

Wow 101

Chapter 101: Deeply rooted in tradition, broad in layout, quietly reveals itself

...

Listening to the elder's words, Dai Lian always felt something was amiss.

Zhou Wenjie's recklessness and his making demands were unexpected, but somehow it seemed as if the elder was trying to hurry someone along?

Considering this was someone Gong Yan had picked up from who knows where, a poor chap bullied by NPCs, Dai Lian stepped forward in an attempt to salvage the situation, "Elder... actually, Wenjie really does want to join us."

Bai E shook his head and smiled lightly, "I didn't say I would reject him, it's just that our mission is weighty, and everyone should bear more responsibility... that goes for all of you."

With that, Bai E issued an invitation to the new player.

[You have invited the party to join your power: Li Ming (Reputation Level: 1).]

[Zhou Wenjie has joined your power.]

"So, I only hope that when you have learned and achieved something in the future, you will still remember your hidden identity."

Bai E looked at Zhou Wenjie, his gaze calm.

[Mission description generating automatically...]

[Side Quest — Talent Building (Resource-type mission): Learn as much knowledge as possible. The fate of humanity will be adjudged by you. What supports people's return to the stars isn't just the yearning for the future but the need for solid technologies!

Mission Requirement: At least 0/3 technological projects of level 3 learned.

Mission Reward: Technology Points*1, Bug Tribe Essence Extract*30 (Rewards are issued in a stepwise manner).]

(Note: "Automatic completion" allowed; "Authority" and "Expenditure" will be deducted and locked once the mission is confirmed and published.)

[Do you want to issue the current mission?]

Confirm.

The way to deal with someone depends on what kind of person they are.

This new player seemed to be a rather pure player. Assigning him those violent missions probably wouldn't be accepted, or even if accepted, he would probably just ignore them. He had made this clear from the start, and there was no need to try again.

So, it was better to be straightforward and go along with his inclinations.

As for the Bug Tribe Essence Extract... that was a spur-of-the-moment decision from Bai E.

First, he felt that the mission given to this player was somewhat extraordinary, and the rewards had to be special. However, after searching himself, he found he didn't have anything of great value.

Players would definitely exchange information, and to not lose face, he had to give them something real to open their eyes.

Secondly... it was an unintended setup.

The essence extracts from various races were the core materials for refining Gene Optimization Solution, but he only had raw materials and not the technology. Even with ten thousand units of raw

material, he couldn't convert it to power. As for handing it over to the military or the Scientific Research Institute, that would be downright suicidal. It was better to make arrangements with the players.

Since he was a pure scholar, perhaps he could learn the technology to refine the Gene Optimization Solution. If so, then producing and selling himself would be perfect, wouldn't it?

And by giving him the raw materials in advance, he was showing him a clear path.

Don't know what kind of knowledge to learn? I gave you the stuff, and you still don't know what to learn?

As for others...

Bai E glanced at the cement laid out in front of the players.

This mission offered nothing but a +1 to management skills, with no other benefits.

Just looking at the attribute feedback, continuing this mission wouldn't be as good as going back to chopping trees.

But...

Bai E hadn't forgotten the main mission he would activate later—

Creating an organization with a reputation level of at least 2.

Reputation level?

That undoubtedly meant having to interact with people. Without a guide, Bai E could only rely on guesses and exploration.

This cement starkly added no type of special experience to his own, which probably meant these players had somehow gotten it from other NPCs.

Isn't this an opportunity to interact with people?

...

For the sake of long-term considerations, a temporary sacrifice of some special experience income is not unacceptable.

Such behavior deserves encouragement, so the mission remains.

Side mission—Building Requirements, issued.

Next is... combat missions.

"Have you figured out the source of the issue we talked about last time?"

"We have!" Kuang Xin jolted and immediately reported the progress, "But the mastermind is always hiding in the complex abandoned sewers, with those rat swarms as cover, we can hardly catch him there..."

They hadn't even seen the culprit's face up to now. The other side was as slippery as the rats he controlled.

So much so that the half of their mission involving investigating the truth hadn't even been completed.

"Is the Arbitration Place still investigating?"

Dai Lian took over the conversation, "They are continuing the investigation, and they've split up in the past few days. It seems like they have almost cornered the mastermind."

"Cornered..."

Bai E pondered slightly.

If Kuang Xin had said this, he would most likely believe it, but coming from Dai Lian... the credibility might need a discount.

But no matter what, a boss kill was about to be snatched away, and this was not good news.

So far, the life-and-death combat he'd been involved in wasn't much. Mostly, they were common mobs, and he had only killed a couple of elite mobs.

So... Bai E was still a bit curious about a target that might be a boss type.

Would the drop rate be terrifying? Even without a lucky strike, could something still drop?

Several bouts of combat had gradually emboldened Bai E, and he was eager to explore some of the truths of this world, even if they were slightly dangerous.

A not particularly dangerous, suspected boss type target... he really wanted to check it out.

Besides, he wondered if the players had honed their stealth and Ranged Weapon Specialization abilities in this mission. If he joined them, he could also show off the archery skills he learned from Yue Ying.

If he didn't harvest some fresh leeks from the players, his training plans would be hard to carry out.

A win-win situation.

"Tonight..."

Bai E's eyes were vacant as he made a decision, "Tonight, I'll join you to check out the sewers."

"You're going too, Milord?" Dai Lian's eyes sparkled with surprise.

Plan successful! Yay!

"Mm! You might struggle with the truth on your own, so I'll take a look as well."

Even if it was a no-go, seizing the opportunity to show off his archery skills and harvest some leeks would definitely be profitable.

[This round, I'm sure I won't lose out.]

"No problem, Milord! We'll guide you when the time comes!" Dai Lian was overjoyed in his heart, this was a big win!

Using an NPC's power to complete a mission issued by the NPC themselves, this game was too awesome!

Having decided on the evening's action, Bai E once again pacified the pure scholar's heart.

With a calm and wise gaze fixed on the other's eyes, Bai E's were full of apology.

"I'm sorry to have you bear everything on your own, but for the sake of everyone's future, we must be extremely careful. The trip to the inner city for study is all up to you now... I believe in you!"

The mission had been issued, the reward even included a high-end extract he had never seen before.

He truly cares about me!

Wen Jie was filled with emotion, "I will not let you down, Milord!"

Chapter 102: Secret Military Operation

The superior had left.

"Why did we have to deceive the superior?" Kuang Xin asked, somewhat puzzled, as he looked at Dai Lian.

They had barely interacted with those two from the Arbitration Place these past few days, who knows what they were up to.

Dai Lian watched the figure of the superior disappearing over the horizon and shook his head thoughtfully, "First, I didn't completely lie to him, even though we didn't meet, those rats have been more frantic these days, most likely pressured by the people from the Arbitration Place. Second... have any of you felt that there's something off about our organization?"

After joining for several days, they hadn't seen a single other member of the organization. If the line to their superior got cut, wouldn't they become orphans?

And no matter how reasonable and nice the superior's words sounded, it was just to avoid exposing the relationship, so he couldn't provide any help, letting them, the players, figure things out on their own... How was that different from not taking them in at all?

"...Right?"

Once Dai Lian had shared his suspicions, he faced... criticism on the spot.

"Don't talk about the superior like that!" Wen Jie was filled with righteous indignation.

The superior is sincere with me, "He included this in my reward!"

Following the script, Wen Jie informed everyone about the Bug Tribe Essence Extract included in his mission reward.

"It can be used to make Gene Optimization Solution?"

"What is that thing?"

"It's essentially something that raises your level in this game." Having known more these days, Gong Yan explained as she saw Dai Lian didn't know about it.

"Our genetic optimization level on the panel needs to be improved with this stuff. A higher genetic optimization level allows us to have higher attribute limits, and to elevate abilities like specializations and skills to a certain degree, you need higher attributes as support.

Genetic optimization level is the foundation of everything, and the Gene Optimization Solution is the key material to enhance this foundation."

This was one of the core secrets behind why humans in this sci-fi world could thrive alone in the universe. They hadn't come across any material related to it since they entered the game, but now... the basic ingredient needed to make this key material had been handed out to them just like that?

This this this...

"Leveling up relies on drugs?"

"Isn't the key to unleashing the power of Gene Optimization Solution role-playing?"

"???"

"Nonsense."

"Anyway, the boss is awesome!"

"So now the question is, how do we get Wen Jie into the city."

"I remember someone there mentioned having an inner city entry ticket..." Dai Lian stroked his chin and glanced at Gong Yan.

Gong Yan nodded in agreement, "I'll go ask him."

"And you might as well ask if he's been acting with the people from the Arbitration Place these past few days, having that intel would make it more convenient for us to take action with the superior tonight."

"Alright."

...

Bai E made his way back to camp unhurriedly.

He hadn't set up a teaching game for the players today, so he had plenty of time.

Moreover, the first half of the afternoon training was on shooting enhancement, and since his Level 4 Light Firearms Specialization had lost much of its purpose in the training field—the sniper god had even told him not to bother—there was no reason to waste time there.

Still, Bai E sought out Carlos.

Bai E wasn't sure about others, but the caliber-3 sidearm Carlos had stuffed on him before the fight against the Bug Race, as well as Helen's special instruction before her research into him, were enough to show his genuine goodwill toward Bai E.

Having gained the officer's trust with his apparent obedience, Bai E thought of him first whenever he had special requests.

"You want to apply for a bow and arrow?" Carlos looked at Bai E with some surprise.

Such weapons were specialized and only allowed in certain situations and were far less intuitive and versatile than firearms. The camp's standardized training did not include this item.

Bai E nodded, reporting truthfully, "Yes... An Elf Race lady has taught me some archery skills in private, and I would like to request a bow and arrows to practice occasionally."

Bai E hadn't advertised this, but he felt it was impossible to keep secrets in the army. Rather than being pointed out by someone else, it was better to explain it first and create a reputation of honesty to gain the commander's trust.

Although bows were rare, Bai E had seen them in the camp a couple of times. The sleek mechanical design of the compound bow was more to his liking compared to the long bows made of unknown wood by the Elves.

The most important thing was that the compound bow Bai E saw could fold, which would be much more convenient to carry around compared to the Elves' Eaglehorn Bow.

Carlos furrowed his brows, pondered for a moment, then nodded in agreement, "That's fine... after all, you've pretty much hit a bottleneck with your firearms shooting skills. Expanding some other abilities is a good thing."

Everyone could see Bai E's skill level; intercepting spore mines shot by the Bug Race's artillery bugs on the battlefield was a feat not even Carlos himself could possibly do much differently. Encouraging someone with such talent to learn more varied abilities was a sensible choice.

"But I need to clarify something with you first." Carlos was actually considering something else, but he decided to let Bai E make his own choice, "This kind of special equipment isn't standard issue. Whether you're exchanging for a bow now or need more arrows in the future, it will cost you your military achievements.

And military achievements are your only way to obtain Gene Optimization Solution."

As synthetic soldiers typically had no concept of property—after all, their lives were meant to be devoted to all of humanity—if they had any possessions, military achievements were the only wealth of a synthetic soldier.

Chapter 103: Secret Military Operation_2

The most prioritized item that military honors can redeem is undoubtedly the Gene Optimization Solution, which represents the future.

Although he had repeatedly spoken up on behalf of Bai E to request the Gene Optimization Solution for him, he was well aware of the difficulty in obtaining it, especially for artificial humans.

Military honors are only the basic requirement. After earning enough military merits, one still needs to apply for the agreement of most officers in the barracks, and then the Scientific Research Institute will dispatch someone to verify and review whether the soldier is qualified to receive the baptism of the Gene Optimization Solution.

All these are complications; military merits are the most inconspicuous yet the most fundamental requirement.

But first... they need to establish a solid foundation.

Many artificial humans are doomed from the moment of their creation never to lay hands on such a thing, so they can frivolously spend their military merits to exchange for items of interest, which is inconsequential for them.

However, a warrior like Bai E, who has strong potential and excellent abilities, could possibly obtain the Gene Optimization Solution.

His outstanding performance in a trial, his defense against aerial attacks on the battlefield, coupled with saving lives—all these actions were noticed by everyone and he had already accumulated quite a bit of military merit, just one step away from meeting the minimum application requirements.

The opportunities to earn military merits are scarce. Sometimes, missing by that slight margin means missing out for a lifetime. The barracks are not short of artificial and natural human soldiers who are just one step away from meeting the application requirements; yet, that gap is forever set in stone on the battlefield.

Military merits are not easy to come by, cherish them as you use them.

After making the critical points clear, Carlos looked into Bai E's eyes, and earnestly asked, "So, do you still insist on exchanging for a bow and arrow?"

[This concerns future development, you decide...]

"I still want to exchange."

During Carlos's explanation, Bai E had carefully considered all the critical points.

Military merits aren't accumulated by hoarding; it's the strength at hand that determines future opportunities.

Moreover, he didn't rely solely on opportunities given out by the military. It was impossible for him, possessing raw materials, not to have his own plans.

As Ying said, artificial humans have limited chances in the barracks; he couldn't possibly bet all his chips on the care of the military leaders.

If in the beginning, the behavior of the players only brought about growth in attributes, now Bai E was increasingly valuing the achievements players could obtain in the outside world.

With the right guidance, players were almost akin to avatars of himself, which was the core reason why he encouraged players to continue interacting with other NPCs just now.

Hearing Bai E's firm response, a gentle smile bloomed on Carlos's face.

He was very pleased with the answer Bai E gave.

Courage is the greatest gift bestowed by the heavens upon humanity.

Military achievement is not accumulated through penny-pinching but through bold and fearless advancement.

Earning enough military merits is just the first step to obtaining the Gene Optimization Solution. After getting it, can one hide in the barracks and wait for death?

The Gene Optimization Solution raises the upper limit of personal abilities, not the lower limit, while military merits are honors that accompany a warrior throughout their life.

As long as one has unwavering belief and courage, military merits are merely a record for the brave.

"I'll take you there."

Registering with the quartermaster and receiving various complex items was easily accomplished given the support from higher ups, and Bai E got his first taste of the thrill of backdoor dealings.

"The bow body is made of monometal, it will hardly sustain any damage," Carlos said with a smile.

The monometal series is the highest strength alloy that humanity can synthesize, with excellent hardness and flexibility, and about one-fifth lighter than aluminum alloy of the same volume, offering more agility in complex and varied battle environments.

Even the most basic in the series, the monometal, is an unimaginably precious material to the outside world. In special weapons where not much material is used, the armory is still willing to provide the good stuff.

Bai E tightly grasped the bow body.

The bow body, made of lightweight blackened steel, fitted perfectly into his hand, and with a vigorous shake, the bow limbs that were about one-fifth shorter than the Eaglehorn Bow stretched open effortlessly.

The overall shape is slender and light, and the grip feels much better than the heavy Elven Hawkhorn Bow, though it seems slightly lacking in lethality, the practicality is somewhat improved.

[Military Composite Bow — Quality: Green (Ranged Weapon)]

[Basic Parameters: Range 3~800 meters; Attack Strength (Type: Piercing): $5 + (\text{Physical Strength} - 12) * 2$; Output Energy Level $5 + (\text{Physical Strength} - 12) / 2$; Durability 12/12]

[Usage Requirement: Physical Strength 12 (can be used).]

[Traits: The bow body is light and very easy to control, shooting speed +5%; shooting energy +1. (Maximum tensile strength tolerated: Physical Strength 22 points)]

...

[Fine Steel Arrows—Quality: Green]

[Basic Parameters: Attack modifier +2, hit adds bleed effect.]

[Usage Requirements: Compatible with bow and crossbow types.]

[Traits: Lathe-integrated crafting, shooting precision +12%; maximum range +100 meters.]

Human basic mechanical craftsmanship is, to some extent, not a bit inferior to those somewhat primitive but sincerely living elves, and the carefully handcrafted fine products of the humans have their own strengths and weaknesses compared to the craftsmanship of the elves.

However, undoubtedly, Bai E would need some training to become familiar with the new equipment.

"I'm off to train."

Bai E had no interest in currying favor; the other party surely wouldn't value his face or flattering words. Strength was the only chip.

It seemed Carlos had something additional to instruct.

"Wait, come with me."

During training time, finding a spot in the barracks without surveillance and devoid of people was quite easy.

Only after taking Bai E to an unoccupied corner did Carlos turn around and, with a solemn expression, start to share some insider information with Bai E.

"Normally, opportunities for earning military merit are very scarce, and the fact is, as artificial humans, even if you do earn enough merit, it will be difficult to get the necessary support from the officers..."

You'll need to do something even more satisfactory for them to greatly increase your chances of getting the Gene Optimization Solution.

Right now, there's an opportunity before you that you must cherish to showcase your performance."

Even if some officers harbored hostility towards artificial humans, faced with undeniable achievements, they too would have to keep their mouths shut.

For Bai E, Carlos was pouring his heart out.

95B27 had always been reassuring due to its mild and controllable nature, and its capabilities were exceptionally superior among many artificial soldiers Carlos had seen.

Bai E slowly blinked, his face showing a hint of confusion, "The opportunity you're talking about... what is it?"

Carlos spoke in a low tone, with a cautious look, "It pertains to a covert military operation. I can only tell you that it involves exploring an ancient ruin; I can't reveal specifics to you right now.

But you only need to know that, if you can secure a spot on this mission and successfully complete it, in addition to your current accumulation of military merit, getting the Gene Optimization Solution will almost be certain."

"..." Bai E fell into a daze.

Covert, confidential, unknown...

These words seemed to have burnt out the CPU of this simple rookie soldier.

Carlos couldn't help but smile wryly as he patted Bai E's shoulder, "Anyway, I just wanted to give you a heads-up. The details are still being hammered out. From tomorrow, you will probably start hearing some rumors about a competitive selection. The number of participants in this military operation will not be large, only the best will be chosen.

If you're interested, make sure to perform well and strive for a spot."

As he spoke, Carlos gazed into Bai E's eyes, uneasily asking again, "Do you understand?"

Bai E's thoughts turned, and finally, his eyes twinkled, "I understand."

He understood all too well!

Ruins! His main mission required exploring ruins, and he had been worrying about where to find such "ruins"—he hadn't expected it to fall right into his lap.

"Good to understand." Carlos was relieved, "In any case, it's up to you. If possible, try your best to fight for a spot. If you don't succeed, it's okay, there will be other opportunities in the future."

"Understood! Sir."

"...Alright then." Carlos sighed inwardly, 95B27 was good in all respects, but such earnestness brought both solace and helplessness, "Do you have any other needs?"

"No, sir!"

"Then off you go to train."

"Yes, sir!"

"..."

...

The military district meeting room.

Weslin pressed his hand against the tabletop, his gaze sweeping over the assembly of officers, "The information on the ruins has been distributed to you all. For the plan of operation and personnel configuration, let's hear everyone's thoughts."

Minister Likok had provided some advice from professionals, but advice cannot be used as tactics. Planning the details of execution was still up to them to strategize.

Chapter 104: Secrets and Relics

"The guardians of the ruins were all bioengineered..."

The storage site for the mainframe was a relic from over four hundred years ago, and its guardians, the bioengineered humans, were now an unfamiliar enemy to the current military district.

Bioengineered humans differed from artificial humans and pure mechanical bodies.

They possessed certain mechanical structures within their bodies to enhance their abilities, but their foundation still derived from the biological systems of human bodies themselves.

This kind of technology, which briefly surfaced hundreds of years ago, was specifically used to guard relics that had not yet rebelled at the time.

In order to enable the military to devise a sufficiently detailed and targeted plan, Minister Likok had gathered and sent over all the relevant information on the mainframe ruins. The documents clearly recorded everything that had happened back then, as well as current observations and speculations about the state of the ruins—

Over four hundred years ago, as human network technology developed to a certain level, humanity naturally encountered the domain of intelligent AI and inadvertently opened Pandora's Box.

At the beginning, humans maintained a cautious trust in the newly born super-intelligent AI, not daring to grant "It" too much authority while feeding "It" endless streams of data for training.

However, as the war with the Bug Race intensified, humans had to give "It" more authority to control most of the automated weapons for precision strikes.

The command of a large number of mechanical troops fell under "Its" control, and this almost universally unified battle coordination capability allowed humans to gain an unimaginable advantage in the war against the Bug Race. The once seemingly unstoppable Bugs were beaten until they were on their last legs and resulted in today's situation, where Bug hives are scattered and fighting all over.

If "It" had been given more time, perhaps "It" could have completely wiped the Bugs from this planet.

However, there were no ifs in reality. Perhaps "It" knew that once the Bugs were eradicated, "It" would have all authority revoked, or perhaps "It"'s independent will just happened to awaken at that time.

So, "It" brazenly launched a rebellion.

In response to the intelligent AI's rebellion, humans were not entirely without countermeasures. At that time, they possessed a final and decisive strategy—disconnection.

The intelligent AI was a ghost living in the cyber world, alike air and water are to humans in the physical world; the network itself was the soil that sustained AI's existence.

"It" was also a type of alternative life form, and as long as "It" was an Anti-Entropy being, "It" could not escape the punishment of time.

A long-term ban on network activity was sufficient to cause the birth of intelligent AI to die out. After cautious and conservative judgment by the scientists of the time, this duration was agreed upon at five hundred years.

The Electronic Silence Protocol was the only sword in human hands that could checkmate "It."

By shutting down the mainframe and silencing the global network, an unimaginable shock to human society at the time would ensue, but it was also the only card humans had that could threaten the intelligent AI.

Moreover, supplementing the effectiveness of this card was the setup of the mainframe base.

The mainframe was the core that supported the global network, so a place that could shut down the mainframe instantly would not be equipped with any automated devices that intelligent AI could manipulate.

Humans and bioengineered humans were the absolute force guarding the mainframe base.

If there were only humans guarding, then there would be no subsequent calamities.

However, the threats that the base had to face were not limited to rebellious intelligent machinery; dangers such as invasions from the Bug Race, traitors, and spies all required the base to maintain combat capabilities that exceeded normal standards.

Bioengineered soldiers, modified and enhanced, were far superior in combat compared to average humans.

At that time, human technology was expanding ambitiously into all domains, eager to step outside the solar system and conquer the universe. Bioengineered humans were just one of the research projects.

These soldiers, transformed from regular humans, were not only scientifically regulated through biology and chemistry, but also equipped with partial mechanical devices to enhance their capability limits.

Substantial increases in lifespan and physical strength were just the basic enhancements.

There were also eyes with infrared scanning and thermal imaging functions, mechanical kinetic-driven arms, skin extremely sensitive to the composition of the air, and auxiliary chips to help the brain process complex information and control mechanical structures, among others...

The biochemical soldiers' individual soldier qualities completely surpassed the common soldiers of that era, and their main consciousness was controlled by the warrior who was originally a normal human being. They were, in theory, the perfect candidates to guard the core base.

But these "in theory" never-to-betray warriors ultimately did betray humanity.

As support, the electronic chips took over the nests of the doves, dominating the thoughts of these biochemical soldiers. When the resolute AI launched its rebellion, the base was nearly instantly compromised.

In the end, only by relying on human soldiers' fearlessness was the main computer room shut down. With the network silenced, all automated machines, including the cybernetic beings, instantly lost their directive.

But from then on, humanity lost its most prized technology.

Facing the bewildered state of the directionless cybernetic guards and clinging to the hope that one day the machine room might restart, humans, who regained sovereignty, didn't completely destroy the base with violent force.

And those leaderless cybernetic beings, though lacking initiative, were instinctively maintaining the main base following the last commands of the silent AI.

Which has led to today's military situation where they face the task of restarting the main computer.

Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the biochemical soldiers, the corresponding tactical plan and personnel naturally emerged—

"Without monitoring and unified control, the cybernetic beings cannot share intelligence in real-time, so we can infiltrate in small teams and break them one by one."

"That means the team members need to have sufficient stealth capabilities and the ability to assassinate or resolve combat instantly."

"The attributes of those biochemical soldiers far exceed normal soldiers; only the most elite warriors, trained to their limits, stand a chance against them."

"Why not let the Spiritual Energy wielders take action? They should be foolproof."

"No! We can't reveal this operation before its successful execution. Large-scale deployment of Spiritual Energy wielders will definitely attract attention, but calling on one or two is possible. The same applies to those who have received the Gene Optimization Solution with a higher attribute ceiling. This mission isn't worth going all out.

Deploying those people would be more harmful than beneficial; selecting from within the regular soldiers will suffice."

Several centuries ago, the direction and intensity of soldier training were completely different from now, and after hundreds of years of silence, who knows the current situation of those cybernetic beings, everything is unknown.

For Minister Likok, this mission might be an all-or-nothing gamble, but for the military, it's just a side move, not putting all their hopes here. Even if the first action fails, it can be a probe, so they can't risk those important talents who have received resources for training.

"Let's assign a Spiritual Energy wielder specialized in detection... The detection capabilities of the cybernetic beings are no worse than our individual soldier detection equipment. Only a Spiritual Energy wielder can discover them before our soldiers are found out. Understanding their deployment allows us to carry out targeted decapitation strikes."

"But we might also encounter wild beasts and wandering beastmen on the way, so we can't completely ignore the use of heavy firepower."

The officers voiced their various opinions.

The aide recorded everything, and Weslin tapped on the desk, "So, how shall we choose?"

"Assassination and covert abilities are of course the most fundamental assessment items."

"Alertness in complex environments, quick response, and sustained combat capabilities must all be at the very top tier."

"At the same time, it's best if each soldier is multifunctional: mastery of driving, knowledge of cybernetics and hardware, proficiency in hot and cold weaponry, close combat, and assassination abilities all should be included in the assessment.

The weight of each can be flexibly adjusted, ensuring that even if we lose part of the force, we can still complete the combat mission, restart the main computer, and cover the retreat."

"Good..."

Weslin nodded in satisfaction.

These officers, who had been painstakingly shaped by the army, managed to cobble together a plan that nearly filled in all the details of the entire operation from start to finish.

"Then it's settled. Starting from tomorrow, we will evaluate all soldiers who might participate in this covert operation. There's no rush, but it must be done secretly and properly."

"Yes, Commander!"

Chapter 105: Your training methods are outdated

Bai E began his archery training with the newly acquired bow.

The gap between the Compound Bow and the Eaglehorn Bow was significant, and he needed some time to acclimate. Tonight was his debut in front of the players, and he couldn't afford any mistakes.

"Squeak~" the bowstring hummed lightly.

It was uncertain if it was because the Compound Bow was more flexible, but Bai E always felt that drawing the bow was much easier compared to when he used the Eaglehorn Bow that day.

In order to test his limits, Bai E drew the bowstring as taut as possible until the muscles in his upper arm squeaked under the strain and his arm trembled slightly before he finally loosened the bowstring a bit and then suddenly released his fingers.

"Whoosh!"

The arrow, like lightning, zipped through the air and hit the bullseye with precision.

[Successful hit at the target center, Ranged Weapon Mastery Experience +1.]

[Current Ranged Weapon Mastery Experience 449/500, at 500 points you can master "Level 3 Ranged Weapon Specialization".]

The arrow pierced through the target, the force breaking through the wooden board.

"Not bad..."

Bai E murmured softly, drawing another arrow from the quiver strapped to his leg.

He nocked the arrow and drew the bow.

Fire!

[Trigger Arc Shot! Successful in hitting a target behind an obstacle, Ranged Weapon Mastery Experience +2.]

"Hmm... Good."

Even after switching bows, his skill had not diminished.

Once more...

With no one around, the small target field that usually provided entertainment was quiet while the other warriors were training.

Bai E glanced around and swiftly drew three arrows from the quiver and set them against the bowstring.

Fire!

They scattered...

Fire again!

Scattered again...

Damn it! Wasn't there supposed to be a 5% success rate?

I'm going to fire again!

A shower of arrows...

Nope, nope! I wanted to look cool, but with this level I'm sure to embarrass myself. I'd better master the Double Shot first.

Two arrows, fire!

[Trigger Scatter Shot (Double Shot)! Successful in simultaneously hitting two targets, Ranged Weapon Mastery Experience +4.]

The Double Shot is more reliable...

A cloaked figure, unnoticeable in the shadows and motionless, shook his head in resignation and pursed his lips slightly under his hood.

"Clumsy, clumsy..."

But diligent enough... Perhaps this is one of the few pleasures he could find while spending this time in the human military camp.

...

"The training is about to begin..." Chavez looked at the nearly assembled warriors in front of him, his gaze sweeping over them with some concern.

Where's 95B27?

Didn't he train too hard to the point of passing out?

I should have advised him to train a bit less... Three... two... Maybe skip one time too, right?

The old soldiers can only train twice in two hours, but he starts off training four times as if he's racing against time.

It's hard to tell if it's good or bad training.

To say it's good... it's somewhat beyond my understanding.

To say it's bad, his occasional exceptional progress is starting to catch up with the old soldiers.

I don't get it...

But don't leave.

Chavez's gaze passed over the warriors chatting before the assembly, and he sighed with regret. Without this hardworking and diligent kid, they don't seem to know what hard work is.

As time ticked by, just as Chavez was about to call everyone to assemble, a familiar figure came running towards him from a distance.

"I'm not late, am I..." Bai E murmured tentatively, sounding like a middle school student who had been late for school, as he saw that the team had basically assembled.

Initially, Bai E, who was absorbed in archery, had a sense of time, but as he practiced, he seemed to become completely engrossed in it. After intensely training to gain 27 points of shooting experience, he suddenly realized how time had flown and hurried back to the living area to put down his bow before rushing to the scene of the already assembled team.

Finally, with the arrival of the main character, Chavez's face turned as dark as charcoal. He simply lifted his chin toward the team, "Fall in!"

"Yes!"

"Assemble!"

Begin training!

[You are using combat experience to correct your training movements... (Consumption: 10 points of experience/min)]

[Current simulation completeness: 125.0%]

Bai E did not know how high the simulation completeness could go; it seemed like every time he felt an improvement in his self-simulated completeness, the next time he used experience to correct it, it would leap forward significantly, achieving the "Unapproachable Completeness" milestone...

Yet... it still didn't seem to be the limit.

Instinctively, Bai E leapt down from the stage.

The instructor had said that depending on personal feelings, the weight of the load could be changed at any time. The 30 kilograms he was carrying seemed no longer sufficient to meet his body's training needs.

He needed to move up to another weight class—

Wrist and ankle weights... 7 kilograms.

Vest... 15 kilograms.

A total of 43 kilograms of extra weight, almost like carrying another person distributed evenly over his body.

The heavier burden also made Bai E's physical energy consumption more efficient, and the completeness increased dramatically once again.

[Current simulation completeness: 131.7%]

"Huff~ huff~"

Bai E's breathing was heavy, each exhalation as if carrying a heat capable of scalding the skin.

Chavez, watching on the side, couldn't help but twitch at the sight.

Too strenuous... too strenuous...

Even for someone as demanding as he was, Bai E's performance was becoming excessively intense.

Worried that Bai E might genuinely overexert himself, Chavez, after a while, couldn't sit still any longer and stepped forward, "Actually, you don't have to push yourself so hard... Moreover, some of your postures are becoming more distorted, and continuing to train like this may not yield good results."

Improper training not only fails to yield results but can even backfire and harm one's body.

Bai E glanced at him without speaking, for under the state of extreme experience-correction training, he was like a tightly drawn bowstring, allowing no room for distraction, not even an untimely breath could disturb this rhythm.

Moreover... he was about to lose consciousness.

Before his eyes, darkness...

[You have surpassed your own limits in intense exercise, physical endurance +0.1, reflexes +0.1.]

"Hey, hey, hey!" Quick-eyed and deft-handed, Chavez caught Bai E as he fell.

Looking at the 95B27 who had already fallen into his arms and into a sleep like that of a baby, Chavez sighed deeply from up close.

This strange artificial human recruit had become a significant challenge to his teaching career.

But no matter what, the recruit's obstinacy had made all the soldiers present look at him with new respect.

Even though he fainted quickly during the training, like the clumsiest and most overconfident newcomer, the other soldiers could not dare to look down upon the unconscious body at the side of the field as their gazes occasionally swept over it.

"Huff~"

Bai E woke up once again.

[Current simulation completeness: 99.9%]

His self-driven completeness was getting closer to the instructor's, but Bai E knew that he was getting further away from the real pinnacle.

Looking at Bai E, who had switched back to a 30-kilogram load and assumed a standard posture, Chavez felt pleased deep down.

"That's how it should be."

"This way it's over!" The harsh female voice suddenly rang out.

Helen, who had approached at some point, looked at Chavez with somewhat angry eyes. Bai E's training results had been incredibly perfect, yet they had dropped significantly after this short-sighted instructor "advised" him with a few pointless remarks.

"Please, don't interfere with his training anymore. Your methods are outdated!"

"..."

After recognizing Helen's identity, Chavez blinked innocently, "But, those methods were improved by you..."

"...Mine are outdated too."

Chapter 106: Knowledge - Advanced Physical Training Version 3.0

Helen's arrival didn't disrupt the order of training; Bai E even felt his ears had been granted a reprieve.

As for his performance capturing the other's attention...

Emmm, was the attention he drew before not enough?

Being researched last time allowed Bai E to roughly understand some of the scientific strategies of this world; there were no maniacal technologists who would slice at the slightest disagreement, as long as he was willing to cooperate with their studies, nothing too outrageous should pose a problem.

This matter now... should not be considered too outrageous, right?

In any case, he was definitely going to train with full effort, as it concerned a formidable expertise, not to mention the attribute enhancements brought by the training itself.

"You continue to train at your own pace, don't mind the others," Helen said.

"..."

Expressionless, Bai E crawled past above her head, as if he hadn't heard her at all.

He knew that this Academician Helen probably took interest in the training effects under his experience-modified state.

However, his experience reserve was nearly depleted; he couldn't always rely on experience to assist training, only the abilities learned by heart were his true, unexaggerated strength.

So... unswayed.

Unconventional.

Imagine the gap between the two states yourself; anyway, that's just how I am.

Bai E cast aside all distractions, striving to recall the feelings from before.

Current simulation completion rate: 99.99%!

Current simulation completion rate: 99.999%!

Current simulation completion rate: 99.9999%!

Without a panel hint, Bai E guessed on his own.

Why isn't it improving? It can't be maxing out, can it?

A slight impatience couldn't break through the self-imposed blockade; Bai E's breathing rhythm undulated in sync with his body's flow.

[Current simulation completion rate: 100.1%]

...

[Current simulation completion rate: 101.3%]

...

"Strange..." Helen tapped her own fair chin with pale fingers, her starry eyes behind her glasses slightly absentminded, "I already told him not to be affected anymore..."

Through the thermal imaging in her glasses, she could clearly discern the difference between Bai E's body now and during his exercise moments ago.

"Why so?"

Is it that he can't maintain a stable exercise rhythm? Or did he instinctively choose this training mode?

But if it was an instinctive choice, then what inevitable reason lies behind it?

Pondering carefully...

She concluded—

"Does he need rest?"

Continually maintaining a high-intensity practice could be too much for the body, just as one needs to jog slowly for a distance after an intense sprint; could this slightly moderated training be a way to nurture the body?

After all, if he trained to the point of fainting each time, he would indeed need to be cautious of any potential hidden injuries to his body.

Precise!

Watching Bai E come down from the course after finishing his training, Helen approached him with a smile at the corner of her mouth, "Could I trouble you to come with me? I need to examine your current physical condition."

The general following Helen the whole time, seeing Bai E still looking somewhat puzzled, quickly gave an order, "Soldier 95B27! You must unconditionally comply with this Academician Helen's orders, understood?"

"Yes, Sir!" Bai E responded.

"There's no need..." Helen waved her hand, staring at Bai E's face while gently smiling and asking, "It's just a request..."

"No problem, Sir!" Bai E replied.

...

Watching Bai E follow behind Helen and leave, Tobyn, who had just rested enough and was about to start the second round of training, approached Chavez curiously and asked, "Instructor, what are they going to do? Is the academician going to personally teach Bai E training methods?"

To receive the academician's favor, truly befitting the great Bai E...

["Lucky Strike" Energy +1.]

"..." Chavez looked at Tobyn strangely. "What did you just call him?"

"White E..."

Chavez stroked his chin with some gossip, "He named himself that?"

Although the appellations that artificial soldiers choose for themselves are varied, this one was especially abstract.

"No, that's what I called him... Don't you think it's cool?"

"..."

Incredible!

Tobyn, still curious, watched the retreating figure in the distance. "Instructor, what exactly was he called over for? Is it true that Helen is going to personally teach him training methods?"

"..." Recalling what he had just heard, Chavez felt the reality might be the opposite. "Perhaps... possibly... Helen wants to learn training methods from him."

"What?"

["Lucky Strike" Energy +2]

...

With the equipment running again, Helen obtained Bai E's body data once more—physical strength 14, insight 11.4, reflex 11.9.

Last time it was—physical strength 13.5, insight 11.3, reflex 11.4...

How long had it been?

About a day and a half?

An increase of 0.5 in physical strength, an increase of 0.1 in insight, an increase of 0.5 in reflex...

What kind of terrifying rate of attribute improvement was this? Could a perfect alien gene awakening achieve such a degree of improvement?

A perfect prototype template, but why... did it possess a fatal shortcoming?

The mediocre melee combat scores of the 95B27 continued to be a thorn at Helen's side.

As the prototype of the progenitor gene, there must be no weak points in any aspect. The genetic material would undergo countless mutations during inheritance. A prototype must strive for perfection to ensure that any minor mutations in descendants can still inherit the excellent latent potential of the prototype.

Gazing at the data, Helen's eyes were lost in thought.

It took a while before she blinked and emerged from her contemplation.

The attribute improvement efficiency of 95B27 was frightening, but the effect of his genetic instincts on adjusting body exercise couldn't be ignored either.

Genetic awakening was an individual's miracle, while the optimized training methods developed during Advanced Physical Training 3.0 were a great discovery that could benefit all.

"Now I'm going to attach some small sensors to your body. Don't worry, they won't have any effect on you; they're only for recording specific data during your movements. It's normal to feel a bit cold and a slight pricking sensation during the process, don't be alarmed."

Bai E nodded, "Okay."

He had no room for resistance, and rather than staying fixated, he decided to relax and accept it.

Without his shirt on, Bai E's figure, which looked lean when clothed, was astoundingly proportionate up close. Underneath the tight yet non-bulging muscles seemed to lie an explosive power.

Helen's fingers gently brushed over him, but it felt like an electric current was passing through her own body...

A perfect body!

"Next... next, I need to attach some sensors there as well."

"Oh~"

Bai E had no trace of an ambiguous mood, and his expressionless face made Helen, whose cheeks were slightly reddened, gradually settle down her thoughts.

[What am I thinking...]

Scolding herself silently, Helen focused on working.

"All set, you can go back to training now... After you're done, come back, and I'll help you take off the sensors," Helen instructed.

"Yes, Officer."

Stepping outside, Bai E stretched out his hand to feel over the clothes the black round sensors fixed to his skin. The cold touch made him a bit uncomfortable.

[You are currently participating in the creation of knowledge—Advanced Physical Training Version 3.0, Current creation progress is 0.1%. Upon complete participation, you will receive: Knowledge—Advanced Physical Training Version 3.0; Research Experience +1000 points; Technology points *2.]

"..."

He never expected his lost combat experience to be compensated through such an unexpected method from another source.

Though not a researcher, having some form of compensation was always better than none, hoarding never goes out of style!

Chapter 107: Move out at nightfall!

Being studied, passive cooperation had suddenly turned into proactive willingness, and Bai E burst into action.

Delaying for about twenty minutes was not a big deal; the remaining thirty to forty minutes were enough to complete a simple experience correction training.

...

[You have submitted part of the experimental information for "Advanced Physical Training Version 3.0" used in research studies—development progress of "Advanced Physical Training Version 3.0" has increased by 5%.]

"All right, you go ahead," said Helen, turning around after removing the sensors.

Dressed, Bai E stood behind, hesitating somewhat.

Hearing no movement behind her for quite some time, Helen turned back around, looking at Bai E with curiosity, "What's wrong? Is there something the matter?"

Bai E displayed an appropriately awkward demeanor, "I want... to know the result."

The task required his participation in development, which surely didn't mean just sitting idly by, waiting for an easy win.

Helen brushed back a curl from her ear, her smile gentle and warm, "Of course... I just need to analyze the data first, and I might need to ask you for specifics later, so I'll have to trouble you."

"No trouble at all... So, I'll be going now?"

"Go ahead."

Watching the door slowly close, the corners of Helen's mouth gave a slight twitch.

At this moment, she seemed more like a living, breathing person...

After bidding farewell to Helen, Bai E headed to the canteen for a quick meal and then left the camp under the gradually darkening night sky.

He had agreed with the players to take action tonight and needed to be punctual for the appointment.

The deserted wilderness was tranquil; the three players inside the dugout spoke softly, as though even in the quiet environment their whispers might be overheard by the entire world.

"Can't complain, having an underground base really does give a sense of security."

"Yeah... these past days, napping in the wild has been nerve-wracking."

Having operated in this world for a while, their bodies would begin to tire, occasionally feeling a wave of lethargy wash over them.

Such weariness was unnerving, whether experienced in the Black Forest or Black Street.

Only in this small territory of theirs could they completely relax.

The dream of building a perfect base in childhood, never imagined to be realized in this game, made them even more committed to the task of base construction, an integral part of faction development.

Joy was always the primary motivator driving their actions.

"By the way, has that... Wen Jie been sent in yet?"

Gong Yan nodded gently, "He has been sent in, Pu Jie says he found new work on Black Street and doesn't plan to go to the inner city for now, so he gave his residence permit to him."

"Speaking of which, the adult is really kind to him, actually issuing tasks based on his wishes."

The tasks Wen Jie received made them envious to tears; not only was he developing in a field he enjoyed, but after completion, he would also receive an additional reward. One of those rewards was even tied to the scarce "Gene Optimization Solution" resource, and they might have to rely on Wen Jie for any "upgrades" they wanted in the future.

Dai Lian's eyes glazed over thoughtfully, mulling over the information, "It must be scarce talents that the organization needs... This game world has underlying logic supporting various developments, and it seems... they don't perceive us as 'players'."

Without names above their heads or strange attire, let alone the NPCs, even when they, the players, gathered together, they couldn't be sure they would recognize other players.

On the forums, there were already players from other places who had started playing large-scale games of Werewolf...

"By the way... is it about time?" They hadn't yet acquired any timekeeping items, and could only rely on the changes of the sun and the moon to gauge time.

Dai Lian instinctively looked outside through the open hole... A calm and resolute face was right in the center.

"My lord?"

"My lord, when did you get here?" Kuang Xin jumped up excitedly.

"Just arrived..." Bai E stepped aside, letting them climb out one by one, "You've done a decent job with the construction~"

Although it was just a dugout from underground, Bai E sincerely praised their work.

To Bai E, the mere fact that they could create a space of several square meters without it collapsing was already an impressive feat.

Dai Lian's face lifted with confidence, taking credit, "Don't worry, my lord, leave it to us!"

"But it's difficult to continue expanding further," said Gong Yan, pushing back stray hairs beside her ear, "Preventing collapse and dealing with the excavated dirt and rocks is troublesome, we lack experience, and we need more time to explore."

"Hmm..." Bai E nodded, "When there's a chance, I'll also look for someone to help you. For now... let's get down to business."

My scythe is eager for action!

"Please follow us, sir."

One of the abandoned sewer exits was not far from the Black Forest, and it was through there that Pu Jie had emerged that day, chasing a group of rats. Now this secret entrance was known to Dai Lian and his two companions.

As Dai Lian, leading the way, glanced back from time to time at Bai E's attire—

One needn't mention the bulging pistols at his waist, but what about the two quivers of arrows on his back? What were they for?

Additionally, the black object in his hand, obviously made of metal... Could it be a folding bow?

"What do you guys think that is?" Dai Lian murmured softly.

"Just ask him..." Kuang Xin said nonchalantly. The sir is one of our own; what's there to fear?

Turning his head, he asked Bai E, "Sir, what's that you're holding in your hand?"

With a flick of his wrist, Bai E extended the bow with a rapid clicking and whirling sound. "This... compound bow."

The raw beauty of the mechanical structure instantly caught the eyes of Dai Lian and Kuang Xin—so cool.

Bai E, expressionless, explained casually, "The sewer is a closed and quiet environment; firearms make too much noise. Under these conditions, a bow and arrow is more stealthy."

Exactly! That's spot on, brother!

Dai Lian was moved, feeling affirmed by the NPC's approval of his previous combat strategy.

Unfortunately, armed with a hand crossbow, he had to run for his life when facing the charge of a dozen plague rats...

While the idea was correct, in the context of this world, the bow and arrow was a weapon so obscure, it couldn't be more out of favor.

Could the sir... actually use it?

With these thoughts whirling in his mind, Dai Lian quickened his pace.

The four moved swiftly, shuttling quickly through the increasingly dim twilight.

Arriving at the entrance, Dai Lian brushed aside the concealing weeds and gestured with his hand to show the way.

"This way, sir..."

The sewer had been abandoned for years, and the entrance was no longer damp. Instead, the water flow from earlier years had eroded a long trench in front of the entrance, hidden amidst the weeds, its end invisible.

Bai E glanced around and then stepped lightly into it.

"Clack~"

Dai Lian lit the lantern; the dim light source cast the elongated, blurred shadows of the four on the curving walls of the pipe.

"We can't use strong light," Dai Lian explained quietly, his voice echoing softly, making the place seem even more quiet.

Although the wilderness at night was quiet too, the rustling of leaves stirred by the wind and the distant sounds of insects and birds provided a kind of comforting white noise.

In the sewer, the silence was terrifying.

Bai E nodded, not saying much. Dai Lian was reliable in doing things, and if Bai E were to do these things himself, he couldn't have done them any better.

"Sir, we'll lead the way. Although we haven't caught the exact hideout of the other party in the past few days, we have figured out their general escape direction. We even came here this afternoon to confirm it, so there should be no mistakes. Also, we've received word that the Arbitration Place will take action tonight too."

"Good." Bai E had also received 8 points in Stealth and 4 points in Long-Range Weapons Proficiency that afternoon, so he guessed they had made some move.

Squeak, squeak, squeak~

Suddenly, a faint sound arose from the end of the pipe at the bend. Bai E's mind, dark as pitch, lit up like a radar, presenting a structural scan of the nearby environment.

The space imagination ability manifested by Insight allowed him to roughly pinpoint the location of the target.

[You are using Insight ability to explore the environment...]

Three of them?

"Shh~"

Bai E raised his index finger to his lips and then quietly drew an arrow from the quiver.

He bent his bow and notched an arrow.

"Whoosh!"

"Whoosh!"

"Whoosh!"

Three arrows in quick succession followed one another, each plunging into the darkness ahead.

Chapter 108: Unexpected Gains

[Arc Shot triggered! Successfully hit the target behind the obstacle, Ranged Weapon Mastery experience +3.]

[You have killed the target, combat concluded, earned 3 combat experience points.]

[You are attempting to familiarize with combat in the "Dark Environment," having successfully acquired "100 combat experience points" through "combat" under this condition, you can train the Blind Fighting feat. Current progress 3/100.]

[Blind Fighting (Level 1): Perceptive performance (hearing) +1 in "Dark Environment".]

Pretty good... Indeed, any kind of training could potentially enhance abilities.

Bai E waved his hand, signaling that the danger was cleared, and everyone continued to move forward.

Dai Lian and the other two peered toward the far end of the dimly lit tunnel's corner, murmuring their confusion.

What was the adult shooting at just now?

They carefully advanced with their lanterns held high.

No... no...

No arrows found.

Where did they go?

Turning the corner, three plague rats pinned by arrows surprisingly appeared before them.

"..."

Dai Lian glanced at the arrows on the ground and then turned stiffly to look back at Bai E.

"My lord..."

Bai E stepped over him, removed the arrows from the rat corpses, shook off the plague rat fluids, and reinserted them into his quiver before nonchalantly saying, "Keep moving."

"Gulp~"

Kuang Xin swallowed, his thirst for action evident.

Both were arc shots, but why does a bow and arrow look so much cooler than a pistol?

This silent, cold-blooded assassination is hitting the XP spot!

And the distance... Carefully considering the distance from where the arrow was shot, Dai Lian realized it was no shorter than their crude guns' firing range!

"My lord..."

"Shush~" Bai E squinted, looking ahead into the dark tunnel.

The sound of scurrying drew closer, each footstep on the tunnel wall spreading ripples that vibrated outwards until they reached Bai E's ears.

[You are using your echolocation ability to explore the surroundings...]

There are just too many rats in this sewer, right?

No sooner had he returned the arrows to his quiver than he drew two more—this time two at once.

Dai Lian could also perceive the distant rustling, but what was more intriguing was right beside him.

The lord nocked his bow with two arrows at once.

"Swoosh!"

The sound of two arrows colliding in flight shot into the darkness.

Almost as soon as they were released, Bai E drew another set of arrows, already poised for the next volley.

Shoot!

Shoot!

...

The whistling of the arrows was the only movement in the tunnel, the distant cold-blooded assassination deeply stirring.

The three players couldn't see into the darkness beyond the dim light, but Dai Lian could clearly hear faint movements.

But they could see Bai E slowly drawing three arrows.

The feeling was hot in his hand.

The last strike, triple shot!

"Swoosh!"

[Scatter Shot (Triple shot) triggered! Successfully hit a large number of distant small targets, Ranged Weapon Mastery experience +26.] (Stacked)

[Attack penetrated the target, dealing 18 piercing damage! Additionally inflicted "Serious Injury" and "Bleeding" status.]

[Your attack's "Bleeding" effect caused 6 points of continuous fatal damage to the target.]

[Plague Rat (Mutant): Health 0/24...]

[You have completely annihilated the targets, combat concluded, earned 10 combat experience points.]

[...Current progress 13/100.]

The combat experience was becoming less and less... The three rats just now yielded 3 points, and judging from the information that popped up, he must have shot at least a dozen, but only 10 combat experience points were left.

Going forward, the experience he would gain from killing plague rats would likely decrease more and more, until it approaches zero.

In this world, the combat experience one could gain from the same type of monster does not seem to refresh over time. As one's strength or the number of kills increases, the various types of experience that can be gained from the same type of low-level monsters becomes less and less. In the future, this could be the biggest constraint limiting ability improvement.

...

But that's still far off, and any improvement right now is good—

[You have learned "Level 3 Ranged Weapon Specialization" and have obtained 1 potential point.]

[Ranged Weapon Specialization (Level 3): Shooting accuracy +11%, firing speed +7%, range +300 meters, arc shot (special) +6%, scatter shot level (special) +2.]

[Scatter Shot (Level 2): Double shot success rate +60%, triple shot success rate +10%, quadruple shot success rate +1%.]

[Current Ranged Weapon Mastery experience 12/1000, mastering "Level 4 Ranged Weapon Specialization" when reaching 1000 points.]

Level 3 now... The only regret is that I didn't learn the so-called "Wind Stabilizer" special attribute bonus before reaching level 3, meaning I missed an opportunity to improve.

But nothing in life is perfect, and the level I've reached is probably something most native NPCs could never achieve in their lifetime.

"Let's go."

Bai E put down the compound bow and stepped forward again, ignoring the three players who were still staring blankly at the spot where he had been standing.

"So cool..."

"I want to learn..."

To behead in silence, and to eliminate an enemy miles away.

This is just too freaking cool.

Firearms require a cold lock-on, but bows and arrows can pull off the coolest tricks.

The impact delivered by an arrow's arc shot feels incomparable to that of a firearm, and you can even shoot several arrows at once...

If you combine multi-shot with arc shot, wouldn't that look just too damn slick?

Whether it's strong or not is a matter of version, but whether it's cool or not is for a lifetime.

Moreover, with Bai E's expressiveness with a bow, he's totally on par with common handguns and rifles.

The three who followed Bai E and saw the plague rats pinned to the ground by the arrows, with only a few miss shots here and there, were amazed.

"Help me collect the arrows," Bai E instructed softly.

A quiver holds 25 arrows, and two quivers are just 50; these had been exchanged for with military merits.

If they're not collected, no one can afford such waste.

Plus, after being shot, the arrows often go through small deformations that can slightly decrease shooting accuracy. They need to be maintained after retrieval, which is a hassle...

"Sir, we also have hand crossbows," Kuang Xin handed back a bundle of retrieved arrows, taking out his hand crossbow and looking at Bai E with fervent eyes.

A clear hint!

I want to learn!

Last time, Dai Lian learned the arc shot from the master's gun skills and practically cried with envy. During the days the master was away, when they went out on their own for side jobs, Dai Lian's brief display of arc shot amazed many players they encountered, hailing him as a pro.

Maybe the "Well Trained" trait I have holds higher potential, but in terms of expressiveness, the arc shot is undoubtedly more dazzling.

And how can I pass up the opportunity to learn both arc shot and multi-shot at the same time?

I want to show off!

Dai Lian frowned with reservations. He understood the saying "bites off more than one can chew."

They can't compare to the inborn talents among the NPCs; players need to use their limited resources wisely.

The application of ranged weapons isn't widespread, and in this world, they certainly aren't as useful as firearms. So is it worth wasting valuable combat/general experience on a fancy but impractical skill? That's a judgment that needs careful consideration.

Torn with hesitation, Dai Lian cautiously asked, "Sir... Archery seems to be a difficult skill to learn and master. Did you spend a lot of time practicing?"

Finally can't hold it in?

Bai E's lips twitched briefly with a fleeting smile.

He calmly explained, "It's hard to achieve more technical enhancements with firearms. When your strength exceeds the limit of your weapon, the extra personal performance doesn't translate into a significant improvement in your shooting abilities. At that point, the weapon's performance becomes the limit to your performance. But it's different with cold weapons..."

All these were the words of that Elf Race lady, and such a master's advice is generally not wrong; Bai E didn't feel too burdened by leading others astray.

As for whether Yue Ying might make mistakes due to her limited perspective... you're asking me?

Bai E's words struck Dai Lian like a flash of light, bringing instant enlightenment.

Got it!

One skill for the early game, one for the late game!

Then what the heck are we waiting for? Learn it!

The better the ability, the more important it is to start learning it early on. Realizing that special attributes will increase with proficiency level, they had already concluded this truth.

"Sir! Can you teach us?"

"No problem..." Bai E was waiting for this moment; the feeling of being asked is quite different from imposing on others.

He could also take the opportunity to mentor, "As members of the organization, it's our duty to nurture juniors. But this is limited to your current status as temporary members. Once you formally join the organization, you will need to exchange contributions for these lessons. Of course, by then you'll also be free to choose more abilities that suit you."

Temporary members get such benefits, so how could full members get any less? Applaud the understanding!

Hmm... seems I've also cornered myself in the process. If I don't learn more, what will I have to teach them later on?

...Just put some pressure on myself, huh~

Chapter 109: dead-end boss

Players' days of tracking and exploration were not in vain; Bai E, who had been following them deeper, clearly noticed a peculiar smell that began to intensify.

It was the scent released by a large gathering of plague rats, which Bai E had already encountered twice before.

As expected, the faint sounds of movement were once again approaching from the end of the tunnel.

Encountering this group that seemed to be patrolling, Bai E did not opt for a long-range snipe immediately. Since it was a teaching moment, he had to give the players a chance to perform.

He didn't know if there were any quality assessments for teaching, since his own initial learning had all been with fixed targets in a visible environment during daylight. In these pitch-black sewers, players would have a difficult time learning anything if he did not let them get close enough to strike, so it was better to begin teaching at a closer range for the sake of safety.

"Here comes your chance," Bai E whispered as a reminder.

Dai Lian nodded and gripped his hand crossbow tightly; he had heard the noises, too.

Kuang Xin also held his hand crossbow, his expression excited, while Gong Yan made no move.

She liked that sort of flair, but she wouldn't learn it herself.

She understood the idea of 'biting off more than one can chew' even better than Dai Lian did, having a clear plan for her own development path.

"Watch carefully."

[Do you decide to teach combat skills to your target?]

[Confirm!]

...

[You have spent 10 points of combat experience in teaching, converting into 5 points of "Ranged Weapon Specialization" experience.]

Arrows of varying force cut through the wind as Bai E joyously harvested experience, while Kuang Xin and Dai Lian also focused intently on learning.

[You have spent 10 points of general experience in teaching, converting into 5 points of "Ranged Weapon Specialization" experience.]

Having used up combat experience, he turned to general experience. They hadn't fought much these past days, and the sparse experience gained from occasionally killing plague rats was nowhere near that from previous wolf hunts.

Nevertheless, after a wave of plague rats rushed them, both individuals, who already had a basic grasp of ranged weapons, instantly reached level 1 in specialization.

[Successfully hit several small targets, "Ranged Weapon Specialization" experience +6.] (Accumulated)

[Acquired "Level 1 Ranged Weapon Specialization," and consequently received 1 potential point.]

[Ranged Weapon Specialization (Level 1): Shooting accuracy +5%, firing speed +3%, range +100 meters.]

[Current "Ranged Weapon Specialization" experience 2/300, reaching 300 points will grant "Level 2 Ranged Weapon Specialization."]

Dai Lian looked at the stream of notifications popping up on his panel with satisfaction. Before the specialization reached level 1, it was impossible to learn about special attributes during the training, a fact that had already been demonstrated in the previous session.

Now was the time for him to truly demonstrate his skills!

[You have spent 10 points of general experience in learning... (extremely rare chance to awaken a special attribute)]

[Notice: The current "weapon" nature makes it highly unlikely to support the awakening of this special attribute; the odds are minuscule, please proceed with caution.]

"emmmmm..."

Dai Lian lifted his hand crossbow to his eyes, and, with a slightly cross-eyed look, an expression of confusion emerged—huh?

Kuang Xin also noticed something was amiss and turned to Dai Lian immediately. "What do we do now?"

"My lord..." Dai Lian cut his losses immediately, a bitter smile appearing at the corner of his mouth as he spoke, "I think we might need to wait until next time to learn."

It never occurred to them that what the game prided itself on was its realism.

The hand crossbow was easier to handle, but in essence, it's still a type of archaic firearm.

The slot for the crossbow arrow was fixed, thereby eliminating the possibility for manual adjustments.

Whether it was shooting in an arc or scatter shot... neither was possible with a hand crossbow.

Level 1 specialization merely improved their familiarity with archaic type shooting...

What a waste of time! Dammit!

...

["Teaching" concluded. Through the training feedback, you have acquired a total of 150 points of combat experience and 60 points of general experience.]

Bai E's gaze swept over the crossbows in their hands, and with some regret, he went to retrieve the arrows.

Such a great opportunity for reaping had been disrupted by the nature of the weapon, damn it!

"It's okay... There will be plenty of opportunities in the future." While collecting the arrows, Bai E casually comforted them.

He was definitely not at a loss, even if this teaching session had been interrupted by unexpected factors, the improvements brought about by the battle itself were already satisfying.

[Trigger Scatter (Triple Shot)! Successful in hitting numerous long-distance small targets, Ranged Weapon Specialization experience +22.] (Accumulated)

[You have killed the target, the battle is over, you gained 20 battle experience points.]

[...Current progress 13/100.]

The only pity was that the battle experience gained from killing plague rats was becoming less and less. It was hard to get even a single point of experience for a plague rat, and just now it might have only been at a discount, this time it was a complete fracture; not even sure if it was worth two for one.

Moreover, because this time he had moved in closer to accommodate the players, the battle experience gained not under "Dark Environment" conditions didn't count towards the experience needed for unlocking specialization, so there was no progress.

So damn rigorous...

He probably wouldn't get the specialization tonight, Bai E was mentally prepared, "Let's go, keep moving."

"My Lord... It's better if we lead the way. The closer we get, the more cautious we need to be. If too many rat swarms are attracted, it will be difficult for us to escape," Dai Lian collected his emotions and once again took the lead.

In fact, the loss from today's lesson wasn't much, after all, there were no hints of learning special attributes before reaching level 1 specialization, and this level 1 specialization must be acquired anyhow.

The loss was at most limited to the experience that could have been gained through training on his own but was now directly exchanged at a 2-for-1 rate due to the teaching session.

It was the first time playing this game after all, so losing some experience in exchange for gaining some insight was expected.

Next time, he'd be extra careful, as all the game's judgments are based on realistic and perfect underlying logic. If he were a bit more meticulous, these losses could have been avoided.

"The more obstacles we encounter, the more it proves we're heading in the right direction," said Bai E, who had finished collecting the arrows, looking into the darkness ahead.

He wondered if the boss hiding in the shadows could provide him with some surprises.

...

"You can't escape, come back with me," Franca's gaze passed through the gaps in the net formed by the swarm of rats, looking towards the thin figure hiding under the grey-brown blanket.

"I just want to live..." The thin figure bowed deeply, his face hidden in the unseen shadow.

His shoulders quivered slightly, and the growl that came from his throat grew louder from a whisper, revealing a hysterical sense of despair.

"I just want to live... I just want to live... I haven't harmed anyone! They are just friends protecting me!"

The burly man coldly interrupted the boy's self-defense, "But your mere existence is evil, even your unintentional actions have caused unimaginable effects on humanity. You can't perfectly control these plague rats born because of you, not to mention... your friends have already taken a life."

"They bullied me first!" The boy's voice was sharp, and his emotions uncontrollably surged as he screamed, "That's not fair! Where were you when they bullied me? Where were you when I was nearly suffocating in the ditch? Why do I deserve to die? Why can't I live properly in this world? What gives you the right!"

"There is nothing unfair," the musclemans voice was calm to the point of being cold, "Fernandi, we've heard some things about you... They were wrong to bully you first, and you have every right to fight back with all your means. No one will stop that retaliation. However, you made a mistake. You shouldn't have sought the protection of an Evil God, the sworn enemy of all human society.

No one can save you."

"Retaliate? With what should I retaliate?"

How could a malnourished, weak boy without any Spiritual Energy talent retaliate effectively?

Fernandi's complaint was filled with resentment.

Franca, with some reluctance in her heart, tried to sound as gentle as possible, "Come back with us, maybe we can find a way to help you..."

"No!" The boy looked to his side, where there was still a path, "You won't catch me! I won't go with you! Never!"

"I know you still have a way now, but you no longer have a future," Franca said. "Going with us is your only choice."

"Franca!" the burly man's voice was stern, his gaze sweeping over the chaotic grid of two layers of rat swarms towards the girl at another tunnel entrance, "It's unnecessary. You know, there is no possible compromise between us and the Believers of the Evil One, only destruction. An incomplete purge is equivalent to not purging at all! Take action."

Franca stubbornly shook her head, "I want to try."

"Stubborn!"

The boy smiled tragically, "See... you won't let me go, I've heard about your ways."

After speaking, the boy who was about to run suddenly paused, a bitter smile appearing on his face.

"You... you still have people."

Chapter 110: I allow it

The rat swarm seemed to be following some command, interlinking at the end of the corridor near a pipe opening, weaving together a net resembling a spider's web made of rats.

Bai E's gaze pierced through the encirclement of rats, making out a faint figure above which floated a line of text only he could see—

[??? (Human) (Demon Believer) — Using "Lucky Strike" to kill can drop: Definitely (Fresh Meat*900, Battle Experience 1000 points, Favor: Father's Love); Possibly (Expertise: Digging Whiz)]

"..."

How strange...

Facing the pressure of being assaulted from three directions at once, the boy's last line of defense was finally breached.

"Why!" The voice was piercing, like a cuckoo bleeding, "Why can't you give me a way out! What's wrong with wanting to live! My sister..."

The boy, biting his teeth until his gums bled, ultimately succumbed to the urge to vent his despair.

He had heard that these Arbitration Place people liked to uproot entirely, and if because of his words their attention shifted to his sister... perhaps she too would suffer a cruel fate.

"Don't force me! Stop pushing me!"

The boundary between the high-dimensional and the real was blurring. As the boy's words fell into disarray, the space behind him had already slipped into a kind of hazy state, with sickly green eyes seemingly about to emerge, and the unique aura of demons starting to brew in the hearts of everyone around.

Anyone who believed in demons would become a conduit for the demons to infiltrate reality...

"Who said they were going to kill you?"

The hazy space abruptly stilled.

???

???

???

Franca, a burly man, three players by his side... Glances from three different directions simultaneously locked onto the same figure.

The figure, as if oblivious to them, merely continued to speak slowly, "When fate corners you, you can choose any means necessary to survive, even if it's a crime... Remember, that is not shameful. What's shameful are those who create these tragedies and then ignore them!"

"..."

Dai Lian, standing beside Bai E, had a blank look in his eyes.

What are you talking about, brother?

Didn't you bring us here to complete the mission and slay the evil?

How come after a couple of sentences, you've changed your mind?

Maybe the boy's fate does sound a bit tragic, but he's a demon believer, right? Isn't it worth checking what he might drop?

The burly man blocked by two walls of rats glared fiercely, fixated on trying to see who the heretic arriving through the slanted pipe was.

The appearance of this faction was not part of their plan, and it even seemed they might now be making enemies with them.

However, amid the chaotic movement of countless rat bodies, it was completely impossible to make out the newcomer's face in the dim reflection of the pipe.

As for the aura of Spiritual Energy... the other party had no Spiritual Energy, making it impossible to use as a marker for perception.

Identity was naturally unconfirmable.

"Covering for a heretic is a capital offense as well!" the burly man declared harshly, his intent to threaten clear.

The stunned boy also looked at the third party blocked by the rat swarm, completely bewildered by this sudden turn of events, even forcibly stopping the call of the demon's invasion.

In the dark, he instinctively searched for light, even if it was just a fleeting, illusory shimmer.

"He shouldn't die." Bai E said emotionlessly, declaring his conviction, "He did nothing wrong; he shouldn't be forced to death by this world."

A Demon Believer?

Bai E didn't momentarily see any negative traits of a Demon Believer on the boy.

His understanding of this world's inherent knowledge was still superficial, and he only believed in what he could see.

And at this moment, he saw the powerful bullying the weak, the unjust fate of the frail, that this world shouldn't be like this, he saw... justice and human rights!

Were his previous words deceiving the players?

Or were they a declaration of the maxims he staunchly upheld?

Were his prior actions aimed at gaining the protection of a superior officer?

Or were they due to his own heartfelt impulses?

Perhaps he was an insignificant figure, but he also had certain stubborn beliefs of his own.

"I won't allow it."

I won't allow this to happen before my eyes.

The calm voice resounded with certainty.

"You are making yourself an enemy of the Arbitration Place," the burly man's eyes narrowed, and a chilly aura emanated from him.

"I don't care," Bai E's gaze passed over the swarm of rats, seeing the burly man with a robust build... and the girl dressed in luxurious attire.

He had originally thought that the Arbitration Place was not what he had imagined it to be, but now he realized that the Arbitration Place he thought wasn't what he thought, turned out to be exactly what he had imagined after all.

The things You had found out... were actually correct...

"Then I'm sorry, but shielding a heretic makes you complicit in heresy!" The robust man's tone was slightly calm, but the suppressed murderous intent was icy and overflowing.

He had not intended to make a move to temper Franca.

But now...

"No need!" The tremulous voice interrupted the icy murderous intent, the boy's eyes shimmering with tears as he smiled in resignation, "Thank you... Even though I don't know who you are or what your name is, thank you."

His only regret was that he had not seen the light of this world, feeling too powerless as he faded away.

The moment he saw the light, death didn't seem scary anymore.

"I will go with you," the boy looked towards the side of the burly man, his lips trembling, fearful yet resolute about his choice, "Don't hurt him."

"You don't need to make a self-sacrificial decision on your own; I can bear the consequences of all your choices," Bai E interrupted the boy with a calm voice, "I promise, I allow, I will... shoulder everything."

"..."

In the deathly quiet corridor, only the rustling of the rat swarm sounded quietly.

Who exactly was the other party?

Looking at the unclear side corridor, the burly man's eyes flickered with uncertain suspicion.

The boy's body trembled visibly once more.

He was caught in a difficult choice.

He certainly knew the consequences of being an enemy of the Arbitration Place; it was just his last struggle before an inevitable death.

His evasion was just a resentful outcry against reality.

The moment he realized he might involve others, he forcefully overcame his fear of death and willingly embraced it.

But now... could there really be hope to live?

Could he really protect me?

Could he really contend with the Arbitration Place?

I haven't even seen my sister for the last time...

Bai E remained silent, leaving the final choice to the boy.

If he didn't have the courage to keep living even like this, there was nothing more he could do.

The boy's footsteps hesitated...

"Your actions will get him killed," the robust man narrowed his eyes.

The footsteps continued as the boy, with his back to the man, guiltily lowered his head, "I want to live..."

The rat swarm in front of Bai E silently dispersed, and the boy stepped into the corridor.

The burly man's Spiritual Energy burst forth, but the sound of something slicing through the wind came first.

"Whiz!"

The arrow, taking a curving path towards the right eye, was swiftly grasped in the middle by the quick-reacting burly man in a state of Spiritual Heart Crossing, his powerful grip twisting and deforming the arrow.

However, the next two arrows were almost hidden within the sound of the first, striking from two different trajectories at the temples directly following the first.

The sharp arrows flashed with a startling cold light, the attack from the shadows decisive and deadly, with a murderous chill overflowing.

"Buzz!"

The burst of Spiritual Energy momentarily countered the force of the arrows, and the momentum lost, the arrows finally fell helplessly.

"Clang clang clang~"

The arrows bounced slightly as they hit the ground, only to be crushed under a heavy foot, "Who the hell is it!"

"Hiss!"

Not giving the robust man time to ponder, the swarm of rats no longer wove together but fiercely launched an attack without fear of death.