

The People's God: Sacrificing Trillions to Ascend

[1,122 words]

Chapter 601 - Split Up

As the mechanical bees mapped the sewers, Kerry projected the map for everyone to see. The display appeared as a three-dimensional model rather than a flat schematic.

"I've programmed the bees to send an alert the moment they encounter a living life form," Kerry explained.

Han Wu gave her a thumbs-up in appreciation of her thoroughness.

The map continued to fill in, but several paths stopped updating. As minutes passed, more paths remained incomplete. In less than five minutes, every mechanical bee lost its signal.

Kerry frowned and ran several diagnostic codes through the beehive to review the bees' last footage. The recordings showed mechanical mice, roughly thirty centimeters long, charging at them to tear them apart or strike them with their mechanical tails before destroying them. The footage confirmed that the mechanical mice were the culprits.

"It seems that we'll have to explore ourselves," Han Wu said.

To improve their efficiency, they split into four teams. Han Wu teamed up with Luxun, Kerry took two automatons from her Black Rose Squad, Akanzor paired with one automaton, and Bart led another.

Kerry also gave each team a mechanical beehive. They could receive signals from the mechanical bees and display the map of the areas they had explored. After everything was set in place, the four teams moved out.

Han Wu and Luxun chose a path and soon heard the sound of mechanical mice. He used his senses and detected a mechanical mouse about twenty centimeters long, with a tail stretching nearly two meters. Its trajectory left no doubt that it was heading straight for him.

The distance slowly closed from a hundred meters to ten meters before the mouse finally came into view. It was baring its steel front teeth and charging at Han Wu.

Han Wu raised his left arm and activated Cable Form. His five fingers transformed into thick cables that snapped through the air. He then activated Lightning Whip. A surge of electricity flooded his arm, and the five electrified cables lashed about with violent force.

The mechanical mouse shattered under the assault and exploded into different parts. One Energy Part and one chip drifted free from its ruined body.

Han Wu waved his hand, and both items floated toward him. He stored the Energy Part in Luxun and checked the chip.

[Level 1 chip: Whip]

After appraising it, he realized that it had an 85% compatibility rating with his left arm. He equipped it and finally understood the EX rating's importance. Machines or automatons with the EX rating could equip compatible chips without restriction on number or level.

Han Wu delved deeper and discovered more mechanical mice. At first there had only been one, but now he faced fifty. Still, he didn't retreat. Lightning Whip consumed too much energy, so he relied on Whip instead. Even though it was slower and had a smaller radius, it conserved energy and could easily handle large groups of mechanical mice at the same time.

He wasn't alone either. His supporting automaton, Luxun, fought alongside him. It fired Laser Blasts and eliminated many mechanical mice on its own.

Their progress was smooth. As they destroyed more mechanical mice, they accumulated increasing numbers of Energy Parts and chips. Luxun could store large amounts of energy but not items. Han Wu had to merge those items to increase their quality and reduce the strain on Luxun.

Unexpectedly, Luxun showed interest in the merged Energy Parts and autonomously sent a request to Han Wu. "Discovered new Energy Parts that can be replaced. Replace?"

Han Wu considered the request. Since Luxun was his own machine, replacing its parts would strengthen his own power too. Hence, he agreed.

After replacing those parts, Luxun showed no visible changes. Han Wu didn't mind and assumed the effects would not appear immediately. He then focused on merging the other chips into three basic forms: Whip, Bite, and Rapid Walk.

Only Whip was compatible with the Machine God's left arm. After merging them, Whip had advanced from Level 1 to Level 4. While the movement speed hadn't changed much, its power and speed had increased rapidly.

Satisfied, Han Wu decided to gather more Whip chips and raise its level even higher. He looked forward to seeing just how destructive it could become.

He continued advancing and reached another fork in the road. He expanded his senses, but something dampened them, much like in the Steel Forest. He could only extend his senses up to a hundred-meter radius.

The sewers were three-dimensional, which allowed Han Wu to sense activity fifty meters above and below his position. It also helped him in locating Ji Zhongyi faster.

As he ventured deeper, the true terror of the place became clear. Unlike the Steel Forest, which teemed with machines and steel trees that actively attacked him, this area contained only mechanical mice with simple attacking patterns. Nonetheless, this was still a restricted zone. The mechanical mice were weak, but their numbers were overwhelming.

Han Wu felt a huge swarm surging through the tunnels below him. Mechanical mice covered every inch of the passage. Anyone with trypophobia would have died on the spot. Even for Han Wu, this scene ranked among the most disturbing he had encountered.

Another problem followed immediately. Just a hundred meters away, he sensed a massive ball composed of tens of thousands of mechanical mice barreling toward him. The force driving it down the path was no joke. Getting struck by it would be like being hit by a solid steel ball.

Han Wu knew he could not handle it head-on, and he quickly chose to run away. Someone else could deal with it, but not him. He ran backward, searching for a fork in the path that would let him avoid the oncoming mass.

As he moved, he checked the beehive's map and soon found a path where he could hide. He slipped inside, and the rolling mass passed by moments later without causing any damage.

Han Wu let out a breath of relief. He had barely stepped back onto the path when he heard voices coming from the fork ahead. He assumed that they were hunters and decided to eavesdrop on them.

"That idiot really stole the Mechmouse King. If he follows the map the bishop gave him, he should reach the core in half a day."

"As long as his Mechmouse King attacks the core, it will awaken the guardian. Then we will have a good show to watch."

Han Wu's expression turned serious. He had heard of the Mechmouse King before. It shared the same name as the machine that Ji Dezhu's son had stolen.

It seems that things have become interesting, Han Wu thought.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,126 words]

Chapter 602 - Machine God Cult

Han Wu stepped out from his hiding spot. When they heard him, the four hunters panicked and decided to kill him just in case he had overheard.

“Sorry, but you only have your own bad luck to blame,” one hunter said before ordering his A-rated mechanical tiger to attack.

The mechanical tiger charged at Han Wu with its jaws wide open.

Han Wu stood unmoving. Seeing this, the four hunters assumed their abrupt attack had caught him off guard. The group mocked Han Wu, acting as if his death was a foregone conclusion.

“*Hahaha*, young man, you could’ve survived if you just stayed hidden.”

“I’ve never seen someone this stupid before.”

“Someone this stupid should’ve died a long time ago.”

Suddenly, an incredible scene unfolded, interrupting their chatter. Han Wu had grabbed the pouncing tiger by its open maw with his bare hands!

Creaking metal echoed as Han Wu pried the mechanical tiger’s jaw further open. Broken gears clattered from its mouth. Its jaw split open, tearing down its body until the entire thing ripped in half with a loud crack. Explosions rocked the body of the mechanical tiger as it was destroyed.

“How can this be?” the owner of the mechanical tiger muttered in disbelief.

The others were equally shocked. They had never seen a life form destroy a heavy machine like the mechanical tiger with their bare hands before. Was the person before them actually an automaton?

Han Wu stepped forward. The four hunters immediately took a step back, preparing to escape. Unfortunately for them, they were simply no match for Han Wu’s power and speed.

Chuckling, Han Wu swung his left arm into five cables. Four of the cables ensnared the hunters, but before they were captured, they managed to release mechanical beasts to attack Han Wu.

The last remaining cable made quick work of the beasts with Lightning Whip. The four hunters were out of luck.

“What do you want? We can give you all the money we have on us!” one of the hunters bluffed.

“I overheard something about an idiot bringing a Mechmouse King toward the core of the Lightless Sewers. I’m interested in that.”

The four hunters turned serious.

“In that case, you should know that we’re from the Machine God Cult,” threatened a hunter. “Let us go, and we’ll pretend that nothing has happened, or the Machine God Cult will kill you.”

“I really have to admire your stupidity. Think carefully about your predicament,” Han Wu said, unleashing a surge of electricity through the cable holding the hunter who had threatened him.

The smell of sizzling flesh filled the air. Fear painted the faces of the other three hunters.

“Now, who’s going to tell me what I need to know?” Han Wu waved the fifth cable menacingly before the hunters, but they still refused to talk.

Chuckling darkly, he pierced one through to his stomach with the cable, rotating it inside and eviscerating the organ. The hunter was in agony, but there wasn’t anything he could do.

Han Wu had many ways of inducing excruciating pain without killing his subjects. Seeing this, the other two cultists decisively bit into the poison capsules hidden in their mouths. When Han Wu realized what they were doing, he immediately tried to stop them, but it was too late.

The Machine God Cult was more dangerous than he thought. He had not expected them to implant poison capsules into their followers just to protect their secrets. Their doings were equivalent to an evil cult already.

Fortunately, the two remaining cult members had been incapacitated before they could do the same. After removing the poison capsules from their mouths, he continued his interrogation.

It took employing various forms of torture, but eventually, one of the hunters relented and told him everything about the plan of the Machine God Cult. In exchange, he requested that Han Wu grant him the mercy of death. Han Wu complied and electrocuted him to death.

The last remaining cult member was unconscious. Deciding to leave him alive, he ordered Luxun to carry the unconscious hunter with him to find the core of the Lightless Sewers.

Han Wu also managed to get an electronic copy of the Lightless Sewers' map. Conveniently, it had the path to the core highlighted.

As he walked, he made sure to destroy every mechanical mouse he encountered, accumulating lower-level chips and upgrading his Whip chip to level 7. Whip now caused the air itself to split with each hit. It was even more powerful when combined with Lightning Whip. Han Wu was like a living blender.

After passing through several areas guarded by the mechanical mice, he finally reached the area marked on the map.

There was nothing there. Not even Ji Zhongyi.

Glancing around, Han Wu noticed some fresh scratch marks on the wall. Closer investigation led him to discover a hidden door.

Han Wu shoved hard at the door, but it didn't budge. Activating his Divine Ring, he used the Pressure Form to imbue his left fist with great force. He struck the hidden door with the combined strength of the left arm of the Machine God and the incredible pressure from his Divine Ring.

The hidden door crumbled apart, revealing a dark corridor behind it.

Light scuffs marked the edges of the entrance. The Mechmouse King had likely left them behind while it was moving. The map didn't record anything past the hidden door, so Han Wu had to rely on these marks to show him the way forward.

After walking for three km and successfully clearing over twenty hidden mechanisms, the corridor widened into a plaza. At the end of the plaza was a massive core. The familiar presence of the Machine God could be sensed inside the core. Part of its will had been sealed within. Han Wu was about to break it when he heard mechanical footsteps behind him.

"You shouldn't be here," Ji Zhongyi warned, riding the Mechmouse King. The Mechmouse King was similar to the regular mechanical mice, but at least ten times larger. Its swinging metal tail left light scuffs on the stone floor.

“I should be the one saying that. Your father is waiting anxiously outside for someone to rescue you,” Han Wu said, taking out Ji Dezhu’s request form for Ji Zhongyi to read.

The Mechmouse King used its tail to tear the paper to shreds. “That old man doesn’t understand me. I have ambitions that would take me far from here, but he’s only keen on taking care of that little shop! He’s not my father!”

Han Wu scoffed, left arm silently shifting to Cable Form. *Perhaps I should teach him a lesson in Ji Dezhu’s stead.*

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Chapter 603 - Because You’re an Idiot!

[1,063 words]

Chapter 603 - Because You’re an Idiot!

Han Wu activated Lightning Whip. The five cables danced like wild snakes, electricity arcing between them. Ji Zhongyi’s Mechmouse King avoided it deftly as it attacked Han Wu.

This was Han Wu’s first time seeing a mechanical device with this level of dexterity. It was as if he were fighting a seasoned warrior rather than a machine. This thoroughly piqued Han Wu’s interest.

The Mechmouse King whipped its steel tail at him. A single lash caused explosions in the air—a testament to its power.

Ji Zhongyi oozed confidence. In his eyes, a biological life form could never compete against a machine. He was already looking forward to splitting Han Wu in half. With Han Wu dead, there would be no one to stop him from proceeding with his plan.

Unexpectedly, Han Wu didn’t dodge the attack but instead caught it with his right hand. A metal tail, capable of turning stone into dust, failed to even scratch Han Wu!

Han Wu pulled on the tail. The Mechmouse King was dragged forward. Its claws left deep grooves on the stone floor as it vainly attempted to resist.

Ji Zhongyi’s face paled as if he had seen a ghost. *Is he really human? Who’s really the automaton here?*

Han Wu yanked harder before abruptly swinging the Mechmouse King away. Ji Zhongyi fell off it and onto the ground. Though winded from the pain, he forced himself to stand up and run. Han Wu's cables were already too close for comfort.

"You think you can run?" Han Wu chuckled, lashing his cables at Ji Zhongyi.

Whip cracks echoed through the plaza. Five lines of blood flowed out from Ji Zhongyi's back as he fell to the ground with an agonized cry. He had never felt this kind of pain in his life.

Han Wu whipped him ten more times in succession, taking great pleasure in teaching him a lesson. "This one is to remind you to use your brain. This one is to remind you to respect your elders. This one is to remind you not to help traitors. This one is to remind you that..."

By the end, Ji Zhongyi's body was a bloody mess, and he couldn't even groan in pain. He shot Han Wu a vicious glare, but Han Wu only whipped him again.

"It seems you're not satisfied yet. Want me to beat you up again?" Han Wu threatened.

Ji Zhongyi shook his head with a wince of pain, no longer daring to glare. With Ji Zhongyi subdued, Han Wu proceeded with his true mission.

"Now, look closely at what would've happened to you if I weren't here," Han Wu lectured, gesturing for Luxun to bring the captured hunter over.

The hunter was still unconscious, but that didn't stop Han Wu from smacking him awake. The hunter blearily spat out several bloody teeth. Terror filled Ji Zhongyi at the realization that Han Wu had just smashed the guy's teeth in with just a punch.

When the hunter regained his senses, he panicked. He recognized this place.

"I'm a believer of the Machine God..." the hunter mumbled.

Han Wu couldn't quite make out his words, so he simply slapped the hunter again—breaking the rest of his teeth—before commanding him to shut up.

The toothless hunter could only swallow the blood in his mouth in silence.

Then, turning to Ji Zhongyi, Han Wu asked, "What did they ask you to do?"

"They told me to ride the Mechmouse King into the core and bring out the treasure hidden within," Ji Zhongyi hastily replied, terrified of getting his teeth smacked out of him as well. "They promised to pay me 10 million Enercoins and give me the project to install the conveyor belt here in the Lightless Sewers in exchange."

Han Wu frowned at him before glancing at the Mechmouse King. “Do you know why they told you to do this, instead of other, more experienced hunters?”

Ji Zhongyi hesitantly shook his head.

“It’s because you’re an idiot! They don’t need you; they need the Mechmouse King. Also, there’s no treasure in the core. They used you.”

Ji Zhongyi swallowed the protests on the tip of his tongue. His aching body warned him not to go against Han Wu.

Han Wu was aware of Ji Zhongyi’s thoughts and looked forward to proving it to him. “Don’t believe me? Let me show you what would happen if you’d followed their instructions.”

Dragging the Mechmouse King closer, he commanded the hunter to sit on it. The hunter knew what would happen to him and vehemently refused.

“Do as I say,” Han Wu warned. “You might die, but at least you’ll die swiftly. If not, I can guarantee you a slow and painful death. Choose.”

The hunter despaired. Reluctantly sitting on the Mechmouse King, he commanded it forward.

The Mechmouse King slowly inched toward the core. When it was just a step away, it did something that even Han Wu couldn’t comprehend: it turned to look at Ji Zhongyi. It was a strangely sentient act.

Then, facing forward once more, the Mechmouse King entered the core. Three seconds later, a blaring siren sounded from the sewers, and swarms of mechanical mice converged in the plaza from the various corridors.

Han Wu tossed Ji Zhongyi onto Luxun so he wouldn’t die from the stampede. Surprisingly, the mechanical mice didn’t attack them but instead charged at the core.

They swiftly detonated themselves, but even a million explosions did nothing. A massive python-like being emerged from the core. Clamped in its maw was half a corpse and a metal tail.

Ji Zhongyi’s face was ashen. If he had entered the core, that corpse would be his. The Machine God Cult had tricked him! Though furious, there was nothing Ji Zhongyi could do to vent his anger. It didn’t matter if the Machine God Cult had tricked him. He was simply too weak to do anything against them.

Han Wu, on the other hand, was delighted at the sight of the giant mechanical python. He could clearly sense the Machine God's presence within it!

“The main character is here.” Han Wu grinned. “Time to hunt.”

Activating his Divine Ring, he transformed into the Black Dragon King to attack the giant mechanical python.

Ji Zhongyi watched the ensuing fight while tied to Luxun, his heart filled with awe.

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[1,085 words]

Chapter 604 - BD-02 Jumen

Han Wu collided head-on with the mechanical python. As a World life form, he was far superior to the mechanical python. Within three minutes, he crushed the python’s core.

The massive python fell limply onto the water as beams of light shot upward from its frame. Most of them resolved into Energy Parts, but four shone brighter than the others. One took the form of a flame and flew toward Han Wu, burning into his right arm.

Han Wu was already used to this. Once the fire died out, he checked the data of his right arm. The Machine God’s right arm was also rated EX, though its effects remained unknown.

This was the second part of the Machine God. He then collected the three remaining lights. The first two were chips.

[Level 10 chip: Snake King Black Mamba. After equipping, grants the user the ability to transform into the Snake King Black Mamba and assume a giant mechanical snake body.]

[Level 10 chip: Mouse King Pika. After equipping, grants the user the ability to transform into the Mouse King Pika and gain the ability to create and control mechanical mice.]

The chips came from the two mechanical beasts. Han Wu had no interest in turning his right arm into a mechanical beast. If he ever chose such a transformation, it would require a chip to transform his right arm into a Great Dragon at minimum.

Both Black Mamba and Pika were powerful entities in the Lawless Civilization, but they weren’t anything special to Han Wu. He stored the chips and turned his attention to the final treasure, a blueprint. It recorded a machine similar to BD-04 Luxun, designated BD-02 Jumen. As for its function, Han Wu wouldn’t know until he built it.

He stored the blueprint and collected the Energy Parts. He then merged many similar parts and replaced Luxun's existing parts with them.

He continued swapping parts until a change finally occurred. The level of its additional function, Multi-chip, increased by two, from Level 20 to Level 22. One would think that the increase was minor, but Han Wu understood its importance. The upgrade allowed Luxun to equip two more additional chips and opened a path for further enhancement.

Han Wu scanned his surroundings, found nothing else of value, and prepared to leave.

Ji Zhongyi was still bound to Luxun as he brought him out. Along the way, Ji Zhongyi did everything he could to flatter and praise Han Wu. This didn't stem from a fondness for being beaten, but from genuine admiration for Han Wu's strength.

Meanwhile, Han Wu paid him little attention. If not for Ji Dezhu's request, he would have abandoned Ji Zhongyi in the sewers forever.

That indifference only drew Ji Zhongyi in further. He told himself that this was how a powerful master should behave. The others he had encountered before amounted to nothing more than weaklings. None of them could tear a mechanical beast apart with bare hands or transform into a monster and crush one outright. He swore that he would become Han Wu's disciple and learn how to tear mechanical beasts apart with his bare hands.

Han Wu could easily read his thoughts. His only goal was to deliver Ji Zhongyi to Ji Dezhu and complete the mission. Ji Dezhu would then honor their contract and provide information about the Nanite Mythril.

With the Nanite Mythril, he could forge the chip needed to execute Stellar Plunder. That would accelerate his growth by a significant margin. He was already looking forward to becoming stronger.

He sent a signal to the three teams. After a brief hesitation, they responded. Everyone regrouped at a fork in the sewers, and each team returned with a substantial haul.

The group saw Han Wu return empty-handed with an injured boy bound to Luxun.

Han Wu handed the blueprint he retrieved to Kerry. "Ms. Kerry, can you create this?"

Kerry was an expert mechanic and studied the blueprint with fervent interest. Five hours later, she told him that she could construct the automaton, but they didn't have the necessary parts here. Their best option was to return to Ji Dezhu's shop to purchase the required materials.

After agreeing, they headed out of the Lightless Sewers. Back in the plaza, many hunters still wandered about, unaware that the Lightless Sewer had been dominated.

Ji Dezhu had been standing near the entrance the entire day. The moment he saw his son, he rushed over. Alarm filled Ji Dezhu when he noticed the extent of his son's injuries. Ji Zhongyi had entered unscathed, so what had happened inside?

"My son, are you hurt? Let me find you some medicine."

"Old fart, stop touching my wounds! This is the bond between me and my master," Ji Zhongyi said proudly.

Ji Dezhu opened his mouth to respond, but no words came.

Han Wu stepped in. "Since your son has been saved, let's talk about our payment..."

Ji Dezhu quickly stopped him from saying anything else. "Wait. Let's discuss this once we are back. I am a man of my word, and I will tell you what you need to know."

Han Wu nodded. "What a coincidence. We have many items that we need to sell off too."

He patted the bags that Akanzor and the rest were carrying. They had brought a large quantity of chips and Energy Parts with them.

Ji Dezhu carried Ji Zhongyi in his arms and led the group back to his home. As the owner of a small shop, he wasn't filthy rich, but he never worried about food or shelter. He arranged the guest room for them to rest.

Kerry, however, was a maniac when it came to machines. She refused to sleep until she constructed BD-02 Jumen today.

Ji Dezhu had no choice but to help Kerry gather and sort every Energy Part she required.

Constructing BD-02 Jumen required numerous Energy Parts. Ji Dezhu didn't have some of the parts and had to purchase them from other shops at high prices.

Once the materials were assembled, Kerry started constructing it. She proceeded with meticulous care and completed each step until the work was finished.

A new supporting automaton came into existence. A blinding light filled the room as Jumen activated, following the same process that Luxun had used to recognize its owner.

Han Wu placed his finger into the small hole. After absorbing his blood, BD-02 Jumen activated, revealing its complete range of functions to him.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[1,138 words]

Chapter 605 - Ji Dezhu's Past

[BD-02 Jumen]

[Automaton Rating: EX]

[Function: Spatial Storage]

[Additional Function: Multi-Chip (0/20, Can equip chips up to Level 10)]

Han Wu was ecstatic as he read Jumen's data. He had finally obtained a function that he needed: Spatial Storage. Due to the Lawless Civilization that is cut off from the other spaces, he couldn't connect to his Divine Realm, so he had to carry everything on him in a backpack, which had grown tiresome.

Now everything had changed. He could store his belongings inside Jumen's interior space, which would make the rest of his journey easier. Even so, he faced a dilemma over which chip to equip on Jumen.

Han Wu took out the Level 10 Black Mamba and Level 10 Pika chips. Both were excellent choices. Equipping either one on Jumen would grant it the ability to change into a mechanical beast. It would also turn Jumen into a mechanical mount for travel. The benefits were undeniable.

Yet he couldn't decide between them. As he hesitated, he noticed Ji Dezhu staring intently at the chips in his hand. Ji Dezhu's initial surprise soon gave way to helplessness, mixed with a trace of hope.

"Young man, this may sound improper, but I would like to ask whether you would sell the chip in your hand. I am willing to exchange it for other powerful chips," Ji Dezhu said.

Han Wu could tell that Ji Dezhu didn't want to part with the Mouse King Pika chip.

"This is the Mouse King chip, and it's special," Han Wu said. "Once equipped and as long as sufficient raw materials are available, it can create mechanical mice with different functions, and even control them. With this chip, I could create an army of mechanical mice. Can you really put a price on something like that?"

Ji Dezhu felt a surge of bitterness. He understood the chip's value better than anyone, since the Mechmouse King had been his mechanical beast. If his son hadn't stolen it, the chip wouldn't have fallen into Han Wu's hands.

"I am willing to pay any price, no matter how steep," Ji Dezhu said.

Han Wu nodded. "Fine. Show me how much you are willing to part with. If your offer satisfies me, I will exchange it with you."

Ji Dezhu returned to his room and soon emerged with an intricately crafted box. A conflicted expression crossed his face as he opened it. Inside lay five chips, each one extremely powerful.

[Level 10 chip: Adaptive Arsenal. Contains a structure with 100 different barrels recorded in it. When equipped to an automaton, it can transform to match the required weapon configuration.]

[Level 10 chip: Bullet Time. When equipped to an automaton, it can activate Bullet Time, increasing reaction speed by a factor of 100.]

[Level 10 chip: Explosive Ape King. When equipped to an automaton, it enables transformation into the Explosive Ape King, granting powerful explosive power.]

[Level 10 chip: Weapon Manufacture. When equipped to an automaton, it can manufacture various weapons, provided sufficient materials are available.]

[Level 10 chip: Gaia Hammer. When equipped to an automaton, it can transform into the Gaia Hammer, unleashing absolute destructive power.]

Han Wu immediately recognized that none of the five chips were inferior to the Mouse King Pika. Yet Ji Dezhu was willing to exchange these chips for Pika. The offer stirred Han Wu's curiosity, and he assumed that there was a secret to it. What had happened to Ji Zhongyi only sharpened his interest in Ji Dezhu's identity. He didn't believe that an ordinary shop owner could possess such a powerful mechanical beast.

The Lightless Sewers teemed with mechanical mice. Could they truly be unrelated to the Mechmouse King? I don't think so, Han Wu thought.

"Boss Ji, I understand your intentions after you showed willingness to exchange so many powerful chips," Han Wu said. "But I'm quite greedy. I want to exchange all five chips for the Mechmouse King."

Ji Dezhu's face flushed with anger. He would have attacked him if he hadn't been holding onto the Pika chip.

“However!” Han Wu suddenly shouted. “I’m more interested in your past. If you tell me your story, I might lower my demands and settle for a single chip.”

A strange light flickered in Ji Dezhu’s eyes. “I’m just an old man. What kind of story could I have? You must be joking.”

Han Wu chuckled. “In that case, I won’t change my mind. You should carefully consider your options.”

Ji Dezhu remained silent for an entire minute before speaking again. “Since you are so interested in the past of an old man, I don’t mind sharing some of it. Also, it’s technically connected to the information you need about the Nanite Mythrill.”

Both Han Wu and Kerry immediately focused their attention on him. Han Wu quickly told Kerry to build a lie detector on the spot, so they could detect any falsehoods in Ji Dezhu’s story.

Ji Dezhu put on the lie detector calmly and recounted his past. In his youth, he hadn’t been an old shop owner but a powerful hunter who ventured into the restricted zones.

He served as the leader, with five members under his command. As he spoke of them, his gaze dropped to the small, intricately crafted chest.

Han Wu realized that the five chips inside were once owned by those five companions, which sharpened his interest even further.

Ji Dezhu continued, “I was still young, and the six of us were full of ambition. We wanted to become stronger and leave the Lawless Civilization to explore the world beyond. The seven restricted zones were our goals.

“In one of them, the Weeping Mines, we discovered a vein of Nanite Mythrill and managed to mine a single unit. We were celebrating our success when another hunter group found us. They were strong. They defeated us and nearly wiped us out so they could seize the mine.

“I used the Mechmouse King to control millions of mechanical mice and bought my team a chance to escape. Afterward, we learned that those hunters were from the Machine God Cult, a fanatical group that worships the Machine God. Their goal is to revive the Machine God and turn every life form here into machines.

“The Machine God Cult had infiltrated every corner of that place. Through slander and manipulation, they branded us as evil bandits who had stolen their treasure. That made it increasingly difficult for us to operate.

“We had no choice but to hide in this small city. We were waiting for the situation to calm down before resuming our exploration. To survive, we usually hunted the automatons in the Lightless Sewers.

“Back then, the automatons infesting the Lightless Sewers weren’t mechanical mice. They were mechanical snakes!”

The revelation surprised Han Wu.

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[1,074 words]

Chapter 607 - The Weeping Mines

Han Wu left Ji Dezhu’s family that day. Upon discovering this, Ji Zhongyi flew into a rage at his father for hindering his path to success. Ji Dezhu grabbed the titanium feather duster and gave his son a lesson filled with love.

After a thorough beating, he then informed Ji Zhongyi of his plan. They were going to pack up and move to another city, as far away from the Machine God Cult’s influence as they could manage.

Ji Zhongyi simply couldn’t understand his father’s actions and wallowed over the misfortune of having a cowardly father. Having previously overheard their conversation, he was aware that Han Wu was heading for the Weeping Mines, and he silently vowed to seek out his master once his wounds had healed.

Meanwhile, Han Wu had arrived at their next restricted zone: the Weeping Mines.

This area was a stark contrast to the lively and populous city they were in before. For one, the bulk of the land was taken up by the mines. For another, the main workforce here wasn’t hunters but miners.

Though experienced and well-equipped for mining, the miners weren’t trained in combat, so they would often employ hunters to protect them from automatons in the mines. Including himself, Han Wu’s team had four biological life forms and four automatons. This was considered to be a small team of hunters here at the Weeping Mines.

Most miners wouldn’t hire such a small team unless they were either extremely strapped for money or were looking to conduct a large-scale mining operation with a larger workforce and had to hire multiple groups of hunters as security guards.

The lack of spatial storage equipment here meant the miners and hunters had to work together with large machinery to transport the heavy ores out of the mine.

Han Wu didn't have that trouble. Jumen had plenty of internal storage space, and supplying it with more energy would only increase that space. Kerry's automatons could mine easily, and if necessary, Han Wu didn't mind getting an alloy pickaxe to work away.

With his physical strength, he could easily mine out any ore he could find. Thus, they decided to purchase some mining equipment and head down into one of the mines. The Weeping Mines were worse than the Lightless Sewers.

The terrain seemed to differ with every step, making it difficult to walk normally. Some areas were wide enough to fit five men walking side by side, while others were so narrow that even Kerry's automatons couldn't fit through. Akanzor had to excavate the tunnel so that everyone could pass.

Most of the ores on the outer edge had already been mined, and anything left was largely regular ores of little value.

As Han Wu's team delved deeper, they passed several other teams of miners. Even though they didn't talk, Han Wu could tell that they were wary of them, as if expecting to be robbed.

The rules of the Lawless Civilization meant this was very much viable, and Han Wu even considered the idea. However, the teams they encountered only managed to mine some regular ore, nothing worth the effort to steal. Han Wu would only act if he found something that piqued his interest.

They found better ores the further down they delved. Some of the ores they uncovered were exceedingly rare, sold by the gram in the Divine Civilization. Han Wu mined them before placing them in Jumen's Spatial Storage.

The oppressive cave easily invoked the worst emotions in people, especially the more aggressive hunters. One day, they were mining and searching for Nanite Mythril as per usual, when a group of hunters entered the range of Han Wu's senses. He pretended not to notice them and continued mining away.

The hunters attacked without warning, aiming their guns at Han Wu's team while their four mechanical beasts pounced forward. At the same time, they noticed Kerry and her automatons' figures and decided to act on their lust.

"Listen to our commands, or we'll blow your heads off!" the lead hunter threatened as he tried to pull Kerry to his side.

It had been a while since he had tasted a living lady, especially one as beautiful as her. The four automatons could be given to his brothers to pass around.

But Kerry wasn't going to cooperate so easily, and she didn't hesitate to fire her gun. Her revolver was fast and could regenerate bullets, so she didn't have to worry about running out.

"You stupid bitch. You dare fight back? Everyone, bomb them to bits!" the lead hunter shouted.

No one responded.

Turning around, he saw a cable skewering through his underlings, leaving their bodies dangling in the air.

Han Wu appeared silently beside the lead hunter and gently tapped his shoulder with his right hand. The hunter nearly shot himself in his fright.

"Don't move. I'll kill you soon enough, but before I do, I have some questions."

"You bastard, die!" The hunter frantically squeezed the trigger to unload a hail of bullets onto Han Wu.

Han Wu merely raised his right arm to snatch the bullets out of the air and toss them aside.

The clanging of bullets hitting the ground echoed like death in the hunter's ears. He had never heard of anyone catching bullets with their bare hands before. Han Wu took advantage of the hunter's shock to grab his gun and break it apart.

"Now, answer my questions," Han Wu said quietly, the threat clear in his voice.

The hunter nodded in a daze.

"You guys—"

Groans interrupted Han Wu's interrogation. The hunters he had killed before had suddenly come back to life! Their heads swiveled forward, revealing stainless steel teeth. Their empty eye sockets shone red.

"AAAA! Don't kill me! I have nothing to do with this. They're the ones who killed you guys!" the lead hunter shouted at his companions in a panic, trying to escape while Han Wu was distracted.

Han Wu's right arm turned into a laser gun. Raising it, he blindly shot at the escaping hunter, eyes still fixed on the corpses-turned-automatons. The laser bullet pierced through the hunter's skull and killed him.

"I did say I was going to kill you, and now I did." Han Wu sighed. "Rest in peace."

Then, turning his left arm into five cables, he captured the automatons.

"Now, time to investigate what happened to you lot."

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[1,052 words]

Chapter 608 - Kerry's Discovery

Kerry cracked open the automaton's exterior to discover that its innards weren't fully mechanical. The corpses were part machine, part flesh. This realization intrigued Kerry.

Even an expert mechanic like her had no idea how to fuse flesh and machine into one body, but she was confident that she could puzzle it out. It would undoubtedly help her when it came to making more automatons in the future.

"I need some time to research this," Kerry said.

Han Wu nodded, glancing around with boredom.

Strangely enough, automatons donning miner hats would stealthily approach them from time to time, as if triggered by the death of the hunters. Han Wu shot them down with his Adaptive Arsenal before they even got close. They dropped Energy Parts and chips when destroyed, the former of which he tossed into Jumen for safekeeping while he checked the data of the chips.

[Level 3 Chip: Anthropomorphization. Equip to an automaton to grant it the ability to act like a human. Also upgrades them with the capacity for minor learning abilities]

Han Wu's eyes lit up. The humanoid aspect had little appeal to him, but the capacity to learn like a human had thoroughly piqued his interest.

If a level 3 chip grants them minor learning ability, then what about the higher levels, like level 10? How would an automaton with a level 10 Anthropomorphization chip act?

Would they be as smart as humans or smarter?

Han Wu grew increasingly excited as he thought of the possibilities.

A new goal formed in his mind: farm more Anthropomorphization chips to merge them into a level 10 chip. Han Wu decided to start hunting the automatons instead of waiting for them to approach.

The corridors in the Weeping Mines were complex and difficult to navigate, but Han Wu managed to find three separate groups of automatons attacking miners within a hundred-meter radius.

One of the automatons could even fire a gun at the miners and hunters. They truly could learn!

“I’m heading out to collect some chips. Be right back,” Han Wu called out to Kerry before riding Jumen in its python form.

The mechanical python easily bored a hole through the ground. In just three minutes, Han Wu arrived and quickly destroyed the automatons in the area. Ignoring the grateful ramblings of the rescued miners, he headed straight for the next group on the mechanical python.

Within half a day, he farmed enough chips to merge into level 10.

[Level 10 Chip: Anthropomorphization. Equip to an automaton to grant it the ability to act like a human. Also upgrades them with the capacity for inhuman learning abilities]

Eager to test out these “inhuman learning abilities,” Han Wu decided to equip it to BD-04 Luxun. At the moment, the automaton was equipped with chips from Kerry, with the level 7 Laser Blast chip as its main attack, and complementary chips to amplify its damage. However, the overall levels of the chips weren’t particularly high, so Luxun’s power had remained fairly low.

It was useful against regular mobs, but not against powerful foes. Thus, Han Wu decided to swap its chip out. He replaced all of the chips with the level 10 Anthropomorphization and commanded its activation.

Luxun soon turned from a floating box into a humanoid automaton.

The automaton had androgynous features and didn’t have any reproductive organs. Even its body was unusually balanced. Han Wu tested it out further.

“Can you speak?” he prompted.

Luxun stared at Han Wu’s lips with wide eyes, attempting to mimic him. “Can... Can... You... Speak?”

“Not bad.” Han Wu nodded.

Luxun copied him. “Not... Not bad.”

Han Wu understood that Luxun was copying him. Its inhuman learning capabilities meant it could learn things at an accelerated pace, and Han Wu wasn't about to waste that on useless things.

He needed to teach real combat skills. After mulling it over, he chose martial arts. Human martial arts were well-suited for humanoid beings and could be used both in defense and offense, especially after gaining mastery.

Even if one wasn't proficient in using it for combat, it could still be used to strengthen one's body. Of course, an automaton had no need to use martial arts to strengthen its body, but this didn't stop Han Wu from teaching it.

At first, Luxun was incapable of grasping the essence of Han Wu's martial arts. As a machine, it found it difficult to comprehend certain physiological aspects of movement.

Still, with its inhuman learning capabilities, it managed to memorize Han Wu's lesson before using its mechanical body to repeat the process. As it went through the motions, it analyzed each move to optimize it. It even questioned Han Wu about things that it didn't know. Han Wu noted that Luxun's eyes were gradually gaining a spark of humanity.

Further down the tunnel, Kerry had dismantled most of the automatons and came to understand that the mechanism for turning flesh into a machine had one critical condition: the flesh had to first lose its vitality. In other words, any dead biological life forms in the Weeping Mines would eventually turn into an automaton.

Her gut told her that there had to be some sort of catalyst or material that caused this. However, she had found nothing even after picking apart every inch of the corpses, leaving her unusually frustrated.

Han Wu continued to teach Luxun how to fight.

“The essence of martial arts is in your breathing,” he explained. “Try breathing in and out.”

Luxun answered simply, “I don't have a nose to breathe with.”

Han Wu realized his mistake. He had treated Luxun as a real human.

Their conversation sparked a thought in Kerry's mind. *What if the underlying condition of turning dead flesh into a machine was in breathing, or rather, in the air they breathed in?*

She quickly constructed a device to analyze the air composition in the Weeping Mines, and it didn't take long for her to have a report in hand. There were the regular components of air, but besides that, there were also tiny solid particles.

After extracting the particles to examine under a microscope, she found that they were actually tiny machines! The air of the Weeping Mines was filled with tiny machines!

This discovery left Kerry in shock.

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[1,052 words]

Chapter 609 - New Mine

Han Wu was equally surprised at this revelation. "So that's what it is!"

The microscopic machines were behind the turning of flesh into machinery. None of them had expected this level of risk when entering the Weeping Mines. They had all entered without any precautions and had been breathing normally.

Does that mean our bodies are filled with machines? Han Wu wondered. It was a terrifying thought, and he felt his head dizzy despite his extensive experience with danger.

"These machines parasitize biological life forms, but it only happens once they die and their vitality has dissipated. Only then will they activate and turn them into mechanical components. You don't have to worry about them while you're still alive." Kerry reassured him.

Han Wu nodded but found it hard to relax regardless. Just imagining the microscopic machines inside him brought a suffocating feeling to his throat. His goal here was not only the Nanite Mythril but also the core of the Machine God. He could never be too careful when it came to the Machine God.

"Ms. Kerry, they turn lifeless flesh into machines, right? In that case, what would happen to them if they were to encounter a biological life form with powerful vitality?"

Kerry was stumped. "I've not tried that."

"Let me help you then."

They gathered some of the microscopic machines from the air into a container. Han Wu then placed a piece of flesh into it and watched as it slowly gained a metallic sheen.

Han Wu then activated his Life Aspect, infusing powerful Life Energy into the flesh. The mechanical part didn't turn back, but the conversion miraculously stopped.

Checking it under the microscope, Kerry saw that the microscopic machines had been deactivated. Powerful vitality could stop the invasion of the microscopic machines in one's body!

Han Wu sighed with relief. He first infused himself with powerful Life Energy to ensure that his vitality remained at its peak. Then, feeling a dull throb in his chest, he exhaled. A cloud of dirty air made up of millions of microscopic machines was expelled from his lungs.

The discomfiting sight brought a wave of reassurance at having them out of his system. He then did the same for Kerry, Akanzor, and Bart. Han Wu felt much safer without the threat of microscopic machines in their bodies.

They continued to delve deeper, destroying any automatons they encountered. Carefully following Ji Dezhu's information, they eventually found the hidden cave that had been purposefully sealed away.

Usually, a sealed cave indicated that the ores within had been fully mined out, but both Kerry and Han Wu could sense mining coming from the depths. Someone was mining in a decommissioned shaft.

Han Wu commanded Jumen to remove the boulder blocking the shaft so they could enter. Not far inside, they found a group of hunters guarding the miners.

The hunters were surprised to see Han Wu's team. They were certain they had sealed the entrance to prevent outsiders from coming in. However, since they had already been discovered, they had little choice but to kill them. After all, dead men—and automatons—told no tales.

The two parties didn't bother to exchange pleasantries. The hunters from the Machine God Cult attacked first.

Three mechanical beasts pounced, and six powerful guns let out a barrage of bullets. Having expected this, Han Wu's team swiftly dove behind a boulder to avoid the attacks. The four automatons tanked the bullets and started firing back with their own.

Luxun and Jumen attacked too. One turned into its humanoid form while the other turned into its mechanical python form, each tanking the bullets as they fought against the mechanical beasts.

Luxun's rapid learning meant it could use all the martial techniques that Han Wu had taught it before. Its mechanical body twisted and turned. While not fully proficient yet, it still moved with grace.

Han Wu nodded with pride and satisfaction at the level 10 chip, Anthropomorphization. At this rate, they could probably kill the hunters in half an hour.

Still, Han Wu wasn't one to sit back idly and waste time. Turning his right arm into a massive laser cannon, he gathered his energy into it, causing it to glow brightly.

"Move away!" he shouted.

The four automatons dodged swiftly to the side. Luxun and Jumen turned into their original box-like forms and stuck themselves to the ceiling.

Han Wu unleashed his attack. The massive laser cannon had destroyed both the mechanical beasts and hunters. Even the stone wall to the side had been blasted apart, revealing a group of startled miners behind it.

"You fool! How dare you cause trouble in the Machine God Cult's territory! I'll kill you!" the head miner shouted angrily, climbing into the cockpit of a massive mech and barreling toward Han Wu.

Faced with a powerful mech, Han Wu opted against using his laser cannon and instead activated Cable Form. The sharp ends of the cables stabbed into the chinks of the mech, releasing explosive currents of electricity alongside signal jamming frequencies.

The mech stalled mid-flight, then crashed to the ground like a pile of scrap metal. The head miner was a fanatic of the Machine God Cult. Since the mech couldn't harm Han Wu, he unhesitatingly pressed the self-destruct button.

The powerful explosion sent Han Wu crashing back into the stone wall, leaving behind a human-shaped cavity. The force of the blast had knocked the others back as well.

Blood dripped from Han Wu's nose, but as it was only a minor wound, he soon healed. The head miner's decisiveness had caught him off guard. If he were to place them in the Divine Civilization's ranking system, that level of self-sacrifice would require them to be Zealots at minimum.

When the miners saw their head sacrifice himself in the explosion, they immediately rode their mining machines or grabbed their alloy pickaxes before charging at Han Wu.

Akanzor and Bart stepped forward, easily dispatching them with their overwhelming might. The pair also swiftly dealt with the automatons that were converted from the miners' bodies.

Han Wu expanded his senses and finally found the long-sought Nanite Mythril.

“Let’s mine this quickly before the people from the Machine God Cult arrive,” Han Wu said, grabbing a pickaxe and getting to work.

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[1,004 words]

Chapter 610 - Bishop Stark

Ding ding ding...

The repetitive sound of a pickaxe hitting ore echoed in the mine shaft. Under Kerry’s guidance, Han Wu and the rest mined fifteen ores of Nanite Mythril from the vein.

These ores contained a certain amount of Nanite Mythril, which they would have to extract. Fifteen ores would yield roughly three units of Nanite Mythril. This was enough to make the desired chip, but since Nanite Mythril was rare, they had no intentions of stopping now. It was free money.

Halfway through mining, they suddenly heard footsteps outside the shaft. Han Wu didn’t even need to use his senses to know that it was the Machine God Cult. As expected, this new wave of cultists made a beeline for the mine shaft.

The leader of the group was in a futuristic mech suit that was at least rated SSS. Behind him were thirty hunters in five-meter-tall mechs. Their mechs were weaker and most likely rated S.

Stark, the leader, was a bishop of the Machine God Cult and held significant authority. This meant he didn’t typically have to act personally. However, the Nanite Mythril within the Weeping Mines was of great importance to the Machine God Cult, and he hadn’t hesitated to gather his men the moment he received the alarm.

He eyed Han Wu’s team. The mech automatically scanned their data and displayed it on its interface. Han Wu, Kerry, Akanzor, and Bart didn’t have ratings because they were biological life forms, but the four automatons of the Black Rose Squad, BD-04 Luxun, and BD-02 Jumen did.

Stark quietly admired the sheer strength of the four SSS-rated automatons. That was, until he checked the data of the two little boxes.

Is this...? The difference in their ratings meant Stark couldn't scan any detailed information, but he did manage to get their names. *BD-04 Luxun and BD-02 Jumen!*

Stark was thrilled. He had seen automatons with the same series name accompanying the cardinals. Those automatons were said to be the emissaries of the Machine God.

"The Machine God's guidance led me to you. If you're willing to part ways with the blueprints for the two emissaries of the Machine God, I will let you live, but you can never return here."

Han Wu chuckled. He knew better than to trust the words of an enemy. "That's not a bad idea. But what if I refuse?"

"Then I will kill you and take the emissaries of the Machine God with me by force." For Han Wu to have trespassed into the territory of the Machine God Cult to plunder their resources meant they had the strength to fight against the cult. Seeing no need to waste their time talking after Han Wu's rejection, Stark commanded, "Kill them!"

A barrage of bullets zipped through the air, chipping off bits of stone on the surrounding boulders and rock faces. Kerry's four automatons stood at the front as a shield. Unexpectedly, loud screeching sounds filled the air with every impact, leaving dents in their wake.

"They're using HEAT rounds! My Black Rose Squad can't hold on for long. We need to find a way to escape!" Kerry fired her revolvers from behind her cover, leaving dents on the enemy's mechs in return.

Unfortunately, it would take more than Kerry's revolvers and her four automatons to destroy those mechs. Akanzor and Bart were powerful, but the sheer number of HEAT rounds flying through the air made it impossible to attack. Moreover, there was still Stark at the back with his higher-rated mech.

Han Wu could overpower the lower-rated mechs, but was forced to conserve his strength for Stark.

"I guess I have no other choice," Han Wu muttered. Then, glancing at Luxun and Jumen, he ordered, "Enter overload status and destroy those mechs!"

Both Luxun and Jumen underwent rapid changes, their respective humanoid and python forms glowing bright red as if ablaze. This wasn't a result of their skill but rather their Energy Parts.

During battle, they could increase their output in exchange for extra energy. White steam enveloped Luxun, making it harder for others to lock onto it.

With its learned martial knowledge, it moved like a phantom within the steam, closing the distance unnoticed so it could attack the mechs. Its punches and kicks were already close to the threshold of a master.

Jumen, on the other hand, was much more straightforward and brutal. Its giant mechanical python form tanked the HEAT rounds and crashed into the mechs before thrashing around wildly.

Their attacks obliterated one mech after another.

“You useless fools,” Stark barked at his underlings. “What’s the point of nurturing you lot when you can’t even do something so simple?”

Stark stepped gracefully onto the battlefield. The full mech armor didn’t hinder his agile movements at all. He moved like a panther, easily getting close to Luxun and kicking it away. He then splayed his palm open to reveal a hole. A huge white net shot out from the hole and captured Luxun.

Luxun struggled against the sticky net, but Han Wu had never taught it how to escape from such a situation, and there were limits to even its intelligence and abilities. The automaton fought to escape, but to no avail.

After securing Luxun, Stark turned to Jumen. He leaped up into the air. Spikes extended from the toes of his feet, which he kicked into the mechanical python’s head.

Fortunately, the spikes appeared to be too small to injure Jumen. Han Wu breathed a small sigh—that was, until Stark jumped into the air again, generating electricity in his palms before firing it at Jumen.

Jumen swiftly dodged the attack, but it was a futile attempt. The tiny spikes embedded in its head acted as lightning rods. Electricity surged through the giant mechanical python, frying most of its circuitry. Jumen slumped to the ground.

Stark had subdued both of Han Wu’s automatons in a matter of seconds.

Beckoning Han Wu with his finger, Stark sneered, “Your turn now.”

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[1,027 words]

