved version of the Tiangong core module.

Soon after, the core module was sent to a vacuum chamber. It was suspended in the air by four cables. This mimicked an outer space environment.

Immediately afterward, the engineer in charge pressed the start button. All of the equipment except the solar panel was activated. Various physical parameters were displayed on the control panel.

"Core module operation is stable!"

Zheng Xiangdong sighed in relief and forced a smile.

Academician Yuan, who was standing next to him, frowned.

“... Something is not right.”

Zheng Xiangdong immediately looked at Academician Yuan and asked, “What’s wrong?”

Academician Yuan didn’t respond directly. He went silent for a while before saying, “Look at it again.”

Zheng Xiangdong said nervously, “Don’t scare me...”

The launch mission was going to begin at the end of the month, he couldn’t afford to have any mistakes.

Academician Yuan didn’t say anything as he stared intently at the screen.

Zheng Xiangdong relaxed a little.

Maybe he was wrong?

He continued to look at the console screen.

Ten minutes passed...

Twenty minutes...

Half an hour later, something finally happened.

The component temperature curves began to fluctuate toward a clear upward trend. Judging from the temperature-time function prediction values, the temperature of the entire core module was rising rapidly, and it would reach a critical value after 24 hours. Due to overheating, the antenna control equipment would fail first.

Sun Yuanpei started to sweat.

A terrible word appeared in his mind.

Overheating!

Judging from the temperature trend of the core module, the total heat accumulation of the core module had exceeded the heat dissipation limit.

Sun Yuanpei wasn't the only one who noticed this; the other engineers, as well as the researchers in the laboratory, also noticed this anomaly.

Academician Yuan was the first to speak.

"Stop the experiment! Inject shielding gas!"

"Yes, sir!"

The engineers in the laboratory quickly began to work.

The gas valve was opened, and nitrogen gas was injected into the vacuum chamber. The components of the core module began to turn off, and the temperature of the module finally began to decrease.

However, none of the engineers in the laboratory were relaxed.

Especially Systems Director Zhang, as well as Sun Yuanpei... Their faces began to turn pale.

"Sh*t..."

Even though Zheng Xiangdong didn't understand the technicality of the situation, he could tell something was wrong. He looked at Academician Yuan and asked, "What happened?!"

Academician Yuan frowned and shook his head.

"We're in trouble."

Even though he didn't closely inspect the module, he could guess what the problem was.

It was obvious that the problem was the loop heat pipe.

Loop heat pipe systems were usually used as cooling systems for spacecraft. It used capillary action to remove heat from a source before moving it passively to a condenser or radiator.

Even if all of the other components were perfect, failure of the loop heat pipe could sabotage the whole mission!

There were only two ways to solve this problem. One was to remove the loop heat pipe and redesign it. The other was to reduce the spacecraft performance and remove some of the high-heat inducing components.

However, the problem was that this was a core module. It wasn't a unity module or a working module. This was the "heart" of the entire Moon Palace space station! This was like the "Zarya" of the ISS.

Even though they wanted to remove some of the more heat-intensive equipment, there was nothing left to remove.

If they wanted to remove and redesign the loop heat pipe system, not only would it cost billions of yuan, but it would also delay the entire Lunar Gateway space station project.

Vice President Zheng felt his hands and feet go cold. He began to sweat from his forehead.

The launch mission was happening at the end of the month.

Just when the core module was about to be launched, a critical problem occurred.

Normally, being able to detect the problems before the launch was considered lucky.

However, the aerospace situation was tense right now. The life support system of the Ares program had just been launched. The entire country was looking forward to the Moon Palace program.

The entire plan could be postponed to 2021...

And he was personally responsible for this.

2

Chapter 751: Dropped the Ball?

Jinling Institute for Advanced Study, materials science laboratory.

Lu Zhou was standing next to an optical microscope. He gently turned the focusing helix dial and observed the carbon nanotubes on the microscope slide.

A couple of minutes later, Lu Zhou looked up at Yang Xu and asked, "There's no way to make it longer?"

Yang Xu shook his head.

"That's as long as we can do."

By looking at the sample through the microscope, Lu Zhou could see that the shortest sample was only 5-10 μ m long, while the longest was 2mm long.

Unfortunately, when comparing the 2mm carbon nanotubes to the silky cloth material, the carbon nanotube was rough like stubble...

Lu Zhou rubbed his chin and asked, "What about the directional growth technology used in the SG-1 superconducting material? Have you tried that?"

"I've tried everything," Yang Xu shook his head and said, "but the pore size of the high tensile carbon nanotube is much smaller than that of the SG-1 material. It is very difficult to synthesize by directional growth... Even if we could, it would be extremely costly."

Superconducting materials could be used in high-technology fields, so the costs were acceptable. However, spending this much on clothing materials was a bit unnecessary.

Lu Zhou stared at the microscope as he said, "So you have no ideas at all?"

"Not quite, I have some ideas." Yang Xu picked up a report from the experiment table next to him and handed it to Lu Zhou. He said, "According to the data from several sets of experiments, improving the catalyst could effectively improve the creation of long carbon nanotubes. These nitrogen-containing carbon nanotubes are very similar to an experiment I did before.

"Therefore, we just need to improve the catalyst such that the catalyst remains active during the higher temperature growth of the carbon nanotubes. Theoretically, this will increase the length."

When it came to growing carbon nanotubes, catalyst deactivation during high temperatures was inevitable. This was one of the main reasons for the carbon nanotube length limit.

However, improving the catalyst and delaying the deactivation time was a feasible and inexpensive research idea.

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Lu Zhou nodded and said, "... Then we'll go with what you said. If you run out of funds, just tell me."

"Don't worry, I'll definitely ask you for funding when I need it." Yang Xu smiled and said, "Oh yeah, there's something else I want to ask you. Now that we have a laboratory preparation method... should we register a patent?"

Lu Zhou thought for a bit and said, "Register one for a carbon nanotube sample first, and wait on the catalyst."

Yang Xu: "What about the thesis?"

Lu Zhou: "After the patent is registered, we can submit a thesis that doesn't include the preparation method."

They were going to keep the synthesis process a secret and only submit the nitrogen-group carbon nanotube as an interesting materials science discovery.

Attracting more research institutes to participate would be a good thing for them.

This wasn't true only in the materials science field; this was true in all of academia. The more popular a problem became, the more research institutes would become interested, and the faster the results could be produced.

If a research institute closed its doors and didn't collaborate with anyone, it would take them decades to achieve any type of success.

"Okay then." Yang Xu nodded and said, "Oh yeah, what should we name it?"

Yang Xu didn't think twice before asking this.

However, the moment the words came out of his mouth, he began to regret asking.

But it was too late, the question was already asked.

Lu Zhou smiled awkwardly and thought for a while.

“Let’s call it N-1.”

There was nothing special about the nomenclature, considering the fact that the special characteristic of the carbon nanotube was its nitrogen group, so Lu Zhou decided to use “N” to represent “nitrogen”.

The “1” was obviously because this was the first generation of this kind of carbon nanotubes. The second generation would be called “N-2” and so forth.

Even though he wanted to call it something like “super tensile carbon nanotubes” or “carbon nanotube that is 100 times stronger than steel”, the names were too long and time-consuming to write. Therefore, he abandoned the idea.

Lu Zhou was quite satisfied with his own naming abilities. He looked at Yang Xu and saw that Yang Xu was quiet.

“... What?” Lu Zhou asked.

“Nothing...” Yang Xu smiled awkwardly and said, “It definitely fits your style.”

Lu Zhou: “...?”

What is that supposed to mean?

You don’t like my naming system?

Suddenly, Lu Zhou received a call.

When he saw that Director Li was calling, he bid farewell to Yang Xu and answered the call while walking out of the laboratory.

“Hello?”

“It’s me.”

It sounded like something was wrong, so Lu Zhou skipped the small talk and asked, “What happened?”

Sure enough, Director Li’s words confirmed Lu Zhou’s suspicion.

“Something happened at the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation. The cooling function of the core module is subpar.” Director Li paused for two seconds and said, “The launch has to be delayed.”

Heat dissipation was a huge problem for spacecraft. It was also a problem that was difficult to detect during the design phase. Even though there was a technology that could simulate heat output and heat dissipation, the simulation still had a certain amount of deviation from real life.

For example, the GOES-17 United States satellite was vulnerable to solar radiation and overheating due to the cooling system design flaws. This made it unable to obtain infrared cloud images in a timely and effective manner. The hundred-million-dollar investment was a total waste.

In some sense, discovering the problem before the launch could be considered fortunate. After all, there was no way to fix the module in orbit.

Lu Zhou immediately asked, “What if we just install some heat sinks?”

Director Li said, “The problem isn’t the heat sink, it’s the loop heat pipe.”

Lu Zhou’s heart dropped. He knew this was going to be a major problem.

“You’re saying that the entire loop heat pipe has to be redesigned?”

There was a hint of anguish in Director Li’s voice.

“I’m afraid so.”

Lu Zhou: “...”

Sh*t!

We have to redesign the loop heat pipe?!

Might as well redesign the whole f*cking core module!

Chapter 752: Big Problem

Even though the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation could afford to redesign the core module, Lu Zhou didn't have the time to wait.

Skyglow's working medium and fuel are already replenished. We're so close to launching, and you are telling me now that something is wrong with the core module?

*The f*ck?*

This is not happening!

Lu Zhou walked up and down the corridor. He made up his mind. He spoke to Director Li through the phone.

"I'm going to Tianjin!"

Director Li paused for a second.

"Why are you going... Are you a space station designer?"

All of the experts at the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation can't solve this, even Academician Yuan shook his head. What are you going to do, Lu Zhou?

The main research and development projects at Star Sky Technology were all focused on the ion thruster propulsion system. There wasn't a single engineer at the Institute for Advanced Study who was an expert in space station design.

Lu Zhou said, "I have to see it in person!"

If the Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation really decided to disassemble the core module and re-wire the loop heat pipe, it would take at least a year.

Even though Lu Zhou couldn't solve the technical problem, he wanted to go to the scene and see what was going on.

At the bare minimum, he wanted to see the problem with his own eyes.

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Seeing how determined Lu Zhou was, Director Li didn't try to persuade him otherwise.

"Okay then... I'll tell the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation not to dismantle the core module yet."

"Okay, thanks."

Lu Zhou hung up the phone before putting it into his pocket. He quickly walked back to the laboratory.

Yang Xu was removing the glass slide from the microscope. He looked at Lu Zhou and paused for a second.

"... What?"

Lu Zhou said solemnly, "Something went wrong at the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation. The launch has to be delayed."

Yang Xu pushed his glasses and asked, "Is the problem serious?"

Even though he wasn't in the aerospace field, as one of the senior members at the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study, he still cared about these important matters.

"The problem is serious. I might be gone for a week or two, so you'll have to handle the N-1 research..." Lu Zhou was about to leave when he saw the carbon nanotube fiber samples sitting on the experiment table.

He stared at them for a while before asking, "What is the maximum length we can achieve at the moment?"

Yang Xu said, "Around 1-2mm... Why?"

Without hesitating, Lu Zhou immediately said, "You're flying with me tomorrow!"

Yang Xu: "...?"

...

The atmosphere in Tianjin was gloomy and bleak.

Because of overtime, most of the workers were already in a bad mood. Now that there was the overheating problem, people were feeling even worse.

Especially the engineers, they all had a tired look on their faces.

Sun Yuanpei, the engineer in charge of the Moon Palace project, sat on a small chair outside the factory building. He smoked cigarettes one by one. It seemed like he aged ten years overnight. He didn't even notice Systems Director Zhang walking over.

"... The core module is inside, I'll take you there."

"Okay." Lu Zhou nodded toward Systems Director Zhang and looked at the depressed engineer sitting nearby. He asked, "Who is that?"

"That is the engineer in charge of the space station. He's also in charge of the cooling system."

Lu Zhou had a look of realization in his eyes.

No wonder!

No wonder he looks so depressed.

I'm sure anyone in his position wouldn't feel so good.

Sun Yuanpei noticed the conversation happening near him, and he looked up at Lu Zhou. He then looked back down and continued to smoke the cigarette.

Lu Zhou: "You're Engineer Sun?"

Sun Yuanpei nodded.

"Yeah, I am."

"Have you found a solution?"

Sun Yuanpei had a bitter look on his face. He shook his head and said, "Right now, the only solution is to redesign the loop heat pipe... We should dismantle the module and rebuild it."

Honestly, as a conservative, he didn't really like Lu Zhou.

But right now, he didn't have any face to hate Lu Zhou.

Rather, he hated himself for not being able to discover the problem earlier.

Lu Zhou stared at him for a while before saying, "Put out the cigarette, and show me what's happening inside."

"Okay."

Sun Yuanpei threw away the cigarette butt and slowly stood up. He walked toward the warehouse like a soulless puppet.

Systems Director Zhang looked at Lu Zhou and sighed.

"Don't trigger him... He's in a bad emotional state right now."

Lu Zhou smiled and said, "Why would I trigger him?"

Yang Xu, who was following Lu Zhou this whole time, asked, "Should I stay outside? I mean... There are state secrets involved here, right?"

After working with Lu Zhou for so long, the most common term Yang Xu heard Lu Zhou say was "state secret".

This term almost became a trigger for him.

Systems Director Zhang smiled and shook his head.

"It's fine, that thing inside isn't exactly a state secret. Two months ago some primary school children came for a field trip... Come with me."

He took the group of people into the warehouse.

Lu Zhou and Yang Xu followed Systems Director Zhang.

The moment Yang Xu walked into the warehouse, he began to look around curiously.

His research area was materials science. He had never been exposed to the aerospace industry. This stuff was all novel to him.

Lu Zhou wasn't curious at all. He walked straight to the core module that was placed in the center of the warehouse.

The module connection port was open, and it was wide enough for one astronaut to enter through.

However, Lu Zhou didn't go inside. He placed his head inside and look around. He then came out.

"The problem is the loop heat pipe?"

Sun Yuanpei nodded weakly and said, "Yes."

Lu Zhou immediately said, "What about coolants? Have you thought about changing the coolants?"

Sun Yuanpei smiled and shook his head.

"The coolant is glycol/water, which is already an excellent aerospace coolant... Do you really think changing the coolant is going to solve this problem? There's no way. Increasing the injection speed of the coolant, improving glycol water mixture... We have tried everything! The problem is that the excess heat is accumulated in the capillaries of the loop heat pipes. It's impossible to dissipate."

As expected, the problem wasn't that simple.

Lu Zhou had a dignified look on his face. He walked around the core module and began to recall the Debris No.3 lying in his underground laboratory.

Suddenly, a light bulb went off in his head. He went inside the core module through the left connection port.

He knocked on the heat pipe and asked, "What is this made of?"

Sun Yuanpei, who was standing outside, said, "Copper-aluminium alloy... Why?"

"Nothing, just wondering."

Lu Zhou climbed out of the core module and took two steps back. He looked at Yang Xu, who was muddled, and asked, "Is it possible to electroplate the N-1 material?"

Yang Xu adjusted his glasses and answered the question, "It can be done... What do you plan on plating?"

"Copper."

"Copper?" Yang Xu looked at Lu Zhou. He then looked at the core module and said, "You're planning to..."

Lu Zhou nodded.

"Yep."

Yang Xu contemplated it for a moment before saying, "I'm afraid it's not possible to electroplate the micrometer-sized N-1 on copper plates... Chemical plating should work."

"Then we'll do chemical plating. You're the expert."

Systems Director Zhang was baffled. He looked at Lu Zhou and asked, "What are you guys talking about?"

Lu Zhou smiled and replied casually, "We're talking about a way to solve this problem!"

After that, he and Yang Xu began to walk out of the warehouse.

Chapter 753: The Only Remedy

Even though Systems Director Zhang wasn't convinced Lu Zhou could really solve this problem, but because of Lu Zhou's background, Systems Director Zhang couldn't help but have a little bit of hope.

He had no other choice, they were the ones who failed to do their jobs. If the loop heat pipe problem wasn't fixed, the launch could be delayed by a year.

Their investment in this project was too big to fail now. Forget about punishing the people responsible for this failure... He had to do everything he could to remedy this situation!

Therefore, after Systems Director Zhang heard that Lu Zhou had a potential solution, he immediately called Academician Yuan Huanmin, the chief engineer of the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation. He then told his assistant to quickly arrange accommodation for these two gentlemen.

Systems Director Zhang was sitting in the passenger seat. Before they began driving toward the hotel, Systems Director Zhang looked back at Lu Zhou and said, "Professor Lu, what are you thinking? Can you tell me anything? I'll discuss with some experts and see if it's feasible..."

Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "I can't tell you the specifics now as it involves a new material that we are still researching and developing... Also, it's hard to say if it will work. We'll only know after testing it. Don't get your hopes up, I'm just trying my best."

When Systems Director Zhang heard that Lu Zhou planned on using a new material, he was both moved and worried.

He was thankful for Lu Zhou's generosity. As for why he was worried...

Of course he was worried.

Lu Zhou was taking materials out of the laboratory and directly applying it to an aerospace module. Anyone else would also be worried.

Systems Director Zhang stared at Lu Zhou with a painful look on his face.

"... Is this material reliable?"

Yang Xu, who was also sitting in the backseat, said, "Just don't ask any questions. We don't know if it's reliable or not yet."

Seeing how Lu Zhou had no intention of telling him anything, Systems Director Zhang decided to shut his mouth.

Lu Zhou closed his eyes and perfected his plan in his mind.

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In fact, the plan he came up with wasn't complicated. However, the preparation of the materials would take some time.

After Lu Zhou arrived at the hotel, he went straight to his hotel room. He called the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study and asked Brother Qian to prepare the materials that he needed.

Fortunately, the Institute of Computational Materials solved the preparation problem for the N-1 material!

In addition to having good mechanical properties such as high tensile and compressive strength, the N-1 carbon nanotube material also showed potential for thermal conductivity.

Lu Zhou used the Debris No.3 as a reference.

When he first dismantled the thruster, layers of damaged graphite were smeared on the messy pipes inside.

Some of the graphite came from the carbon-based computer chips. Lu Zhou was certain of this.

As for the other graphite, he thought that it was probably a layer of thermal coating.

The thermal conductivity of N-1 was tested to be as high as 200W/mK! It was an entire magnitude higher than that of copper and aluminum alloys!

If they used this material to connect the loop heat pipe to various overheating components, there was a chance it could solve the insufficient thermal conductivity problem.

Of course, they had to make some modifications.

For example, using the N-1 carbon nanotubes by itself wasn't possible. They had to perfectly combine the N-1 material and aluminum-copper alloy. They needed to plate a layer of copper on the outside of the N-1 material.

The process was actually very simple. They had to use chemical plating, which was commonly used for carbon based powders.

The surface of the plate had to first be sensitized with stannous chloride, then activated with palladium chloride, and finally, it had to be chemically plated

with a soluble copper salt by using formaldehyde as a reducing agent. There were many research articles that laid out this method.

Those at China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation were ecstatic.

They thought, Chief Designer Professor Lu came all the way to Tianjin to save the core module!

There is still hope!

After the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation heard about Lu Zhou's potential solution, they started to treat Lu Zhou and Yang Xu like gods.

Yang Xu was a little embarrassed at how nice they were treating him, and during dinner, he pulled Lu Zhou aside and talked to him privately.

"That method you talked about... Will it work?"

Lu Zhou thought for a bit and nodded.

"Probably."

Yang Xu: "Probably?"

Lu Zhou glanced at him.

"No sh*t, I haven't tried it before, how would I know?"

Yang Xu couldn't help but say, "This is the space station..."

Lu Zhou: "I know."

Yang Xu: "It costs at least a couple hundred million yuan, right?"

Lu Zhou: "Try adding a zero."

"What if we screw up?"

Lu Zhou looked at Yang Xu in the eyes.

"We won't."

Seeing how Lu Zhou was determined, Yang Xu knew he couldn't persuade Lu Zhou otherwise. He shook his head and decided to continue eating dinner.

He thought about it again, and when he remembered Lu Zhou was the chief designer of the Lunar Orbit Committee, he suddenly realized that his worries might have been unnecessary.

After dinner, Lu Zhou wanted to take a walk outside.

However, the people from the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation came to the hotel.

Academician Yuan and Vice President Zheng were there. Lu Zhou met them before in Beijing.

Lu Zhou waved and was about to talk to them, but Academician Yuan spoke first.

“You really found a way?!”

Lu Zhou was stunned by the old man's excitement. He paused for a second and said, “I'm not a hundred percent certain, but I can do my best.”

When Zheng Xiangdong heard that Lu Zhou wasn't totally certain, he immediately became nervous. He said, “Don't mess around! We can still fix this thing. What if the module becomes beyond repair? Who's going to bear this responsibility?”

Lu Zhou smiled at Vice President Zheng's aggressive tone. He then joked, “I don't know, who do you think is appropriate?”

Zheng Xiangdong was about to say something, but he swallowed his words. He then said, “Um, the blame won't be on you. Our company will find the person responsible for this.”

He suddenly remembered that Lu Zhou wasn't some chief consultant anymore; he was the chief engineer of the Lunar Orbit Committee!

That title came with a certain amount of power.

If anything, he was the one responsible...

Suddenly, he began to sweat.

Lu Zhou knew what Vice President Zheng was thinking, and he smiled as he replied, "The launch plan was approved a month ago. I don't want to postpone. My solution might seem hasty, but it's the only solution that can solve Moon Palace's cooling problem."

"If you really think I'm going to screw this thing up, I promise to pay back any damages."

Chapter 754: Cold welding

Academician Yuan immediately responded.

"Professor Lu, you have mistaken! The Moon Palace problem is our mistake, you came all the way here to help us, we are very grateful."

The old man stared at Zheng Xiangdong and hissed, "Shut up!"

Technically, chief engineer Yuan was below the "vice president".

However, Academician Yuan was a legendary figure in the aerospace industry. Even the president had a certain amount of respect for him, much less the newly promoted vice president.

Zheng Xiangdong's face turned bright red. He knew he had misspoken, so he lowered his head and smiled at Lu Zhou.

"Don't worry about the costs, I was afraid this would impact the country's aerospace industry. I hope Professor Lu can forgive me."

Lu Zhou smiled and didn't respond.

Even though he said he would pay back any damages, he was only kidding.

There was no way he would have to pay for anything.

Even if he did, there was no way Zheng Xiangdong would accept his money.

As for why?

Because all of the funding came from the state.

There was no reason for them to accept Lu Zhou's money.

Read more chapter on

Lu Zhou ignored Zheng Xiangdong. He looked at Academician Yuan and said, "If everything goes well, I can give you a conclusion in three days."

Academician Yuan paused for a second before saying solemnly, "Only three days? Is that enough time?"

Lu Zhou nodded his head.

"Three days is enough."

The required materials could be prepared by the Jinling Institute for Advanced Study in two days. The extra day was reserved for sending the materials from Jinling to Tianjin.

This was Lu Zhou's only idea. If this method didn't work, he could only wait for them to redesign the core module...

After Lu Zhou returned to his hotel room, he lay in bed and took out his phone. He opened his contacts list and called a phone number.

"Hello? Is this Academician Yang Zhongquan's office? Yes, it's Lu Zhou... Can you please ask Chief Engineer Yang if there are any cold welding experts at Shenyang Machine Tool?"

"Oh? I have to make an appointment? Well, tell him that it's about time for him to return the favor!"

...

Three days quickly went by.

A dozen or so individuals stood next to the core module, inside the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation warehouse.

An engineer was wandering around the warehouse. He was curious to see how Professor Lu would solve this problem.

Out of curiosity, Zhao Xianpu asked Sun Yuanpei, “What do you think Professor Lu is going to do?”

“I don’t know.”

“Didn’t you give him a tour last time?”

Sun Yuanpei: “I only gave him a tour, he didn’t tell me what he is going to do.”

“Then do you think he can solve it?”

Sun Yuanpei shook his head.

“Impossible, no one can solve it.”

“No one?”

“Yeah, if Tesla were alive, he’d call this madness.”

Zhao Xianpu paused for a second.

“What does this have to do with Tesla?”

Sun Yuanpei sighed and said, “Nothing, but he’s the godfather of engineering, right?”

Zhao Xianpu: “...”

Inside the core module.

With so many people watching, Academician Yang Zhongquan was nervous. He glanced at Lu Zhou anxiously.

“I’ve never dealt with aerospace equipment before, so I can’t guarantee anything.”

Lu Zhou rolled his eyes and said, “Couldn’t you have found a more experienced person then?”

*The f*ck?*

Yang Zhongquan nearly swore in Lu Zhou's face. With his eyes wide open, he said, "Oh, really now? Go and find someone in Shenyang Machine Tool that's more experienced than me. If you can, I'll eat an entire toolbox."

*F*ck sake!*

I came all the way here to help you fix this crap, yet you're complaining.

Lu Zhou coughed and said, "Forget about it, you still haven't eaten that machine tool yet..."

When Yang Zhongquan heard about the machine tool, he immediately calmed down and started to work.

"Where am I soldering? Hurry up, don't waste my time."

Lu Zhou smirked and unrolled the core module loop heat pipe blueprint. He then pointed to the red circles on the blueprint.

These were all locations where overheating were detected, mainly surrounding the central computer.

"Here, here, and here... All of these spots. I've already prepared the materials, so you just have to find a way to weld them."

Yang Zhongquan stared at the blueprint for a while. He frowned and rubbed his chin.

"Welding directly on the capillary structure? Carbon nanotubes powder? This is a bit interesting... If something goes wrong, how are we going to fix this?"

"Don't worry, nothing is going to go wrong. As long as you don't weld the capillaries together," Lu Zhou shook his head and said, "Just pretend this is a water pipe, weld a layer of this powder between the capillary structure and the overheating components."

Yuan Huanmin: "..."

Zheng Xiangdong: "..."

Systems Director Zhang: "..."

Engineers: "..."

“Okay then, I’ll try.” Yang Zhongquan scratched his head and said, “If something goes wrong, don’t blame me.”

“Don’t worry, just do what I say.”

With the cold welding tool in his hand, Chief Engineer Yang began to drill into the core module.

Academician Yuan was expressionless, while Systems Director Zhang looked at his watch from time to time. Vice President Zheng was nervous. Unfortunately, he couldn’t see what was happening inside.

The engineers extended their necks and tried to see what the man from Shenyang Machine Tool was doing.

As for Lu Zhou, his face was calm, but his palms were sweating.

Yang Xu wanted to say something, but he didn’t know what to say, so he shut his mouth and quietly waited.

Time quickly passed by, and soon, an hour had gone by.

Lu Zhou was about to fall asleep, but Chief Engineer Yang finally crawled out of the core module.

Lu Zhou wanted to ask how the welding was going. But before he could speak, Vice President Zheng Xiangdong spoke first.

“Everything is solved?”

Chief Engineer Yang smiled and said, “I don’t know if it’s solved, you’ll have to ask Professor Lu for that. I just did what he told me to do.”

“Thank you so much, Chief Engineer Yang!” Academician Yuan Huanmin looked at his assistant and said, “Prepare the vacuum chamber for experimentation!”

There was nothing left to discuss. All they had to do now was to test the damn thing.

“Yes, sir!”

The assistant nodded and ran off.

Chief Engineer Yang placed his cold welding tool back into the toolbox. He then nodded toward Lu Zhou.

Lu Zhou nodded back to him, as a show of thanks.

He did everything he could.

Now, he just had to wait for the results!

Chapter 755: Professor Lu Is Nuts!

The experiment soon began.

With help from the logistics vehicle, the core module was quickly sent to the vacuum chamber.

Academician Yuan Huanmin walked to the control console and nodded toward the engineer next to him, signaling the engineer to turn on the suction valve.

The air in the vacuum chamber was gradually being sucked out. The mechanical cantilever above the vacuum chamber slowly moved. With the four cables attached to the core module, the cantilever slowly lifted the entire module.

After the core module was stably lifted in the air, the engineer standing in front of the console looked at Academician Yuan and said, "Ready to begin the experiment!"

Academician Yuan nodded and ordered, "Begin the experiment!"

"Yes, sir!"

The antenna on the core module unfolded.

Various lights on the console began to light up.

"Core module central computer is turned on!"

“All chipsets are performing normally!”

“Looking at battery condition!”

“Battery is operating normally!”

“ ... ”

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Lu Zhou and the other engineers from the China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation stood in front of the floor-to-ceiling windows. They quietly waited for the experiment to finish.

Yang Xu, who was standing next to them, glanced at Lu Zhou’s face. He gulped and couldn’t help but admire Lu Zhou.

Jesus Christ, this is a hundred million yuan project. If this doesn’t go well, Lu Zhou is screwed.

I bet Professor Lu is the only person in the world that would be calm in a situation like this...

However, Yang Xu didn’t know that Lu Zhou was actually staring at the temperature-time graph on the console. Lu Zhou was secretly sweating bullets, but he remained calm on the outside.

However, this wasn’t Lu Zhou’s first time on the block.

This was nothing compared to the controllable fusion experiment. Hence, he was able to remain calm on the outside.

However, the senior executives from China Aerospace Science and Industry Corporation, especially Zheng Xiangdong, were sh*tting bricks. After all, they were supposed to be the people in charge of the Moon Palace program.

Back then, they were ecstatic to have this power, but they didn’t expect the project to turn on them. Zheng Xiangdong hadn’t had a good night’s sleep for nearly a week.

After staring at the temperature-time graph for a while, he finally whispered to Academician Yuan.

“Why do I feel like the curve is more volatile than before?”

*What the f*ck is happening, why do I feel like this is worse than before?!*

However, Academician Yuan Huanmin’s facial expression didn’t change. He simply explained, “This is normal, the material temperature environment is different.”

“Temperature environment?”

Academician Yuan, who was still staring at the screen, nodded and explained impatiently, “Yeah, last time the core module was cooled, this time it was placed into the vacuum chamber at room temperature. The starting temperature is already 20 degrees, of course the temperature is going to be different.”

Zheng Xiangdong said, “Then why didn’t we cool it this time?”

Academician Yuan was annoyed by the questions.

“Why do you have so many questions? What are you, nine years old?”

Zheng Xiangdong finally realized the old man was annoyed, and he replied awkwardly, “Never mind then.”

Systems Director Zhang stood next to them, gloating.

He never liked Vice President Zheng, so he was happy to see the old man chew him out.

But then again, anyone that asked questions during an experiment was quite annoying.

Time quickly passed by, and the experiment had already gone on for almost 20 minutes.

Lu Zhou stared at the temperature-time graph and suddenly tilted his head. He spoke to Yang Xu.

“13 Celsius.”

Yang Xu paused for a second.

“What?”

Lu Zhou smiled and said, “Let’s make a bet. When the timer reaches 30 minutes, the temperature will be exactly 13.5 Celsius, plus or minus 0.5 Celsius. When the timer reaches 60 minutes, the temperature will be 14.7 Celsius, plus or minus 1 Celsius.”

Yang Xu stared at the volatile curve and frowned.

*F*ck sake...*

What is this?

The stock market?

As the director of the Institute of Computational Materials, he was quite mathematically talented. He was a big name in the materials science field. However, he had no idea where the graph was trending toward, much less making a prediction.

He couldn’t believe that Lu Zhou could predict the temperature!

Therefore, he replied without hesitation, “No bets! Gambling is illegal!”

Lu Zhou replied, “Let’s just bet on a bowl of rice and barbecued meat.”

Yang Xu: “... No need to bet, I’ll buy you the rice bowl.”

It was just one rice bowl anyway. He didn’t want to bet at all.

“Boring.”

Seeing how uncertain Yang Xu was, Lu Zhou shook his head and sighed.

It was obvious that the experiment was successful, so there was no reason to continue.

Even if the entire core module worked at a 100% load for 30 days, the temperature would still stay under 21 Celsius.

They couldn’t take into account external factors such as radiation and sunlight. However, according to experimental data, it should be OK.

Lu Zhou was about to leave when Academician Yang Zhongquan raised his eyebrows and said, "You're not going to wait for the experiment to finish? If this thing burns to a crisp, you still have to pay."

Lu Zhou didn't look back. He shook his head and replied, "There's no reason to stay since I already know what the result will be."

After that, he walked out of the laboratory door.

As the researcher standing next to the door watched Lu Zhou leave, he was muddled. Academician Yuan, on the other hand, was too focused on the screen, and he didn't even notice that Lu Zhou left...

Yang Xu contemplated for a second and decided not to leave with Lu Zhou.

He didn't believe that Lu Zhou's mathematical abilities allowed him to predict the future value of a volatile curve. He wanted to stay behind and see how far off Lu Zhou would be.

He quietly waited for 10 minutes. When the curve went up and down, Yang Xu felt like his heartbeat almost synchronized with the curve.

The moment the experiment reached 30 minutes, someone spoke excitedly.

"Temperature is at 286.69 Kelvin! The temperature-time curve is stable!"

286.69K!

Yang Xu's eyes were wide open.

That's 13.54 Celsius!

*F*ck!*

Nearly on the dot!

Jesus... Is he even human?

The data could be clearly seen on the big console screen.

The crowd looked at the data presented on the temperature-time function curve, and everyone's eyes were wide open. The engineers from the lunar space station project burst into cheers and began to hug each other.

Sun Yuanpei stood in front of the floor-to-ceiling windows and looked at the core module suspended in the vacuum chamber. His lips were trembling, and tears were rolling down his face.

We did it!

We actually did it!

This is like a dream...

Zhao Xianpu grabbed his arm and shook it excitedly.

“There is still hope for the Moon Palace! Professor Lu is nuts! He actually did it!”

The overly-excited engineer even began to stutter.

Sun Yuanpei, whose arm was still being shaken, nodded and began to choke up.

“Y-Yeah... Professor Lu is nutty!”

Oh my God!

Even though Zheng Xiangdong didn't know what the curve on the screen meant, he could tell from the laboratory's atmosphere that this was good news. He quickly pulled Academician Yuan aside and asked him, “What's happening? Is it fixed? Is the problem fixed?”

This time, Academician Yuan wasn't annoyed.

While staring at the screen, the old man spoke in disbelief.

“It's going very well...”

It wasn't just going very well.

It was going unbelievably well!

He turned around and tried to look for Lu Zhou.

There was only one thing he wanted to know. Which was how exactly did Lu Zhou improve the cooling system by an order of magnitude without changing the loop heat pipe design...

However, when he tried to look for Lu Zhou, he realized that...

Where is he?

Where did he go?