

Wow 111

Chapter 111: The Little Expert at Digging Holes

...

[Trigger Scatter Shot (Double Shot)! Trigger Arc Strike! Simultaneously triggered two special techniques hitting the target, ranged weapon mastery experience +11.]

Bai E slung his bow across his back and strode away, with the boy draped in the gray-brown blanket following closely behind.

Gong Yan's eyes shimmered as she watched several silhouettes disappear into the slightly reflective, blurry light and shadows.

Even though they are enemies of the Arbitration Place... Such demeanor, so lovable.

And that gentle, calm voice that seemed almost powerful enough to be felt, it seemed so familiar.

Such a familiar feeling.

"Franca!" A burly man's voice roared from the adjacent corridor.

With a helpless shrug, Franca pulled out her longsword and swung it through the air, making "whoosh whoosh" sounds, "I've got my own troubles!"

That little rat man wasn't bad; before I showed too much resolve to exterminate utterly, he didn't let those old rats attack me...

"Hmph!"

The surging airflow vibrated the entire pipeline walls with a buzzing tremor as the brawny man with Spiritual Energy burst free from those annoying rats... and turned to run.

Chasing an enemy of unknown strength and origin in the dark underground tunnels was clearly not a wise choice.

Not to mention, there's a "mole" among one's teammates!

In this city, there are actually people daring to oppose the Arbitration Place!

That's... quite common, actually.

The Divine Arrival Sect's believers entrenched in the deepest darkness, the Mutual Aid Society organized by mutants unnoticed by ordinary people, the city's underworld that thinks it can maintain Order... All these unstable elements are potential targets.

Taking in a desperate Believer of the E forces... it's nothing out of the ordinary.

The burly man returned to the surface, his expression combining indignation and anger, "Why didn't you take action?"

Although his experience and strength were greater than Franca's, her speed was faster. She could have easily broken through the rat horde when they singled her out.

Even if she couldn't detain the enemy, at least by engaging in a close battle, she could have learned some details to track their identity.

The young lady Xiao Xiong spread her hands, "For 500 black water coins a month, why should I risk my life? I'm just a temp, Uncle~"

"..."

It was just that so-called compassion that played a fool.

The burly man turned abruptly, clenching a deformed arrow shaft in his hand.

At least there was a bit of a clue.

Looking like a product of military assembly lines, even if the enemy wasn't from the military, they were undoubtedly connected to the supply line that flows from the military to the black market.

If they want to oppose the Arbitration Place, then it's time to clean up this shady business once and for all!

"No more mercy!" the burly man warned sternly.

Franca grinned, cradling the sword sheath in her arms, "My sword is not dull either."

"..."

...

Under the cover of night, several figures swiftly wove through the jungle's silhouette, silent all the way.

Bai E kept silent, and naturally, the players did not dare to speak out of turn.

The turn of events was completely unexpected. When issuing the mission, they talked about exterminating evil without mercy, but now they had rescued the boss leader?

And it seems the task... Huh? The progress for investigating the truth is also considered complete?

That's not too bad... Without Bai E in charge, they would likely have found it difficult to fight their way through and step over the bodies of those rats to confront the final boss.

It's just unclear what to do next?

...

Enemy of the Arbitration Place?

According to Dai Lian's consistent thinking, he would definitely side with whoever was stronger or offered more rewards.

Loyalty? Nonexistent, do players even have such a thing?

But those two fools seemed different...

Gazing at the figure leading the way, Gong Yan's eyes glittered.

The silhouette that seemed ready to stand against the world for justice was the hero she aspired to be.

Moreover, having such a companion or superior meant that even in desperate circumstances, one could trust him resolutely.

Whether it stemmed from reason or emotion, this was undoubtedly a leader worth following.

As for benefits... if one only pursued benefits, how would a game differ from reality?

The game was ultimately an empty experience, but the process one underwent and pursued within it was the true wealth that could impact one's life.

This life... I'll entrust it to you.

"You're safe now."

Having finally arrived at the underground cave belonging to Li Ming, Bai E turned and spoke to the boy who had followed him down the ladder.

The dim glow of the lanterns inside the cave allowed Bai E to clearly see the boy's pale and handsome face for the first time.

Exceptionally handsome, his looks seemed to rival those of a player called Kuang Xin, except his face was covered with fine scratches and scars.

Perhaps that was one of the reasons for his tragic fate... the uneducated children's malice was pure and insane.

Just didn't know why... he looked somewhat familiar?

Bai E was certain he had never seen him before.

"Next, just hide here," Bai E said, before turning to the players who had come down as well, and asked softly, "And you... can you take care of him?"

No mission was given, just a question.

If possible, Bai E, of course, would have liked to issue a mission, but sadly, the quota for today's commissions had all been given out, and the only one left, originally meant for the top student player Zhou Wenjie, was a combat mission unsuitable for the present situation.

Such a request without mission rewards implied trouble...

"No problem!" Gong Yan responded immediately.

Bai E's gaze flickered slightly, satisfied.

Gently patting the head of the boy who reached only up to his chest, Bai E's lips curved slightly as he said, "I promised to find you some helpers for building a base, and now... he's arrived."

"Huh?" The boy looked up at Bai E's face, full of confusion, "I..."

Bai E gave him a gentle smile, "What, you're going to tell us that mice can't dig holes? Or... you don't have plans to put in the effort to build a home for yourself?"

"Home..."

The boy murmured softly.

Such a distant word. The home with his sister was warm, but there were many things he dared not tell her.

Ever since his sister had gone to the barracks, it had been very difficult for him to survive alone in that place.

Without those "friends," he would probably have turned into a pile of bones by now.

"I've picked up many people like you before; you're neither the first nor the last. You need to build a home for everyone, that is your responsibility," said Bai E in a gentle tone, becoming increasingly adept at deception.

"Yes, my lord."

The man before him had a resolute and reliable appearance, like a cold sun, spreading light that fell on the soul, cool as moonlight.

The boy looked toward the three players and quietly swore an oath, "I will build a home for everyone..."

["Lucky Strike" charge +5.]

Chapter 112: The Pure Pursuit of Idealists

This was the second time this had happened... A single person could provide a "lucky strike" skill charge value that surpassed that of multiple people.

Was it fanatical worship? Or resolute intent to follow?

"Take good care of him, I'm leaving the base to you, I'll see you tomorrow at noon," Bai E waved his hand and quietly left.

In fact, there were still some doubts and concerns that weren't voiced—like whether the boy could perfectly control the rat horde, or what kind of connection he had with the demons. What sort of impact would the identity of a demon believer have on his body as well as his mind and actions?

But today was not the right time.

The restless soul needed temporary warmth to soothe it.

He also needed to learn more about demons and their believers through other channels.

If the boy's fate was to plunge into the abyss of destruction due to his contamination with demonic influence, he could only do his best to ensure the boy journeyed through the last part of his life with as few regrets as possible.

He could rest forever in a sun-warmed afternoon among the chorus of birds and fragrance of flowers, but he should not fade namelessly into the pitch-black, ice-cold sewers amidst helpless panic and indignation.

The people of this world lived a miserable enough existence... they shouldn't also die a miserable death.

...

"The boss has left," Dai Lian, who had taken the initiative to climb to the outside of the cave to see Bai E off, let out a long sigh of relief.

When one's conscience is burdened, it tends to cause some panic.

In the games on the screens of the past, Dai Lian could sell out NPCs without even blinking.

But in this game of maximum realism, the oppression from such characters was also at its peak.

Every time the boss's gaze swept over him, Dai Lian always had the feeling that all his little schemes were completely seen through.

Just a moment ago, the quick-thinking he did indeed entertain some various thoughts.

As their range of activity grew and he heard more news, he came to know that the Arbitration Place was incredibly powerful and, for the right price, not impossible to sell to.

Of course, he didn't ponder this thought further before it was easily derailed by two fools.

But merely having such a thought made standing under the boss's scrutiny feel as heavy as committing a crime.

"He's gone, so what's with the sigh of relief?" Kuang Xin asked, noticing something odd about his tone.

Dai Lian responded with a wistful tone, "Just now, it was lucky that Yanzi reacted quickly, or we would have been in trouble."

Kuang Xin looked confused, uttering a perplexed noise, "...Huh?"

"Just now the boss told us to take care of that kid..." Dai Lian glanced downward—they three players had run up to see off the boss, leaving only that Rat Person hiding alone below—"I hesitated for a moment, but luckily Yanzi answered quickly. Otherwise, I guess the boss wouldn't have offered to help us build a storehouse."

Their path to promotion within the organization would probably have grown distant.

It was a test.

And luckily, Yanzi's genuine kindness had inadvertently struck true.

But I, who quickly reacted as well, deserve some praise...

"Um... Oh right!" Speaking of this matter made Kuang Xin curious, "How did the boss know he could help us dig? Didn't he also just meet this boss for the first time?"

"Who knows..." Dai Lian's eyes wandered, "Maybe he has other sources of information, but speaking of which, I'm more curious about why the boss suddenly changed his mind? Wasn't he going to kill him at first?"

Gong Yan tilted her head, her eyes slightly trance-like, "Maybe it was after hearing about the boy's ordeal... Don't you think it's just what the boss should do? Otherwise, what kind of organization did we join?"

If their leader had not made such a decision at this moment, then what did all those words he preached about the beliefs of the organization mean?

Were those just hollow goals touted by hypocrites? Ambitious schemers wielding kindness as weapons in pursuit of their plots?

"Such charisma is what it takes to lead an organization filled with idealism, right?"

"I suppose..." Dai Lian sounded somewhat melancholic.

Remembering the heroic demeanor their leader had displayed when confronting the Arbitration Place... even Dai Lian had to admit that he too needed to steer clear for the time being.

This NPC was indeed a bit handsome.

...

Bai E quickened his pace back to the military camp, propelled by the rare clarity of the starry night.

His actions today had indeed been somewhat impulsive.

But what venture doesn't come with risks?

If caution were always useful, there wouldn't be so many sacrifices in this world.

Life and death are dictated by fate.

As he delved deeper into this world's backdrop, Bai E felt his natural instincts gradually being unleashed... of course, it might also be the world's tech restrictions on artificial human genetics subtly affecting his decision-making—

To do what you want to do, to say what you want to say.

Only with a clear mind can one live a satisfying life.

Biding one's time is just to accumulate strength, hiding away forever is nothing but cowardice.

You only live once, so why not live boldly?

[Feedback received from the commission, Knowledge - Computer Hardware Maintenance Experience +2.]

"..."

?

...

The city, like a flickering newborn star, played tug-of-war with his solitary lamp throughout the night.

Standing alone and somewhat lost in the middle of the street, Zhou Wenjie was dazzled by myriad spinning lights pouring into his eyes, feeling like the modern urban streetscape hesitantly guided him back to reality.

The inner city... is it really like this?

No wonder everyone outside is desperate to get in; just this brightly lit comfort is an unimaginable stability for those outside.

Wenjie, curious about everything in this world, walked briskly along the clean streets.

He soon realized a problem—where should he even begin with the most basic survival?

Entering the inner city with empty hands, he had neither acquaintances nor funds.

"Hiring for LAN maintenance work, eh! Brother... wanna take a look? On-the-job training, guaranteed to learn." The guy yelling on the street corner late at night didn't look at all respectable.

However, Wenjie, with no prospects in sight, seemed to have little choice.

Indeed, as long as he had a foothold, he was confident he could learn anything.

"Do you think I can do it?" Wenjie asked, slightly anxious. Apart from an Inner City Residence Permit, he had nothing on him, and he was clueless about the inner city's situation.

"Sure, you're more than capable!" said the skin-and-bones man with a giggle, "Just by looking at you, brother, I can tell you're hardworking and down-to-earth! As long as you're willing to learn, there'll definitely be no issue!"

"Alright..." Wenjie silently tightened his grip on the knife hidden in his bosom, the only weapon Gong Yan had given him for self-defense, "I'll go with you to have a look."

To die was no big deal, but to lose the Inner City Residence Permit that Yanzi had gone to great lengths to obtain for him would be an unforgivable sin.

But he couldn't pass up the opportunity; there was no harm in checking out the situation.

The man immediately packed up the mess in his hands and, with eyes darting about like a rat, looked around before tilting his head to signal Wenjie to follow him into a dark alley behind, "Come with me!"

Even the most luminous cities have their dark corners untouched by light, and after many twists and turns, Wenjie found himself in a dusty basement led by the other man.

With the sound of an air compressor thundering in operation, the flashing light from fan blades offered an unstable source of illumination, and the skinny man had to raise his voice to instruct Wenjie by his

ear, "When you get there, don't touch or look around randomly. Focus on the lesson, and afterwards, you'll be ready for the job."

Wenjie nodded, "Okay."

...

[You are learning "Knowledge - Computer Hardware Maintenance (Incomplete)," progress 20%...]

...

[You are learning "Knowledge - Computer Hardware Maintenance (Incomplete)," progress 40%...]

"There's not much difference..."

Wenjie's eyes were somewhat glazed over as the principles of this work appeared not much different from that of computer hardware in the real world, resulting in a swift and significant learning progress.

[You are learning "Knowledge - Computer Hardware Maintenance (Incomplete)," progress 100%...]

"Alright, you can go to work now. Remember, if you don't know something, you can ask, you can reserve it, don't fiddle around, anything damaged here will cost more than you can afford!" the supervisor warned sternly.

Wenjie looked at the mountains of "electronic waste" piled up in the warehouse and smiled helplessly.

Gleaning usable parts from this pile of electronic waste was the job he and the others had to do.

So-called maintenance, turned out to be salvaging whatever useful parts remained in this trash...

Wenjie guessed he had probably been tricked into some kind of small, shady workshop, but as long as there was an opportunity to improve his skills, it wasn't a dead end.

Casually picking up a circuit board before him, the item's properties instantly floated before his eyes—

[Discarded Electronic Component: Careful dismantling may still yield some usable spare parts...
Dismantling will yield: Usable Parts 5~8. Dismantling requirement: Knowledge - Computer Hardware Maintenance.]

Just recycling?

A glint passed through Wenjie's eyes; working a lifetime in such a place would hardly give access to truly high-end knowledge.

Who would have thought he hadn't had his fill of computers in reality, and now he had to resume the old trade in the game.

Well... if he had to advance this way, then let's give them a little shock with his existing knowledge.

"Hey! What are you daydreaming about? I told you to work, did you hear me?"

Wenjie turned to look at the supervisor, smiled faintly at him, then sat down at a workbench not far away.

[You are attempting to dismantle...]

[You have successfully dismantled the target, obtaining Useful Components*3.]

[You have completed an instance of practical Computer Hardware Maintenance, gaining Computer Hardware Maintenance Experience +4.]

[You are attempting to perfect the Knowledge - Computer Hardware Maintenance, current completion progress 1%, upon full completion you will gain: Knowledge - Computer Hardware Maintenance; Research Experience +1000 points; Science Points*2.]

Wenjie lifted his head slightly, smiling knowingly.

You exploit my labor for free; I exploit your materials for free... Fair enough.

Chapter 113: Wen Jie's Crazy Feedback

[Feedback from the commission: Your physical fitness +0.1.]

[Feedback from the commission: Knowledge - Computer Hardware Maintenance Experience +50.]

Last night, Bai E's return to the camp had not attracted any attention, as everyone in the tents slept peacefully.

During the day, it wasn't only Bai E who was striving in his training; they too were training their various abilities in their own ways.

When he awoke this morning, the improvements from the task feedback had already appeared on his panel.

Looking at his current physical fitness attribute of 14.1, Bai E frowned slightly in concern.

As the players' attributes grew, the rate at which they could increase his fitness started to slow. However, this wasn't much of an issue, especially considering he was almost at his peak anyway.

It was good that his attributes were improving, but the nearing human body limit started to create an invisible sense of urgency in Bai E.

Before the Gene Optimization Solution could raise the basic attribute limit of the human body, the upper limit of the average person's three-dimensional attributes was 15 points.

No matter how many difficult missions he assigned to the players, or how much effort they put in, once his attributes hit the ceiling, he could no longer make any progress through his own training or via players' task feedback.

This was the limitation of the human body, the decree of genetics. Without a thorough and direct change in potential through genetic optimization, the 15-point threshold in his three-dimensional attributes would lock the upper bound of his development.

Of course, this limitation wasn't unique to him. Every person living in this world suffered from this worry.

That's why the Gene Optimization Solution was the world's most scarce and treasured possession.

The need for a compatible Gene Optimization Solution was pressing!

Before that could happen, however, he couldn't completely ignore the waste in attributes from task feedback.

With only 0.9 points left to reach the full value of his physical attribute, Bai E felt that with his grueling training regimen, he could manage to increase it on his own.

Therefore, the subsequent missions he would issue to the players... he had to consider letting them help him "proxy train" the two basic attributes of reflex and insight.

Physical fitness was undoubtedly the easiest attribute to improve and showed the fastest results, as the standard military training programs could boost it quickly. However, insight and reflex were different.

Though they were useful in many situations, they were not easy to enhance.

Even the military camp didn't have any prescribed routines that claimed to quickly train these two attributes... Maybe he could ask the instructor for some kind of extreme training methods?

It wasn't crucial whether these methods would increase the attributes or not; the main thing was they needed to be extreme. He figured the players would like that.

In addition, the surprise from that top student player Zhou Wenjie was even more astonishing.

A full 50 points of computer hardware maintenance experience, along with the 2 points he had gained last night, totaled to 52 points.

According to the feedback experience halving calculation, the player himself would have already received 104 points of computer hardware maintenance experience.

In other words, Zhou Wenjie, through his own efforts, had acquired a complete level 1 Knowledge in just one night.

This rate of advancement was terrifying.

Truly a top student.

He just didn't know what Zhou did to gain experience so insanely.

...

[You have completed a disassembly of the target, acquiring useful parts*4.]

[You have completed a computer hardware maintenance practical operation, computer hardware maintenance experience +5.]

[You have learned "Level 1 Computer Hardware Maintenance," synchronously gaining a tech point*1.]

[Computer Hardware Maintenance (Level 1): You are familiar with the specific functions of all computer hardware, enabling you to keenly troubleshoot all potential computer hardware faults and expertly disassemble and assemble all related electronic components.]

[Current computer hardware maintenance experience 4/300, at 300 points you may master "Level 2 Computer Hardware Maintenance".]

[You are attempting to perfect your Knowledge - Computer Hardware Maintenance, current progress 39%, upon completion, you will receive: Knowledge - Computer Hardware Maintenance; Scientific research experience +1000 points; Technology points x2.]

"Still not enough."

Wen Jie who dismantled machines throughout the night, didn't even have a moment to drink a sip of water.

"Such opportunities to gain experience for free from these materials are rare." Wen Jie's eyes, although slightly tired, shone with excitement, "Keep going, keep going until I can't rise any higher, then I'll give them a surprise that'll make it all worthwhile."

While briefly grabbing discarded parts, his gaze flickered over his colleagues who begged and bickered, half-assing their work, and a hint of contempt flashed across Zhou Wenjie's eyes.

He knew that these people were likely NPCs, but in this incredibly realistic world, even NPCs deserved to be looked down upon.

They were given the chance to practice their skills but did not cherish it, only thinking about using boring protests to fight for so-called freedom.

Freedom relies on ability, not on begging.

Also trapped in this dark workshop, these people only knew to protest, asking for water, food, rest, and fair treatment.

But what they got in return was undoubtedly a round of beatings.

In this contrast, Wen Jie, who focused on "working," seemed exceedingly docile.

The supervisor, clutching his whip, patrolled around, occasionally leaning in to whisper to one another when slacking off, "How long has he been working continuously?"

"Has he taken a nap?"

"Don't know... I dozed off for a bit too."

"With him here, our performance looks a lot better... The kid is really obedient."

"Should I take him some water... don't want to tire him out too much."

"Bring some food too, it's rare to see someone as well-behaved."

The diligent Wen Jie made even the most ruthless enforcers feel pity.

The buff man quietly handed over a small bottle of water and two pieces of broken biscuits wrapped in a paper bag, "Have some water... and eat something to fill your stomach."

"Just leave it there." Wen Jie, heedless of anything else, focused solely on raking in the experience.

The improvement in understanding that came from the steady increase in experience was like the most tempting poison, capturing all his attention and luring him to indulge in it.

"I want water too! I want to eat as well!" A man not far from Wen Jie, seeing the food and water ignored by Wen Jie, turned green with envy and lunged for it.

"Go to hell!" The muscular man kicked him away, "You don't even look at your own work attitude, do you think you deserve the same treatment as... as this little brother?"

Fearing that Wen Jie would be frightened, the buff man quickly turned around to shield the pitiful, bloodied man, "Don't worry, little brother, he doesn't appreciate kindness. We're not bad people."

"Oh~" Wen Jie responded mechanically, and after a pause, added, "You're noisy."

"... I'll be quiet, I'll keep my mouth shut."

"Tap, tap, tap," the sound of high heels clinking against metal rang out from the spiral staircase on the side.

A sultry female voice echoed in the dusty warehouse, "How's the progress?"

Upon hearing this unexpected voice, the supervisors who had been idly wandering around instantly tensed up, their eyes bulging like bells as they began sweeping around.

The whip cracked menacingly as it flew through the air, "Work properly! No slacking off!"

The warehouse manager, who was napping in a hidden spot, awoke with a start and jumped to his feet, "Almost done... almost done, Ms. Scorpion."

The woman with a terrifying scar crossing over her right eye and her purple dress slit up to the thigh, clad in black stockings, paused on the edge of the halfway-ascended spiral staircase.

Her gaze slowly swept over the entire warehouse before settling on a particular spot.

There, the useable parts that had been stripped down were piled up into a small mountain...

Chapter 114: selection begins

Bai E arrived at the training ground early, but Helen, who had been absent all night, seemed to have been waiting there for a while.

"There's some more data that needs to be collected."

After analyzing the data, Helen discovered something amiss. The body data collected from Bai E were from his second phase of weight bearing, which is 43 kilograms, while most soldiers start their high-level physical training from the first phase with a 30-kilogram load.

Helen instinctively felt that there might be some differences between the different weight-bearing levels. For research to be cautious and comprehensive, under the right conditions, she needed to gather as much evidence as possible.

Bai E's gaze swept over the soldiers who were gradually arriving for assembly, with a noticeable unease in his eyes about disrupting Order.

"Don't worry, I've spoken with your instructors. It's just like yesterday with the sensor attachment; it will be quick, and you'll be able to make it back for training," Helen reassured him.

"Oh~"

After attaching the sensors again, Helen specifically instructed, "Remember, just use a 30-kilogram weight this time, understand?"

"Understood."

Upon hustling back to the training ground, Bai E noticed that the atmosphere was somewhat peculiar.

Though everyone was still training diligently, the scent of hormones in the air was quite different from usual.

There was an added sense of restraint, a touch more fervor.

Although the soldiers usually trained earnestly, the repetition of daily workouts would inevitably lead to feelings of weariness.

Artificial humans are natural soldiers and absolute war machines, but fundamentally they cannot escape the category of being human.

Being human means feeling tiredness, feeling boredom.

Even though they would habitually expend energy in daily training, to say that they give their utmost effort to explore their limits without reservation every single day... that's not quite realistic.

Artificial humans also have their own joys and sorrows, happiness and worries.

They ponder about what to eat today, strive for the rewards they want, pursue honors, and might even build small nests under bridges...

Today... they seemed a few degrees more earnest, their actions a bit more rigid.

Was it because of those two officers wandering around the sidelines?

Bai E cast a quick glance, then withdrew his gaze calm and unruffled.

Yesterday, Carlos had given him a heads-up, saying that the military camp would soon be selecting a small number of soldiers for a secret mission to explore ruins. He was advised to perform well when the time came.

The ones before him were probably the officers responsible for selecting the targets?

Exploration of ruins... the goal required by the main mission.

"Make a good impression." Drill Sergeant Chavez, the stern-faced instructor, noticed Bai E's return and stealthily came over. With his back to the two officers, he reminded in almost motionless lips.

The grassroots instructors weren't aware of the specifics, but they understood that such exceptional observation and selection surely meant something favorable was at hand.

As for asking for details... seeing how those two officers maintained a careful distance from them, it was evident that strict orders had come from above, leaving no room for leniency.

"Understood." Bai E nodded slightly and walked over to start donning his weight-bearing equipment.

...

"How come there's still someone late?"

"Lack of seriousness in training attitude, deduct five points."

The two officers strictly followed commands, executing them rigidly.

Even though they held the same rank as the grassroots instructors in terms of military hierarchy, their responsibilities differed. They simply carried out higher-ranking officers' orders without understanding the details.

"What's the number?"

"95... 95B27, I think." One of them stared vacantly for a while before approximately confirming it after comparing with the photo on his tablet.

"...Sounds familiar."

"Right... I think so too."

"Hey~ who cares, just log it down. Oh, and for the instructor's lack of supervision, dock ten points."

"..." His companion paused briefly, "The instructor gets logged too?"

"Log... it?"

"Sure, I'll follow your lead."

...

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

[Current simulation completion: 125.0%]

Heeding Helen's advice, Bai E followed the guidance of experience to enhance his workout results to the extreme.

He also noticed that under the premise of a 30-kilogram weight, even with the correction from expending experience, he could only increase his completion to 1.25 times that of the instructor's before he could no longer make any progress.

Within the confines of limited conditions, there is a benchmark for the extent to which one can push the body, and this was likely his own benchmark.

While utilizing experience to drive the efficiency of his body's consumption to the limit, Bai E's progress towards exhaustion naturally far outstripped the others.

...

Watching the helpless figure collapse from the obstacle in exhaustion, the two recording officers hissed.

"That's it?"

"This is just the level of a clueless new recruit..."

The officer responsible for observing advanced physical training can't ask the teaching instructors for fairness, so they need to have a certain level of judgment. Those capable of holding this duty all have some level of understanding, or may even have been high-level physical training instructors themselves.

Right now, that 95B27's performance is blatantly obvious.

You can't expect to be more efficient than the instructor, can you?

The current performance is just like that of the most unskilled and unaware novice who has just started advanced physical training.

"Ah, I remember now! Isn't this the new recruit War God that's been the hot topic these past few days?"

"Seems like the level isn't that great, huh?"

"Who cares... We do our job, just make a note of it."

"Mmh... Huh? Who's that over there?"

A figure in a white lab coat suddenly entered the line of sight of the two.

"Looks like it's the Scientific Research Institute's Helen?"

"Why is she here?"

"Seems like... she's looking for that 95B27."

"...He's been taken away!"

"I saw it..."

"Does he... have some special circumstances?"

"Should we ask about it?"

"Then, shall we ask?"

...

"Now, let's start compiling the physical performance scores observed by everyone."

In the dimly lit conference room, the officer responsible for coordinating those qualified for advanced physical training and currently the only one in the know instructed their subordinates: "Each of you put forward the top ten targets from your scores, and we will consider them collectively."

Physical attributes are physical attributes, and physical performance is physical performance. Otherwise, why bother observing when you can just thoughtlessly pull out a bunch of soldiers with full 15-point physical attributes?

Under the same attributes, each soldier's ability to use their attributes can vary significantly, and even under the same physical attributes, there are different types of sub-scores composing the combination.

In this mission, would a pure damage sponge be of any use? Obviously not.

Suitability for the mission's objective is far more important.

"These are my five."

"These are the five I've picked out..."

The officers responsible for observation each expressed their opinions, sharing their data onto the screen in front of their high commander through the local network.

"Commander Griffith, I have a special situation to report."

Looking at the subordinate who had stood up, Griffith nodded and replied, "Speak."

"We observed a peculiar soldier, his performance... is a bit odd."

"Go into detail."

"We first noticed him when he was late to training, and when he officially joined, his body's functional balance deteriorated extremely quickly. Even with the highest consumption rate set by the instructors and a combination of 13 points—the lowest physical attributes—it was far from what it should be.

Plus, the target had just been released as a new artificial recruit from the previous batch, so we judged him to be just a newcomer to advanced physical training with poor performance..."

"What's so special to report about that?"

"Isn't the answer obvious? Your judgment is not wrong."

"You had to mention that separately?"

The other officers assigned to observation were puzzled and there was a buzz of discussion.

Being selected as the target of their observation meant achievements for them.

Military merit is what most people in the army pursue.

However, the word "special" often is indeed very special. Once it appears, it means it will definitely occupy a spot, and those who realized it was a false alarm expressed their dissatisfaction.

"But..." The reporting subordinate waited quietly until the conference room's discussion subsided, then slowly spoke, revealing the unexpected information they had last obtained, "I heard from their teaching instructors that the soldier's performance was actually outstanding, surpassing everyone. This was personally confirmed by Helen from the Scientific Research Institute..."

The irritable officer didn't wait to hear everything and interrupted impatiently, "Aren't we not supposed to contact those teaching instructors?"

Teaching instructors and their own soldiers spend day and night together. They might have their own biases, and taking their opinions can easily mislead them.

To ensure fairness, they had been strictly ordered not to contact the teaching instructors during the observation process, with violations leading to the deduction of military merit.

And now...

"Shut up!" Griffith narrowed his eyes and shouted angrily, silencing the conference room.

He looked at the subordinate who had stood up to report, his eyes filled with surprise and uncertainty, "You just said... that soldier is related to Helen?"

"Yes." The subordinate nodded slowly, "We saw with our own eyes Helen take him away."

"..."

Griffith was silent for a moment before pressing his hand down, "Keep your opinions about this soldier on hold for now. I will go to verify with Helen. Everyone else, continue with your reports!"

Chapter 115: Helen's Second Test

[Physical recovery 100%, Rapid Recovery (unlocked) unlock progress 30%.]

"Ha~"

Bai E suddenly awoke, the occasionally cold touch on his body during his sleep always made him feel as if a blade was gliding over him, creating a sense of danger. This was the first time he actively wanted to wake up from a coma induced by physical exhaustion.

"Awake?" Helen, who was sitting at the workbench with her back to Bai E, asked softly without turning her head.

"Mhm..." Bai E sat up from the equipment bed and began to dress.

Only a pair of big shorts was left on him, Helen had almost completely stripped him...

[Another 270 points of combat experience gone.]

The little combat experience that he had just replenished from the players had once again grown wings and flown away, leaving him with only 93 points, which wasn't even enough for the next training correction. Luckily, there was still general experience to fall back on...

Bai E sighed in his heart. To cooperate with Helen's experiment, he had once again sacrificed combat experience for modifications without having the chance to consolidate the memory in his own body afterward.

It felt like a bit of a waste.

But fortunately, there was another compensating hope—

[You are currently participating in the creation of knowledge—Advanced Physical Training Version 3.0, current creation progress 5%...]

"I go... Training?" Bai E, now dressed, asked quietly.

It's never too late to mend the fold after a sheep is lost.

His body's memory of exercising under extreme conditions was fading away. Bai E could only feel as if ants were crawling over his skin without seizing the opportunity right away.

Very urgent...

"Don't be in a hurry." Helen, with her head down working at the desk, beckoned for him to continue waiting without turning back, "Just give me a moment, I need to explain some things to you."

"Oh~"

It felt like years...

After finally dealing with the newly acquired data, Helen spun her chair around and, with legs crossed and leaning against the back of the chair, looked at Bai E, "I've preliminarily analyzed your body's movement under two different weight bearing conditions, and I have some suggestions for you."

"Mmm..." Bai E listened attentively, as docile as could be.

"At this stage, I think you should stick to using a 30 kg weight as it is sufficient to achieve your training goals. Your physical attribute has already reached 14.1, but until you hit 15 points, the effects of extreme training under a 30 kg weight should be enough for your body to make significant progress with each training session.

While you can achieve higher energy consumption with a 43 kg weight, it doesn't significantly enhance the benefits to your body. In fact, your body may experience a deficit from the excessive consumption in this overloaded state.

I'm not sure yet why your body recovers from injuries faster than the average, but if you continue high-load training under a 43 kg weight, your recovery speed won't keep up with the rate of injury, and chronic injuries will be hard to manage."

[You are currently participating in the creation of knowledge—Advanced Physical Training Version 3.0, current creation progress 12%...]

"Oh~" Bai E nodded as if enlightened.

No wonder his talent unlocking speed skyrocketed after starting Advanced Physical Training; it wasn't just a matter of recovering stamina, the high-load training was also invisibly damaging his body.

In fact, even if Helen hadn't suggested it, Bai E was planning on continuing with 30 kg weight training.

After all, even though he could achieve a higher level of completion under a 43 kg weight with experience correction, with his own memory, he couldn't reach that extreme level. It was more appropriate for his current situation to train under 30 kg without exceeding 125% completion.

"This is just a suggestion from me, but in addition..." Helen took off her glasses, her naturally charming and slender eyes quietly stared at Bai E. A tiny, delicate mole beneath the right corner of her eye attracted Bai E's gaze like a black hole, making it hard for him to look away.

"I want to ask you something..."

The soft, bewitching voice seemed to come from beyond the heavens, ethereal and drifting, echoing in Bai E's mind.

[With the help of "Self-Restraint," you successfully passed a "Psychological Check."]

[You have successfully passed a mysticism resistance check, Mysticism +0.1.]

Bai E's eyes were blurry, as if his consciousness had drifted off to another world, he responded subconsciously, "Yes?"

"Why do you push yourself to train to such an extent?"

Helen looked quietly at Bai E's face, waiting for the warrior who had created many miracles to answer.

Human effort has no standard answer, how much should one strive before it is considered "enough"?

Is it enough to surpass peers? Is it enough to surpass instructors? To what extent does surpassing them count as reaching an end?

Everyone saw the variety of efforts made by this artificial human recruit, everyone marveled at the performance he had demonstrated, but the motivation that supported him to break the norms in the eyes of others time and time again... nobody cared.

But she wanted to know.

"Of course, you should do everything to the utmost," Bai E said with an ethereal look and a voice as rigid as still water, "Train earnestly, laugh heartily, cry out loud, and enjoy meals as if each were your last. I cherish every day of life, because the start of each day is the first day of the rest of my life. Unless I am about to die..."

Bai E's pace of speaking was very slow, his words measured and distinct, the slow cadence seemingly underpinning the intention behind all his actions.

"..."

Helen stared into Bai E's eyes, silent for a moment, that strange attraction fading slowly with the passage of time.

Bai E blinked, as though waking from a profound dream.

"Helen... Did I just drift off?" Bai E showed a clearly apologetic expression on his face.

Helen smiled, her eyes losing their envious glow, "No, it was me who was distracted."

Such a pure artificial human...

This is the magnificent miracle expressed by genes under the realm of infinite possibility!

"You mentioned before that you wanted to know more about my research, are you interested in hearing about it now?"

"Yes," Bai E nodded seriously.

He had a clear understanding of his own role, which in this task of developing new knowledge was to "participate in creation."

It was definitely Helen's role to create, his to participate.

More precisely, Helen was to conduct the research, and he was to be the subject of it...

The only hope of completing this task lay in Helen taking the initiative to impart her knowledge generously.

If she kept silent, his presence would be in vain.

"Originally I planned to adapt your training method so that everyone could utilize it, but based on current findings, to accomplish this there are mainly two concerns—the damage to the body is too severe, and the difficulty of personal will and control over one's body is quite high..."

[You are participating in the creation of knowledge—Advanced Physical Training Version 3.0, current progress 29%...]

"Moreover, I've found that on you, in fact, a 30-kilogram load is entirely sufficient before reaching a physical condition of 15 points, and the three different load levels previously designated are unnecessary. The training with your 43-kilogram load could be applied to those with physical conditions above 15 points..."

[You are participating in the creation of knowledge—Advanced Physical Training Version 3.0, current progress 46%...]

"I need more experimental references with different targets as a comparison with your sample in order to formulate a training method suitable for most warriors, and at that time..."

"Thump thump thump~" A knock on the door interrupted Helen's speech.

"Speak."

"Teacher... Teacher..." Aer's gentle voice came from outside the door, "The military has sent someone over claiming that they need to verify something urgent with you, do you have a moment?"

Chapter 116: Organize a party

"Is there an important matter you need me to verify?" Frowning in thought for a moment, Helen looked at Bai E, "Then you go back and continue your training, I still have some things to handle here."

"Hmm..."

As Helen watched Bai E leave the room, she didn't immediately set off. The pressing matters of the military base might not be so urgent for her; organizing her own thoughts was more important.

"Was he just... controlled by my Spiritual Energy?"

It seemed like it from his behavior, but the expected feedback wasn't quite there... a strange feeling.

Especially since the other party had a precedent for resisting the suppression of Spiritual Energy, she had thought this attempt wouldn't be so easy... but to her surprise, it succeeded.

This success seemed all the more suspicious.

But on second thought, this was a private setting, not like the battlefield with its spirit of resolute and fervent will.

The other party hadn't received orders to fight like on the battlefield, and his commanding officer's orders were probably to cooperate with her research, so being controlled by her Spiritual Energy seemed natural.

She had only instinctively sensed an inkling of dissonance.

If this soldier's behavior was as it appeared on the surface, then it was flawlessly perfect, even a miracle of genetic expression; but if it was all an act... Helen suddenly felt a chill.

Or... should she test him again next time?

After sitting quietly for a while, pondering the data she had just received and all the doubts about testing 95B27, Helen finally rose silently.

The officer waiting outside the door did not rush her.

"Lead the way."

"Yes, ma'am!"

...

"Is it necessary to convene a council meeting just for a synthetic warrior? If there's a controversy, why not just disqualify him? With so many soldiers in the barracks, can't we manage without one?"

Hamilton scanned Carlos across from him, his tone mocking, "But someone disagrees..."

Hamilton had no personal opinion regarding those synthetic soldiers created as cannon fodder.

Even in his view, the performance of that 95B27 was top-notch; if all the synthetic warriors in the barracks could achieve that level, he would be pleased.

But if they wanted to climb the ranks?

Sorry... synthetic beings should not have such presumptuous ambitions. Sovereignty of the world should always belong to natural-born humans!

Carlos stood tall, full of vigor, "Since we are selecting elites, we should treat everyone fairly. His performance should be judged on objective facts, not on subjective decisions based on personal experience."

"Pfft," scoffed Hamilton with disdain, "That sounds nice, but isn't it just for that little bit of military merit after the success of the military operation?"

Everyone knew what Carlos was thinking.

He wanted to use the repeated outstanding performance of his synthetic warriors to force them to sign the application for Gene Optimization Solution by throwing it in their face.

No matter how biased they were against synthetic soldiers, they could not deny the clear facts of combat achievements and would have to begrudgingly accept them.

That was the fairness Carlos sought to achieve.

To make such a fuss over a synthetic soldier, the guy must be crazy...

"Helen is here."

The guard whispered a reminder, and footfalls marked by a tight rhythm entered the conference room.

As Helen stepped in, she exhibited no intention of sitting and delaying, standing at the doorway her gaze swept around the room before locking onto Weslin to ask, "What did you want to see me for?"

Weslin smiled somewhat ingratiatingly, "You see, we've heard that you've been conducting some secret research with an artificial human soldier these past few days. Our instructors are a bit puzzled by the performance of that artificial human soldier. As it concerns the performance assessment of every soldier, we need to ensure the utmost fairness.

If it's convenient, I hope you can reveal a bit about the situation."

"Assessment?" Helen's brow furrowed slightly as she considered this a good thing.

Regardless of whether Bai E's inner self matched his outward appearance, based on facts as they presently stood, he deserved the treatment he was due in the barracks.

Then, she might as well give him a little push...

With that thought, Helen immediately nodded and replied, "Yes, he is indeed helping me with research on physical training programs. The advanced physical training method improved upon by Bai...95B27's instincts, I believe, has the potential to be extended to all soldiers, which could allow each soldier's physical attributes to improve more rapidly.

Moreover, this training method remains effective even for genetically enhanced soldiers with physical attributes above 15 points, solving our previous issue where higher attributes could only be raised slowly through actual combat. We're still experimenting with the specific plan, and more detailed information cannot be disclosed at this time."

"Advanced physical training?"

"Plan improvement?"

"Instincts?"

These unfamiliar terms somewhat jammed the brains of the officers present.

They thought the main point of the meeting was to witness the verbal clashes between the two political factions led by Hamilton and Carlos, yet they did not expect to hear even more explosive news.

This was something that could enhance the strength of all soldiers, an absolutely tremendous boon for their military faction.

Weslin's eyes lit up immediately, "How confident are you about this plan?"

Helen was exceedingly cautious, "I can't make any promises for now."

"Alright," Weslin nodded, "then thank you for your cooperation, Academician Helen."

Helen's voice was cool, "If there's nothing else, I'll be leaving now. There's a lot of experimental data to process."

"No, no more questions... no more questions..."

As Helen turned to leave, Weslin suddenly recalled something and hastily called out to retain her, "Oh, Academician Helen, there's one more thing I wanted to ask."

"Speak."

"Last time you said that once you've finished investigating 95B27's battlefield performance, you could announce the incident where he saved many soldiers on the battlefield..."

Helen's eyes flicked sideways in hesitation before she responded, "It can be announced now..."

After Helen departed, a sense of triumph filled Carlos's face.

Complete victory.

"The facts are clear, Soldier 95B27's capabilities far surpass everyone else, and his physical rating should be ranked first!"

"Hmph!" Hamilton snorted coldly, turned his face away, crossed his arms, and remained silent.

Weslin clapped his hands, "Let's consider this matter settled, and continue with the subsequent selection process. Additionally, Logistics Department Head, please arrange a grand evening celebration for the soldiers tonight."

The recent battle failure had somewhat dampened the morale of the soldiers; the death of two to three thousand men in the past few days had filled the barracks with an air of mournful despondency.

He urgently needed a case to boost morale, and the example of 95B27 undoubtedly stood out most prominently in this campaign.

It had been suppressed by Helen before and couldn't be made public, but now that she had allowed it, it was certainly time to make some noise!

Chapter 117: Underground boxing?

Not long after leaving Helen's laboratory, Bai E received an unexpected message—

["Lucky Strike" Charge +3.]

???

Where did this come from?

Did Helen say something somewhere? I had just left her place, and it seemed that only something involving her could have caused a change.

But it wasn't important, no matter where it came from, a benefit was a benefit, and I would take it.

The charge was already at 93 points, only 7 points away from finding another opportunity to pick a target and let loose... This time, I needed to carefully choose.

My morning exercise time had already passed while being researched by Helen; after hastily grabbing breakfast in the canteen, Bai E began the second intense and thrilling physical training of the day ahead of schedule.

101%...

125%...

108%...

125%...

115%...

With Helen's endorsement, Chavez stopped nitpicking, and my companions became united and friendly. Two hours, along with the early start, was enough for Bai E to complete five exhaustive limit explorations.

Even a soldier who had only exchanged a few words with Bai E proactively asked for tips, attempting to learn training methods that even the instructors couldn't match, but the only advice Bai E, reliant on his bodily instincts, could offer were the following six points—

...

[In the midst of strenuous activity, you surpassed your physical limits, Physical+0.1, Reflex+0.1.]

My body's memory was getting closer to the limit burn state under a 30 kg load.

Perhaps when I completely catch up to the limit state with the adjustment from experience, based solely on my body's instincts, that's when I would acquire a new specialty.

Soon...

"Instructor." After training, Bai E didn't leave immediately as usual but went to start a conversation with Chavez.

"Hmm?" Chavez, who was recording each soldier's performance, glanced sideways at Bai E, "What is it?"

"I want to ask if there's any way to quickly improve the Reflexes or Insight attributes?"

The military camp only provided regular training for physical fitness, the attribute that was easiest to improve through training. Bai E had not heard of any stable methods to enhance those other two.

To assign suitable missions for other players to help me level up, I undoubtedly needed to find the right methods first.

Although Bai E was getting to know more people in the camp, Carlos and Helen, who were high-ranking, were not suitable to ask. One clearly had his own agenda, while the other was too complex and might cause trouble.

Compared to them, the more straightforward instructor was better to ask for guidance.

Upon hearing Bai E's question, Chavez hesitated a bit.

In the brief time, he rapidly searched his memory—

Methods to quickly improve Reflex and Insight attributes...

"Insight is hard to improve." Chavez rubbed his chin with his right hand, "That thing has been a century-old problem. It can be used everywhere, but if you're thinking about improving it quickly and stably, there really isn't any outstanding method right now."

Engaging in more real battles, making more use of it, is the only secret.

That obviously did not fit with Bai E's needs. More real battle experiences... who didn't know that?

"As for reflexes..." The usually serious and rigid-faced Chavez suddenly became a bit lecherous, looking around he made sure those two officers, who stayed behind for precision in compiling training data, were away before leaning close to Bai E's ear and whispering, "Do you know about the underground boxing on the outside world?"

"?"

Seeing Bai E's confused face, Chavez remembered, "Oh right, you've been 'alive' for just a few days, probably haven't been exposed to much. Listen, some of the guys here go to places like that to box for some extra cash when off duty. You've got permission to leave the camp anytime, right? If you want to train your reflexes, that's a good place.

It's all bare-knuckle, in-your-face combat—those who react slowly get wasted. If you go, remember not to join death matches. There's no need to take that risk just to train your abilities."

"..." Bai E looked at the increasingly excited instructor, feeling as if perhaps something had gone wrong with him.

"Does this sound like something a stern and impartial instructor should say?"

"How do I join the underground fights?"

"Oh... When you get to Black Street, look for a guy nicknamed Black Goat, he'll take you. Also..." At this point, Chavez became more cautious, looking around before carefully pulling out a roll of bills from the pocket on his chest that seemed like plastic paper, "If you happen to go there when a Gladiator known as 'Blood God' is fighting to the death, bet everything on him, everything on 'Blood God'."

This is the life of a natural person...

Clutching the money in his hand, Bai E felt somewhat emotional.

It seemed that even the most upright instructors couldn't escape the needs of a normal life.

They were simply serving briefly and would ultimately have a day to leave the barracks and a chance to return to normal life.

As for myself... does a normal life really exist in this world?

Better to take control of your own destiny than to leave it in the hands of others.

Clasping the money tightly, Bai E gave Chavez a slight smile, "I got it."

"Then I'll leave it to you," Chavez said, patting Bai E's shoulder with some delight.

"If there's nothing else, Instructor, I'll head out first."

"Go, go," Chavez, already looking down at the tablet in his hands, continued to dutifully score the performance of all the soldiers.

He had also started as a new recruit and had worked his way up, training hard to become an instructor without having to worry about participating in real wars where one fights for life and death. This had become the best position that most natural persons serving in the barracks could attain, and he cherished it.

"Yes, sir!"

After bidding Chavez farewell, Bai E rushed to the second half of the morning's training. The various training sessions in the barracks were tightly scheduled, and the endless training seemed to be the only destiny of these soldiers.

However, Tiger had mentioned that their "training" was quite different from his own, which was more geared towards new recruits. Going on patrols, standing guard, and small-scale skirmishing with different tribes were tasks that were often assigned.

It was just that his own foundation wasn't solid enough yet, and he wasn't qualified.

When his abilities had improved enough, he would probably be sent out on missions like them.

As he pondered, Bai E had already arrived at the general combat training ground, where Instructor Dan had been waiting for quite some time.

"Assemble!"

Dan's resonant voice echoed across the field, "Today we have a special situation. I just received notice that we need to select the most exceptional fighters from among you to report upwards. This is an incentive program, and those who are selected will undoubtedly receive a generous military reward. But more importantly, it's about glory! Glory is the life of us all!"

There was a complete silence across the field as everyone awaited Dan's next words.

"I have one spot on my hands... of course, it might also be none—it all depends on your performance. So today's training is canceled. I have only one demand of you!"

Dan raised his right hand and extended his index finger, "A melee! Regardless of consequences! Until you surrender or lose consciousness! Medical personnel are waiting at the edge of the field! The last person standing will get this one and only spot! Do you understand?"

The crowd shouted in unison, "Understood!"

"Then what are you waiting for?" Dan said coldly as he stepped back.

His gaze swept over the soldiers who still seemed to be in a daze before him, and Dan's eyes hardened.

The notice she had received was actually to recommend three, and those recommended still might not necessarily receive the rewards and glory. It was said that they would have to compete with others recommended from different training groups, and this would include all soldiers—even those stronger veterans from advanced training groups.

The likelihood was that any soldier selected from the New Recruit Training Group would simply serve as stepping stones for those veterans.

That's why, instead of choosing three who were destined to be eliminated, it was better to let them fight it out here to determine the strongest. Perhaps then they might stand a chance.

This strongest wasn't about just surviving until the end.

If they didn't have it... then there was no need to go in the first place.

"Bang!" Amidst the bewildered fighters, Bai E was the first to throw a punch.

Last-minute notice? Fighter selection?

The answer was almost clear—it was probably the secret military operation Carlos had hinted at before.

And if there was only one spot, Bai E naturally intended to compete for it with all his might.

Chapter 118: wins!

The warrior who had been attacked looked at Bai E with a face full of grievance and confusion, "Boss?"

Bai E's expression was blank as he pounded another fist into the man's stomach.

If combat skills were lacking, sheer strength was relied upon.

With a physical strength of 14.2, he was almost in a league of his own within the Actual Combat Training Group, which tended towards the level of new recruits.

The pain made the stalwart warrior, who had been attacked, hunch over like a shrimp; he who had almost completely trusted Bai E never expected that the boss he acknowledged would be the first to strike him.

Seizing the opportunity, Bai E's hand-chop sliced through the swift wind and slammed mercilessly into "Stone's" nape.

"Bang!" The sound of the palm colliding with flesh was muffled but jolted the other warriors out of their daze.

[Using melee attacks to incapacitate the target, melee combat mastery experience +3.]

The melee had already begun.

Bai E was the first to strike, and his first target was "Stone", the first little brother to recognize him as boss during the new recruits' training.

The first strike in the melee, aimed at a close brother.

Not for any other reason, but to prevent him from helping himself.

The instructor's words weren't clear, but the underlying implication was quite obvious.

The number of spots could be for one, or it could be zero.

Then the answer was self-evident, she didn't want mediocrity, loafers, or connections... but a hero who could truly rely on his own strength to defeat everyone and stand till the end!

If such a person didn't exist, she'd rather not have any at all.

In such a situation, there was nothing more to say.

Just do it and it's done.

Bai E didn't know exactly what kind of ability was needed for covert military operations, but displaying his strength as much as possible according to the instructor's selection criteria was undoubtedly the most likely way to obtain a spot on the mission.

The first punch from Bai E completely unveiled the chaos of the melee, while Dan watched with arms crossed from the sidelines.

The one who strikes first undeniably draws the most attention.

This 95B27 not only stood out in terms of mentality and physiological functions within the group, but was also astute enough to guess the kind of warrior needed and had the ruthlessness to strike at the companion closest to him first.

But...

The level was indeed too poor.

Being the first to move naturally increased his score in her eyes, but sometimes recklessness is only a hair's breadth from confidence.

The one who stands till the end is naturally the most outstanding hero, while those who get knocked down by wild punches are just simple brutes.

Bai E's first move undoubtedly made him the biggest threat in the eyes of the other warriors.

They attacked him in a surprisingly coordinated effort.

[Participation from units exceeding 10, trait—Well-Trained triggered.]

[Current enhancement: Block +5%, Dodge +3%.]

With no allies, only enemy units, the additional performance in insight and reflex was not triggered.

Bai E was calm; he had foreseen this situation of being surrounded before he even started.

Equipped with the Well-Trained trait, he tried to block and dodge amidst the flurries of punches as much as he could, attempting to escape the most dangerous spot at the center.

Even the most skilled fighter would first try to get out of a situation where they could be attacked from all sides when facing multiple opponents.

Although he was not highly skilled, he still understood this theory.

"Bang, bang, bang!"

Punches the size of sandbags came flying chaotically from all directions; Bai E's arms turned into shields but still, two fists were no match for four.

Fortunately, his constitution was truly more brutish compared to the others, and as he bulldozed his way outwards, the other warriors engaged in the tumult became his cover, finally allowing him to break free from his initial position.

Before he could catch his breath, a wind-breaking fist aimed at the back of his head had already smashed over.

"NNND!"

An ambush?

Bai E quickly spun around with a sweeping kick, momentarily fending off his opponent but still took a glancing blow to his back.

...

[Indeed, it's hopeless...]

Observing the chaotic scene before him, Dan felt somewhat powerless. These new recruits, with little training time, were indeed far less capable than the veteran soldiers, and there were none with outstanding talent.

They were no match for that Rose treasured by the group next door. Even if she was also a new recruit, the gap between her and the veterans was enormous.

Moreover, even that Rose might not necessarily hold an advantage over the veterans in a PK, as this selection focused on current strength, not future potential.

As for now, the most outstanding fighter turned out to be the one with the code 95B27. Regrettably, while he possessed sheer brute force, he could only dodge and flee and couldn't organize an effective counterattack when surrounded.

There are three key elements to fighting: offense, footwork, and defense. Only with all three can one be invincible.

At the moment, 95B27 had only instinctive defense and offense, and they were scattered.

A bit of combat experience, but not much.

"Hmm?"

Entangled again...

In the chaos of battle, fighters occasionally reached a perfect understanding, collectively descending on a soldier at a disadvantage to give a good beating to the weakened foe.

This temporary cooperation borne of situational assessment and spontaneous decision-making was not a point of deduction but rather an added edge. Understanding how to work together to defeat an opponent swiftly also made an important part of the assessment in this selection.

...

"How's it going?"

Dan was intently observing the performance of his group's soldiers in the brawl, determined not to miss any moment of brilliance, aiming for complete fairness and impartiality, completely unaware of when a white figure had appeared beside him.

"Fellow... scholar?" Dan reacted with slight surprise.

"Mm..." Helen nodded lightly, always concerned about Bai E's innate talent in close combat and keen on his training results in actual combat, "How is 95B27 doing?"

The battle on the field was nearing its end, and Helen, who was not a specialist in close combat, could not tell if Bai E's performance in the tumultuous fight was good or bad.

And lying amid the fallen soldiers, only his figure remained standing. Could that be considered decent enough?

Dan was somewhat startled to realize that this Scholar from the Scientific Research Institute had a special interest in this artificial human.

But it was none of her concern, so she spoke the truth, "Average... His physical fitness far surpasses that of the other soldiers in the group. If only his combat skills were a little sharper, he wouldn't have to win in such a sorry state as now."

Yes, quite disheveled indeed.

Bai E's vision was darkening, his body was covered in purple bruises, and the pain was even worse than the most intense physical training.

And yet, his strength had not increased by much.

[You maintained clarity in the chaotic fight until the end, combat mastery experience +9.]

No actions, just numbers.

Luckily... he had won.

Bai E looked around and realized there were no more standing figures.

His body swayed, and finally, he fell backward abruptly.

Dan, anticipating this, moved swiftly and caught Bai E as he fell.

Looking down at the warrior sleeping like a baby in his arms, Dan shook his head with a wry smile.

Impressive courage and will, but that was about it.

Should he give the slot to him? With such strength, competing against other soldiers might just be a vain effort.

Or perhaps... it would be good for him to experience the gap?

Chapter 119: The Third Temptation

[Feedback from the assignment, your physical fitness +0.1.]

[Feedback from the assignment, Knowledge - Computer Hardware Maintenance Experience +28.]

[The assignment you posted—"Building Requirements" has been submitted, please review it as soon as possible.]X3

The tips from the panel shimmered lonely in the darkness until Bai E woke up to take notice of them.

Wen Jie is too diligent!

"You're awake?"

Before him was Helen's face, so exquisite it dazzled from the first glance.

Bai E had gradually become accustomed to the sensation of lying on the cold experimental table.

"Your body is recovering quite quickly, and there's no need for any special treatment from me."

"Mm..." Bai E glanced at the panel at the progress of unlocking his talent specialty—

33% now.

Having few opportunities to get hurt, his progress in unlocking this particular talent specialty was indeed slow, yet even the unlocked portions had been a great help in his routine training and combat.

If it's not weak when fully unlocked, it should be quite strong.

In a moment of cautious silence, Bai E carefully inquired, "If you're not busy, may I go eat..."

"Wait," Helen's gaze was as calm as water as she focused on Bai E's eternally impassive expression, "I have a question for you, just a simple inquiry."

"Please ask."

"Did you utilize your full strength during the combat training?"

[Heart requests to accelerate pumping...]

[Suppress.]

In the span of a heartbeat, Bai E suppressed the panic that surged within.

Had this scholar from the Scientific Research Institute discovered something?

Fortunately, this time he truly hadn't held anything back.

"I did my best..." Bai E looked directly into her eyes, open and honest.

His talent for fighting was never strong, and having reserved all of his experience for advanced physical training and Yue Ying's archery lessons, he couldn't just cheat to enhance his level of expertise in combat.

He was simply unskilled.

Staring into the honesty in the depths of Bai E's eyes, Helen was a bit distracted.

She was willing to believe this fact, yet somewhat reluctant to accept it.

Performing poorly in combat specialty meant he lacked the inherent talent to control his body well or to grasp the timing of fights, and an individual with such flaws was ultimately not the perfect seed she was searching for.

Rose? Her talent was more all-around, certainly outstanding compared to ordinary artificial humans, but her performance wasn't as dazzling as Bai E's, and using her as the seed also felt like something was missing.

If she had never seen light, she might have endured the darkness...

Driven by her pursuit of the prime body project, for a moment Helen was more inclined to believe that the artificial human before her was hiding something.

If it was a case of concealment...

"In fact, I would prefer if you were hiding something from me."

Helen's sea-blue eyes quietly observed Bai E, yet unfocused, as though she was looking at the perfect seed she imagined stood behind him, "If that's the case, I hope you remember one thing—your actions will define your habits, your habits will define your thoughts, your thoughts will define your faith. It will determine the path of your life.

You may hide things from me, but please, do not let down humanity..."

If he was as innocent as he seemed, this statement might as well have gone unsaid; but if he was truly cunning, then these words might bring a sliver of hope to her plans in the future...

As for the project itself, let's put it aside for now...

Bai E's eyes slightly glazed over as if he were trying to commit everything to memory, "I will remember your words."

"It's alright, go have your meal," Helen exhaled a long breath, sealing the dust on her plans, now once again shrouded in silence.

"Goodbye, Academician."

Bai E saluted one last time, left the lab, and quickly headed toward the canteen.

Players were still waiting for him; he had to hurry.

...

Gong Yan's eyes slightly glazed over, recalling the words of the thugs from Black Street.

"Miss, it's not that we doubt anything, it's just that looking for concrete isn't free of cost for us, that's money out of our own pockets. Yet, you haven't shown us any real feedback, and you've kept us in the dark about where the concrete we provided is going, which leaves us uneasy... How about giving us a bit of reassurance? What do you say?"

The small figures are cunning and ruthless, and like barefoot children, they have a singular focus and determination.

Shadowing, probing...

In just two days, for the sake of that concrete, Gong Yan and her adversaries had spun a tale reminiscent of a cop drama.

The lies she spun in desperation to escape had now entangled her with them, making it difficult to break free.

Even if she didn't need their concrete, as long as she needed to resupply from Black Street, she couldn't avoid dealing with them.

"Not giving them an explanation definitely won't work anymore," agreed Dai Lian, nodding his head at Gong Yan's concern.

"But we only have a little over 100 bullets at hand; is that useful?"

The bullets won from previous tasks had almost all been exchanged, leaving just over twenty, and the 105 bullets rewarded from the concrete task after the grown-up's return were still in their possession, adding up to just over a hundred in total.

Kuang Xin felt that, as a bluff linked to the military area, a mere 100 bullets seemed childish and probably wouldn't be enough to hold the others at bay.

"How about setting up a battlefield in advance and finishing them off?" suggested Dai Lian, a fierce look flashing in his eyes.

Playing games, after all, should be done with a smile.

To be threatened by an NPC?

"But that way we'd also lose our supply of concrete... and it's dangerous," Gong Yan was reluctant.

She preferred strategizing over the brute force loved by other players, and this brought her joy.

"If only we had more bullets..."

Gong Yan's eyes glazed over as she pondered the possibilities with the resources and information at hand, "We'll see..."

"The grown-up is here..."

Gong Yan quickly nudged Kuang Xin's leg, "Give the clothes to the grown-up."

Kuang Xin, as if awakening from a dream, turned to get the clothes from the cave, "Oh right~"

As Bai E approached step by step, Kuang Xin didn't forget to murmur, "Why do I have to do it?"

Dai Lian barely moved his lips as he rebuked, "Just do it if you're told, no more nonsense."

"Oh~"

Seeing the three waiting, Bai E immediately smiled and asked, "Where's the boy?"

"Below, he doesn't dare to show his face," Kuang Xin was the first to reply, meanwhile, holding the clothes forward, "Grown-up, it's not very convenient for you to move around in military attire, so we've prepared a set of clothes for you. Would you try them on?"

The military uniform might not necessarily have a logo, but it was visibly different from civilian clothing, too easily noticeable.

Bai E raised an eyebrow, his gaze sweeping over the three faces before him, yet he readily accepted.

"I'll try them on later."

Saying so, he headed towards the entrance of the cave below; he needed to see the boy first and then decide on some arrangements that needed to be made today.

Chapter 120: Sociology +3

"Wow! Quite spacious, isn't it?"

The sight of the cave in front of him surprised Bai E; primitive wooden beams were placed at equal intervals to support the structure and prevent collapse, with at least twenty square meters of space, which felt much less cramped than the previous night.

Was it all the work of the little mouse people alone?

The players must have also helped to some extent.

The progress had indeed quickened significantly, so it was time to give them some confidence...

Construction tasks are supposed to reward based on progress made... How much progress there is could still be up to him to decide, so he should settle part of their rewards first.

"You did very well." Bai E nodded, his face showing obvious satisfaction.

[Side Mission—Building a Warehouse (Construction Commission), progress increased.]

[Mission Reward (Stage): "Faction (Li Ming) Official Member" status unlocked.] X3

"!!!"

The players who followed Bai E down into the cavern were jolted when they received this notification, turning to look at each other with visible surprise in their eyes.

Working on a construction task day after day without immediate feedback was very different from the game's other immediate feedback mechanisms, which could sometimes be demotivating.

Now...

As official members, they should finally be able to see what items the Faction Shop had available for exchange. They had sweated and bled for Li Ming, all for a bit of the organization's special resources.

Most of their efforts and the bloodshed were indeed due to the tasks at hand, but that wasn't important!

Let's see...

[Heavy Weapon Specialization Training, Price—Basic Instruction: 20 Faction Contribution Points.]

[Light Firearms Specialization Training, Price—Basic Instruction: 20 Faction Contribution Points; Advanced Instruction: 30 Faction Contribution Points.]

[Ranged Weapon Specialization Training, Price—Basic Instruction: 20 Faction Contribution Points; Advanced Instruction: 30 Faction Contribution Points; Master Instruction: 50 Faction Contribution Points.]

[Firearms Maintenance, Price—Basic Instruction: 25 Faction Contribution Points.]

[Bandaging (First Aid) Training, Price—Basic Instruction: 25 Faction Contribution Points; Master Instruction: 40 Faction Contribution Points.]

[Unlocking the next tier of exchangeable items is contingent on unlocking any item from the current tier, please look forward to it...]

"..."

"How come there are better and worse options?"

The three players' puzzled gazes fell on Bai E, waiting for the final arbiter to speak.

"The organization's manpower is limited for now, so the choices we can offer are also limited. But rest assured, as you get more involved with the organization, your privileges will also increase."

Bai E was quite pleased with the shop rules he had painstakingly crafted during his downtime.

"Oh~"

The three players nodded, half-understanding.

In their eyes, no matter how human the characters in the game seemed, they weren't real people.

These mechanisms surely couldn't be determined by NPCs deciding whatever they wanted, right?

It must be the system in the background, integrating the services the organization could currently provide, along with the level of trust, human resources, and other information, to present them with such a Faction Shop panel.

There's nothing to be gained from contending with such a rigid system setup; one simply has to play by its rules.

Moreover, it seems... that as temporary members, they made quite a profit from those teachings from the bureau, didn't they?

Having been in this world for some time, they were aware that the NPCs of this world treated various skills and knowledge as precious and did not impart them lightly.

So, this was indeed a significant gain. If only they had known, they would have unlocked their official membership later...

Not just the players, Bai E too found it odd.

Watching the information alerts that popped up on the panel the moment the official faction membership was granted, he was also bewildered.

[As the leader of the faction, the bond between you and your organization members has been strengthened. Sociology +3]

[Sociology +3: The population under your jurisdiction feels greater recognition of your identity, task delegation authority contents enhanced—basic combat task single delegation customary experience quota authority increased to: 50~200 points, daily delegation customary experience quota authority increased to: 50~700 points; basic resource task single delegation quota authority added: research experience 0~50 points, daily delegation quota authority added: research experience 0~150 points.

(Effective from the issuance of new tasks.)]

"..."

An unanticipated path.

The new complications were somewhat beyond Bai E's expectations, but they had no impact on the implementation of the established plan.

He needed to first assess the threat of the boy, which was crucial to his subsequent arrangements for the tasks assigned to players.

Bai E's expression remained unchanged as he instructed the three players who had just come down, "You go up and keep watch first; I have something to discuss with him alone."

Wrapped in a yellow-brown cloth resembling a hemp blanket, the weary boy seemed to have shrunk into a corner after a night of exhaustion, with his nostrils gently flaring in tranquil and comfortable sleep.

Even the not-so-quiet conversation between Bai E and the three players had not awakened the child who had suffered so much hardship.

In his days of anxiety, this seemed to be his most peaceful night of sleep... since his sister had left.

"Yes, my lord!" Dai Lian took the lead in responding.

The recently unlocked official faction membership had him excited, and the prospect of more expansive aspirations for the organization seemed within reach.

"What does the lord want to talk to him about?" Kuang Xin, who had climbed up last to the surface, asked with some curiosity.

Dai Lian glanced at him disdainfully. Having known each other for a while and becoming familiar, their speech also became more straightforward, "Why don't you go eavesdrop?"

"Aren't you curious?"

Gong Yan, who had silently pulled up the disguise covering the underground hole, smiled and said, "What's there to be curious about? The lord is worried about the trouble that fernandi might bring later on. Naturally, he needs to ensure there are no hidden dangers."

"Yanzi is the smart one," Dai Lian said with admiration, then shifted the topic to what he cared about most, "It seems we need to speed up the construction of the storage building with the ratmen to boost our faction contribution points and unlock subsequent exchange items."

"You're in a hurry to unlock it even though you don't know what comes next?" Kuang Xin seized the opportunity to retort.

"The wisdom of mortals," Dai Lian scoffed, "Do you remember how you got that trait of yours?"

Kuang Xin envied Dai Lian's ability to show off with his curve gun, but Dai Lian also coveted Kuang Xin's "Well-Trained" trait for its substantial boost to combat effectiveness in melee fighting.

This high-level ability was clearly not taught by the lord deliberately, but this lucky guy, blessed by the system's favor, had learned it effortlessly from the slimmest of chances without paying any price.

And one could foresee that not just "Well-Trained," but other equivalent high-level abilities awaited discovery and unlocking.

This kind of blind box-like game exploration that could occasionally yield surprises was adept at stirring players' curiosity.

Not to mention that even the basic exchange items were very much worth redeeming.

The dignity of the lord repelling the Arbitration Place personnel with three arrows was vividly etched in their minds, thoroughly awe-inspiring!