

## Wow 191

### Chapter 191 Kiss of the Viper\_2

Patience... and stamina.

He had not been without defeat; in that one lost battle, he had not managed to strike a single blow from beginning to end. The opponent's perfect attacking rhythm left him no chance for retaliation, and the abundant stamina the opponent possessed completely drained his own, as the defender.

He had suffered a crushing defeat in that battle, so much so that he even began to deeply doubt the combat style he adhered to, sinking into silent contemplation and absence from even a single match for a long time.

It wasn't until that opponent later achieved a dazzling and unbelievable record in this arena that he finally let go—

It wasn't that he was weak, it was just that the opponent was too strong.

That opponent was known as the "Blood God"!

An opponent like that, there was only one, and there would only be one!

Beyond that, all other opponents would merely become stepping stones for him, step by step as he climbed upwards!

...

[You have spent 330 points of combat experience, converting into 165 points of "Martial Prowess" experience. (Medium probability of awakening special attributes.)) (Accumulated)

[To suppress to death?]

A trace of hesitation flickered in Bai E's mind.

He could feel that his opponent was waiting for his moment of weakness to come, but in fact... with his fast recovery and Overlimit Drive, it was almost impossible for that moment to arrive.

As long as he maintained his peak condition, his opponent would definitely not reveal their final fangs.

Then he would truly be suppressed to death.

So what exactly was this opponent's fighting style... or to say, special characteristics—was it his unique guardian ability? Or was it his final, thrilling gamble for life? Or perhaps both?

"Huh~" Bai E's muscles relaxed slightly.

He needed to give his opponent an opportunity to show off; otherwise, what a loss it would be to spend all that time and earn experience without learning the opponent's treasured skills?

"Here it comes!"

His keen intuition for combat allowed the Viper to detect the weakness in his opponent's state immediately.

Seizing the moment when Bai E's guard was down, the slightly skinny Viper risked a punch to the shoulder and thrust forward into the inner circle, his fingers formed into a sword with a vicious killing move aimed straight at Bai E's throat.

Signature move—Viper's Kiss!

This move was supposed to be executed with a nimble weapon like a dagger, incredibly dangerous.

But fingers trained to the extreme were no less potent than any weapon, able to cause injury or death just as well when hitting vital points.

The sharpness akin to a blade's edge assailed Bai E's senses as he, facing the Viper's stabbing fingers, subconsciously mounted an emergency defense; his hands forming a barrier which overlapped into a shield at the last moment, blocking the fatal strike.

However, it was exactly upon blocking the finger thrust that he suddenly felt as if struck by lightning at his lower abdomen.

Cold sweat poured down like a waterfall, the extreme pain radiating swiftly from that single point to his entire body. Bai E pushed his palms horizontally to force the opponent back and suddenly covered the right side of his lower abdomen, staggering back a step.

Blood streamed down!

The Viper, who had at last revealed his true intentions, also showed a look of psychotic joy in his eyes. He savored the blood and flesh he had torn away, bringing it to his lips for a light suck as if it were some exquisite delicacy.

The crimson blood smeared over his lips, and the malevolently insane atmosphere enveloped the entire "cage" instantly.

Outside the ring, the enforcers sought approval from their superiors, "Should we intervene?"

"The contestant hasn't given up yet, what's the hurry?"

Non-lethal matches in the arena only ensured no loss of life; pain and disability were not taken into account.

To step onto this stage also meant accepting this agreement.

Blood was needed to stimulate the nerves of those who had grown numb.

Otherwise, what would sustain their arena?

Hone their own skills?

Losers don't deserve to speak such words.

Within a solitary room, a figure who had been resting with closed eyes unknowingly opened them at some point, looking at the injured figure in the arena, a hint of interest emerging in those calm eyes.

...

Bai E removed his right hand from the wound, the fresh red blood already moistening his fingertips, flesh swelling in a desperate effort to seal the wound and prevent more blood from flowing out. But the intense pain was still corroding Bai E's nerves.

This old man's fingernails... were poisoned!

Not fatal, but enough to make the experienced pain skyrocket.

And as blood flowed, body temperature boiled, affecting the entire body.

Even such illicit acts were tolerated by this arena...

It truly was... despicable!

Pain made his body tremble; he could easily have suppressed its spread to his nerves, but this time Bai E chose not to curb the sensation.

After a slight tremor, Bai E's body suddenly ceased shaking at a certain moment.

All the pain transformed into a deep rage—

The purpose of honing one's skills was to improve one's frontal combat abilities; humanity's greatest enemies were the bugs, machines, demons—those terrifying foes. These despicable tricks, aside from wreaking havoc amongst their own during civil strife, what use did they have?

Having a sliver of strategy, yet spending it all on their own kind!

This opponent had already become tiresome!

[You have spent 270 points of combat experience, converting into 135 points of "Martial Prowess" experience. (High probability of awakening special attributes.)) (Accumulated)

[Your lengthy learning process has allowed you to draw enough experience from your opponent's combat style, your specialization ability—Martial Specialization, has been enhanced with a brand new "special" attribute!]

[Martial Specialization (Level 2): Strike power +4%, Dodge +2%, Block +2%, Combo (Special) +2, Guardian Fortification (Special) +50%, Opportunism (Special) +2%.]

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[Current combat mastery experience: 304/500. At 500 points, "Level 3 Combat Specialization" can be mastered.]

Lying in wait, ready to strike!

He magnified a tiny weakness in his opponent's performance to the extreme, using all his own strength to amplify this flaw, to the point where it became the absolute factor in the opponent's defeat.

That was the opponent's fighting style.

As for his own weakness... it had always been there!

Bai E took the initiative to attack once more, his strikes swift and forceful.

His first two attempts to seize the opponent were dodged, but the momentum of the dodging actions could not perfectly evade the final side-swinging heavy punch, and the viper was forced to block.

His fundamentals were incredibly solid; his basic combat skills were so refined it was hard to believe, especially in blocking and dodging where he was almost perfect—able to dissipate most of the strength even when blocking attacks from a stronger opponent, allowing him to slip away like a fish.

But this assumed that the gap in strength wasn't too obvious.

In their first exchange, Bai E, sensing his opponent's lack of strength, did not use the burst of Overlimit Drive.

That is to say, during the entirety of this fight, Bai E was holding back his strength.

Would he suppress his foe until the end or suddenly suppress with overwhelming force? It was all within a single thought for Bai E.

Once this opponent had lost his usefulness, there was no need to drag it out any longer!

Fist met arm, and the unexpectedly massive force that hit the viper was not enough to cause injury, but the surprising strength unbalanced him.

The viper stumbled backward, a shiver going through him instinctively.

This was the first time in the battle that something had happened that took him by surprise; until now, no matter how dangerous his situation seemed, it was all within the realms of planned defense.

And now...

Their eyes crossed, and the viper saw in his opponent's eyes a burning passion brewing.

He had seen that look many times before; every opponent thought he was not much of a challenge.

That was the look of those frustratedly toys by the clown without recourse.

But now... there seemed to be something different.

Another punch!

The falling viper had no time for deep thoughts, facing the oncoming punch he could only cross his arms and brace...

"Crack!"

A slight bone-cracking sound transmitted within his body, but what was more critical was the complete disruption of his balance.

Fate was no longer under his control.

Before a dreadful sentiment could surface in his heart, a large hand had already grabbed his worn collar... as if seizing fate by the neck.

Bai E's right fist was drawn from behind, the longest possible swing allowing the punch to build power to its peak, unleashing the peak of strength Bai E was capable of.

Inch by inch...

The viper watched helplessly as the fist rapidly grew larger before his eyes, "I surrender!" got swallowed up by the speed of the punch.

Rage unleashed!

Give it to me! Smash!

"Bang!"

"Thump!"

"Crack~"

The figure flew backward, crossing a distance of more than ten meters in an instant and violently hitting the coarse iron net, before falling to the ground like a heap of rotten meat with a "plop".

His limbs twitched a few times, then fell still.

The emergency medical team that was at the ready sprang into action, as death was generally not allowed in non-lethal gladiatorial contests—the indefinitely pummeling of an incapacitated opponent was definitely not possible.

But as for being knocked out with a single punch, one could only say it was bad luck; no one would blame the victor.

Even more so, they would offer up the most fervent cheers!

The punch had not only crushed the viper, but it had also ignited the passion of every spectator.

Like a mountain and sea, insane shouts and frenzied roars were released, indistinguishable screams mixed with the exploding beats of the music, overwhelming the senses.

The noise engulfed the entire venue like a tsunami, with Bai E standing at the center, silent and unmoving.

The chaotic noise made the whole arena seem to revolve around him, but his mind at that moment was unusually calm.

[I didn't add any charge...]

He looked up at the stands; every direction he gazed upon exploded into an even more intense cheer, but his gaze calmly swept over each of the spectators.

Why didn't I add any charge?

Because I was wearing a mask? Because they didn't know my real identity?

But that wasn't a prerequisite.

The last time he had saved people under the chaos at Black Street during the Fire Rat outbreak, few knew his real identity either.

Maybe it was because... mixed within this worship were too many crazy impurities? His special skill required something much purer.

Bai E lowered his eyelids and quietly walked towards the exit.

Time taken for the second match... 10 minutes.

Chapter 193 Furious Lion

He had spent a total of 1300 combat experience points, in exchange for nearly a Combat Specialization Layer 3 and three special attribute bonuses.

Indeed, the most direct combat was the fastest way to improve oneself; a danger that was both close to real battle yet not as deadly had its unique charm. No wonder those who lived in the dreariness found a bit of joy in it.

Clutching near his wound, trying his best to stem the bleeding, Bai E made his way back to the war room. The attendants there swallowed hard as they looked at the blood-soaked wound and then at the man whose half-masked face appeared expressionless.

"Do you need... someone to tend to your wound?"

"No need. I can handle it myself, just bring me a medical kit," he replied.

The attendant who brought the medical kit stood by, ready for the moment the strong man might need assistance.

As he tended to his wound, a voice suddenly broke the silence, "Keep arranging matches for me... as soon as possible."

...

"He still wants to fight?" The person in charge frowned deeply, his gaze fixed on the figure in the rest area treating his own wound, the color of blood undeniably eye-catching, "Where did this madman come from?"

This was the most dangerous arena, not someone's backyard.

In the most perilous battles, a moment's distraction could invite a storm of blows, especially with wounds already bleeding.

Here, there were few who respected martial virtues; an injury was like an open invitation for targeting.

Even if the fights weren't to the death, the risk of injury, and a serious one at that, was high.

The one who had nearly wrecked Viper couldn't possibly be ignorant of the rules here, yet he still wanted to fight consecutively?

Madman!

But what did it have to do with him?

How many here weren't madmen? If someone could bring in profits, that was the talent he liked!

The last two fights had already earned a significant sum; the more controversial the fight, the more it attracted attention.

The news of his third consecutive battle, once released, would only draw more and more spectators.

It was, in a sense, the perfect setup for tonight's main event.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I've received another incredible piece of news..." the host's voice was filled with passion, "The White Ghost, with his two consecutive victories, requests to continue fighting. To give our most courageous contestant a little time to recover, please be patient. And let me give you a little hint, the White Ghost's next opponent will be someone who has yet to be defeated..."

but it's a secret."

"F\*ck!"

"Damn your hide!"

The unsatisfied audience erupted in curses, immediately followed by cautious discussions with acquaintances nearby; after all, it concerned their wallets.

"The White Ghost seemed to be quite injured just now."

"That old Viper's sneak attack must have hit hard; resting for a bit won't help, how could such injuries heal so fast?"

"But since he dares to request consecutive fights, he must be confident. I believe in the White Ghost."

"In my opinion, this White Ghost is a pure madman; he doesn't have any confidence, he won't leave unless he throws himself on this stage."

Among the numerous discussions, there were all sorts of opinions, but when the "rumor" came out, it almost unanimously swayed them.

"I heard the White Ghost's next opponent will be Mad Lion Paul..."

"Then it's a win for the White Ghost!"

"Exactly! He must be confident to ask for consecutive fights. I regret not betting on the White Ghost earlier; this time I'm all in on him."

"Brothers, bet on the White Ghost, it's a sure win this time!"

...

During the rest period, no other matches were arranged, as the organizers left enough time for this heavyweight match to simmer.

When the host announced the competitor's name, the savvy ones had already placed their bets.

"All in! I must go all in this time!"

"Bet it all on Mad Lion!"

"105 coins on Mad Lion, is that it?" the registrar asked with a deadpan expression and dead fish eyes.

"Shh~ Keep your voice down, don't let them hear!"

"Damn \*ssholes."

Mad Lion, also known as the Junior Blood God.

...

The opponent was a sunny young man with golden hair, whose smile was radiant to the extreme.

He seemed extremely affable and approachable, not at all reflecting the "madness" in his title.

His gaze lingered on Bai E's waist, eyeing the white bandage still oozing red, and he said with a bright smile, "I'll try to avoid your wound."

"I'd rather you aimed for it," Bai E said expressionlessly.

Paul's smile faltered as he deeply gazed into Bai E's eyes exposed outside the mask, "You're even crazier than me."

Bai E's face slightly lifted, his gaze disdainful, "Did they ask you to fight just so you could chat?"

"Haha! Alright!" Mad Lion Paul burst into laughter, instantly accelerating.

His handsome and tall stature surged forward like a lion, each movement from his golden-proportioned body seemingly possessing the regal and domineering air of a lion king.

As his opponent, one could always feel the suffocating pressure as if one were alone in the wilderness, face to face with such a beast king.

Bai E could see this opponent's explosive rate—Combat Specialization Layer 4.

The level isn't especially high, just like the Viper earlier.

But their styles of fighting are completely different.

Despite the same Combat Specialization Layer, Mad Lion Paul's oppressive force was fully dialed up.

Clearly, in the training of special attributes, this Mad Lion had a higher level of aggressiveness.

The practical combat instructor, Dan, had previously told everyone the theory of integrating offense, defense, and footwork as the most basic entry-level and the absolute concept throughout combat.

Yet, on this foundation, each individual's direction for strength development was different.

Barehanded combat differs from firearms and blades, which almost certainly result in life-or-death situations. Every black fist fighter who can gain countless combat experiences in this relatively safe arena has their unique understanding of combat.

So the special attributes they train are diverse and varied.

The opponent, Mad Lion Paul, in some ways resembled the bio-guard soldiers he had faced earlier, with moves that were broad and unrestrained in dealing with external enemies, along with various joint-locking techniques specifically tailored for the human body.

Even in terms of strength, he was not inferior to himself when using Overlimit Drive...

Does he have a similar strength-enhancement specialization? Or is his physical fitness over 15?

Unknown.

But it did definitely make Bai E feel overmatched. If it weren't for the recently acquired "Enhanced Defense," he would probably be completely taken down within a minute.

An opponent whose strength was no less than his and who far surpassed him in technique.

This world is still... full of masters!

...

Watching the opponent appearing somewhat perilous under the pursuit of their young master, two silent figures in a quiet corner of the audience seats suddenly let out a light chuckle.

"Thought we had a real master here, but that's all the level there is."

"The young master's goal is to tame that beast... an enemy of this caliber is of course no concern."

"I heard tonight is the chance for that beast to make an appearance. I wonder if the young master will take action."

"Probably not..."

Although the young master is formidable, he definitely isn't a match for that publicly acknowledged top black fist fighter yet; he still needs more experience.

Not to mention, the organizer announced a three against one scenario. With our young master's pride, he surely wouldn't step in under such conditions.

Thinking of that ferocious beast, a twinge of regret flashed through the eyes of one of the cloaked figures, "Only the military would waste such talent."

Until now, they hadn't issued a Gene Optimization Solution to such a person with unlimited potential, causing his abilities to be stuck within the current physical limitations.

The three basic attributes of the body have their maximum human limits, and it's the same with other abilities.

Once the specialization level is high, without sufficient basic attribute support, it's impossible to elevate or utilize those abilities.

Without access to the Gene Optimization Solution, even the most talented would eventually be confined within the cage of the human body.

Another figure, a charming silhouette, spoke with a light, amused tone, "It's not that the military doesn't care, we just don't have the opportunity to recruit such individuals."

Any expert not valued by the military is seen as a rare main force in their city's war gangs.

And since they want to recruit... they naturally have ways to make the military release such individuals, though not exactly by the book.

After talking about that beast, both of their gazes refocused on the current battle, "This fight should be ending soon, I guess..."

"To persist in wanting to counterattack shows the opponent's commendable will to fight, but in the face of absolute power..."

...

[You spent 250 points of combat experience in learning, converting into 125 points of "Combat Mastery" experience. (Medium chance to awaken a special attribute.)(Accumulated)

[Your long-term learning has allowed you to extract enough experience from your opponent's fighting method. Your specialization skill—Combat Specialization, has gained a new "special" attribute bonus!]

[Combat Specialization (Layer 2): Strike Power +4%, Evasion +2%, Block +2%, Rapid Strike (Special) +2, Enhanced Defense (Special) +50%, Opportune (Special) +2%, Joint Technique (Special) +20%.]

...

Voices from the corner expressed doubt, "Why do I feel... like the young master's opponent has stabilized again?"

The originally precarious battle situation had somehow... reached a stalemate?

The charming figure squinted, watching intently for a while before opening her rosy mouth in surprise, "He... he's learning the young master's combat techniques!"

Chapter 194 person combat system

The original opponent's greatest concern when facing the young master was his use of joint weaknesses, but now, after some time to get accustomed, targeting those commonly used joint weaknesses had become less effective. The opponent could now successfully extricate himself from the young master's clutches during those occasional entanglements.

This meant that he was no longer so passive when facing the young master's attacks.

In previous battles, this opponent of the young master had never shown such familiarity with joint techniques.

"Is he hiding his skill, or is he learning?"

If it is learning...

The two exchanged a glance, both with a hint of shock in their eyes.

"It doesn't matter; even if he's not that passive, he will never be able to win against the young master."

...

The attacks were always interrupted before they could land, and the rare counterstrikes could hardly be executed with perfect force. This frustrating feeling was enough to make one want to spit blood.

After becoming accustomed to Mad Lion's most troublesome joint techniques and not being so timid, Bai E could now manage the occasional counterattack.

But the feeling during the counterattacks was not much different from being suppressed, if not more uncomfortable.

This Mad Lion had a special technique for interrupting attacks.

But it doesn't matter, I can fight with you for a whole day!

What is yours will be mine.

[You have spent 370 points of combat experience in learning...] (Stacked)

[Martial Mastery (Level 3): Strike Power +6%, Evasion +3%, Blocking +3%, Combo (Special) +3, Enhanced Defense (Special) +100%, Opportunism (Special) +4%, Joint Techniques (Special) +40%, Intercepting (Special) +5%.]

...

"The young master's attack has been blocked as well..."

"It doesn't matter, the young master still has..."

...

[You have spent 350 points of combat experience in learning...] (Stacked)

[Martial Mastery (Level 3): Strike Power +6%, Evasion +3%, Blocking +3%, Combo (Special) +3, Enhanced Defense (Special) +100%, Opportunism (Special) +4%, Joint Techniques (Special) +40%, Intercepting (Special) +5%, Inch Power (Special) +17%.]

...

"It doesn't matter..."

...

[You have spent 290 points of combat experience in learning...] (Stacked)

[Martial Mastery (Level 3): Strike Power +6%, Evasion +3%, Blocking +3%, Combo (Special) +3, Enhanced Defense (Special) +100%, Opportunism (Special) +4%, Joint Techniques (Special) +40%, Intercepting (Special) +5%, Acupoint Striking (Special) +1%, Whip Tail (Special) +1.]

...

"...the master still has."

...

"I quit!" Mad Lion Paul, looking as if he had been fished out of the water, lay on the ground like a dead dog, too lazy to even move a finger, "I give up! I quit!"

"Ah?" Bai E was slightly taken aback, "That's it?"

He was just getting into the swing of secretly learning.

He had finally understood a saying, whatever doesn't defeat you makes you stronger.

With the player template, as long as he had enough combat experience, he could rapidly increase his strength by spending experience in various ways.

[In the battle, you have perceived your opponent's attack intentions and quickly reacted to counter, Reflex +0.1.]

[Current Martial Mastery Experience 434/1000, at 1000 points you can master "Level 4 Martial Mastery".]

[Your fighting ability has formed a strong personal style, integrating all your learning, and you are in the process of acquiring a unique personal combat system, current integration progress 33%...]

Martial Mastery, compared to other types of mastery, is indeed slightly different, with a dazzling array of special attribute bonuses.

And it seems that once a certain amount of special attributes is reached, one can develop a unique combat style or specialization of their own.

Is this the reward mentioned in the sparring mission—Underground Fighting?

The enhancement he had obtained in the pursuit of results, similar to the Overlimit Drive acquired before, had become another unexpected gain.

The consumption of experience was also massive, even more so...

Of course, Bai E did not regret it.

Physical combat abilities didn't just determine one's strength when unarmed; they were also crucially important for training the overall quality of the body and every other action requiring bodily coordination.

The body is the foundation of everything. By honing his unarmed combat abilities to the limit, Bai E felt that it would always serve a greater purpose in the future, since according to official statements—the personal martial power of this era was so formidable that it could even contend with starships alone.

As insubstantial as duckweed, gazing up at the starry sky...

Lying on the ground in defeat, Dead Lion Robby tilted his head to look at the figure still standing, his eyes filled with incomprehension, "Don't you ever get tired?"

Bai E remembered the persona he had crafted for himself, his face gently lifting, lips curling slightly, "You were close to taking me down... too bad, you'll never have that chance again."

Seeing the other approaching, Paul, weakened in body, felt a flutter of nerves, his throat worked, and he swallowed.

He knew what it meant to be defeated here, but he had already called "surrender" in advance.

His gaze involuntarily shifted toward the sidelines—where were the enforcers? Save me, enforcers!

The enforcers, realizing the potential danger, ran towards this side while calling out, "The match is over, no injuring the contestants!"

"Whew~"

The afterimage of a palm swung before his eyes, and Paul closed them instinctively.

After he waited a moment without feeling the blow, he opened his eyes to find a hand firmly stopped in front of him.

On the other side of the half-mask, it seemed as if the opponent was puzzled by his reaction, head tilted slightly and staring at him quizzically.

Using the provided support to rise to his feet, Paul, a bit bashfully, expressed his gratitude, "Thank... thank you."

"It is I who should thank you."

Bai E waved his hand and walked towards the passage to his rest area.

The announcer's delayed voice rang out behind him, "After a fierce struggle, our newcomer, the Ghostly White, has emerged victorious from this intense battle! With the vigor of a mighty beast, perhaps after this fight, it's time to prepare another title more suitable for the Ghostly White!"

Paul, his steps a bit unsteady, looked at the initially cocky yet now dominantly striding silhouette, a hint of longing in his eyes.

Such a carefree and unrestrained life was exactly what he aspired to.

[Perhaps next time we could ask if he's willing to join our battle gang...]

["Lucky Strike" energy recharge +1.]

...

Staring at the figure slowly leaving the arena on the monitor, the arena manager narrowed his eyes and contemplated for a moment before instructing his subordinates through the voice-command, "Ask him if he would like to join tonight's battle against the Blood God."

"Yes!"

...

Having stepped into the shadows of the passage, Bai E's figure paused, and he looked over his shoulder.

The golden figure on the field seemed to still be foolishly staring at his departing back.

Was the energy recharge provided by that guy?

It seemed out of place in this arena.

If everyone else doesn't participate and only you do, that definitely suggests a problem...

But the outside world's issues were temporarily unrelated to him. As a player without a strong foundation, it was fine to play the enigma in front of inexperienced players, but for the native inhabitants with myriad eyes and ears, there was no basis for contact or cooperation...

Upon returning to the rest room, staff members already waiting approached and asked, "Lord Ghostly White, what are your plans next...?"

"I'm not fighting anymore," Bai E declared firmly.

He meant what he had said to Mad Lion; if the other had persisted a little longer, he really would have exhausted his reserves of mobility.

After fighting tirelessly through three consecutive matches and using Overlimit Drive both to burst and maintain his physical state, he had pushed his mobility reserves to the limit, leaving almost nothing left.

If he faced a formidable enemy next and invested his combat experience in the fight, only to be defeated before he could master the special attributes, wouldn't that be a major loss?

Definitely not an option.

The staff member, recalling the instructions of their superior, asked again with some persistence, "There is an opportunity to fight the Blood God tonight... You do know who the Blood God is, right?"

Chapter 195 Blood Sacrifice Ritual

Bai E's tone was light and rising, "I know."

"Knowing is good..." Any normal person should be aware of the value of the name 'Blood God' in this gladiator arena. A smile appeared on the staff's face, "Now, there's a chance to defeat the Blood God head-on in a four against one match..."

Four against one? Head-on?

"Not interested!" Bai E flatly refused.

Four against one?

Winning wouldn't lead to any promotion.

As for the so-called reputation in this arena, what use had he for it?

Even the charge value for a lucky strike wouldn't increase; it was worthless!

In the control room, the person in charge was pressing an earpiece to his ear, listening to his subordinate's report.

"He says he wants to defeat the Blood God alone, he's not interested in four against one."

The person in charge's lips curled slightly, and a cold light flickered, "Arrogant..."

However...

"Let him be."

It was just a matter of one more or one less offering. The greatest ascension required the finest offerings, and ordinary targets didn't even qualify to be a part of this ritual!

...

Having heard that a match involving the Blood God was coming up, Bai E wasn't in a hurry to leave. He couldn't participate, but watching that fellow's match wouldn't be bad.

It was only after his battle with the Mad Lion that Bai E deeply realized just how great the gap between him and the Blood God had been. Though his speciality level was only six levels behind, it seemed small, yet the special attribute entries included within the Blood God's abilities were probably far beyond his own.

Moreover, after who knows how many battles, his reflex attributes were undoubtedly far beyond his current 12.6 level without any surprise.

Even if he had dumped all his experience into direct stat upgrades, the outcome of that battle would probably still have been a crushing defeat.

Honed over several years and surviving until now, his practical combat abilities were terrifyingly strong. The only area where he might slightly fall behind was brute strength.

With the Overlimit Drive, his strength advantage was unique and exceptional, while the Blood God... had never received even a single dose of Gene Optimization Solution.

Despite this, he dared to face three opponents in this brutal arena?

During the rest period, Bai E had heard this significant news from others. Tonight, it was heavy enough to be considered.

The only thing he was a bit conflicted about was... whether or not to place the 500 Black Street coins from Chavez on the Blood God.

Three against one at the top tier level seemed to have a very small chance of victory. Could he lose all of his savings?

Night fell, and more and more people arrived...

As the news deliberately spread by the arena fermented, almost the entire Black Street and even more people from the settlements outside the city came upon hearing the name.

Outside the city there wasn't just Black Street as a gathering place. The inside of the city was safer, but it also had rules. Those who disliked rules stayed outside the city walls, gradually forming various spontaneous settlements.

Black Street was just one such place closer to the military barracks.

And as more lively crowds from different areas gathered, the tiers of floors above and below were nearly filled to capacity with people.

An unprecedentedly feverish atmosphere enveloped the entire gladiator arena. Those rampant desires, almost tangible, seemed to flow through the air. Bai E felt as if he could see a kind of perverse pink fog spreading in front of his eyes.

[The scale is this huge?]

Sitting alone in the resting room, Bai E marveled inwardly. The resting room could also be considered a VIP viewing platform. As a rising star, he had this privilege.

Unfortunately...

It couldn't be monetized.

Leaning back in his seat, Bai E's eyes slightly glazed over, feeling a bit regretful.

No matter how fervent the worship of these people, it couldn't be converted into charge values for his skills.

Otherwise, this place would indeed be a sanctuary for grinding charge values. After winning each match, he probably could count on a full 50 points of charge income. Unfortunately, it was not to be...

The crowd was noisy, and to overcome the screeching music and the voices of the foolish around them, everyone spoke louder and louder, naturally inflating their emotions.

Where there are more people, control becomes difficult. In a small place packed with people, a slight friction under a violent atmosphere could easily ignite a large melee.

It was nearly impossible for the limited staff of the hosting party to maintain order among the inherently chaotic elements.

As the situation gradually spiraled out of control and his subordinates were anxiously requesting orders, the person in charge finally pulled out the cigar clamped at the edge of his mouth and, with a ferocious smile, gave the signal, "Begin!"

The announcer's voice violently erupted through the poor quality speakers placed all around. For a moment, the squabbling crowds stopped their fights.

"Let's welcome the fighters to the ring!"

Three top-tier fighters in a bare-knuckle match against one!

The result of three top-tier fighters surrounding one would normally be a foregone conclusion, but with the Blood God being the one surrounded, things became uncertain.

No matter what, the odds didn't lie.

With odds of 1 to 1.5, viewers still favored the trio slightly more than the lone Blood God.

The Blood God was formidable, but his three opponents were also renowned fighters of unmatched strength.

Bai E laid eyes on the three opponents of the Blood God.

One... was a cybernetically modified fighter.

One was an aged warrior with a sturdy physique.

And one was a lithe, bloodthirsty desperado.

"Hey! Those three guys, what are their stories?" Bai E asked curiously to the staff nearby.

The staff member spoke as if reciting from memory, "That modified fighter, nicknamed Viper, used to be a long-standing winning competitor in bare-knuckle fights. He got schemed against once, lost a leg and two hands, got sponsored by the war guild in the city to have cybernetic limbs installed. Now he's exceptionally ruthless in his moves, and he also has more strength than a normal person."

Chapter 196 Blood Sacrifice Ritual\_2

"That old guy is named Graff, a retired veteran who, I heard, survived over a decade on the front lines in the army barracks. He's a tough cookie. He probably wouldn't be boxing here if it weren't for needing to support a few girls at home," the staff member explained.

"As for that skinny one... he's survived twenty-eight death matches, a real Grim Reaper."

The last one wasn't introduced in detail, but the phrase "death match" was enough to prove his worth.

Death matches are practically synonymous with an upgraded form of gladiatorial combat. Those who dare to participate are truly ruthless, and to win twenty-eight consecutive battles in this life-threatening setting...

Without a doubt, these three opponents were also well-known fighters in this arena.

Here, reputation signifies strength!

After finishing the introductions, the staff member spoke with a hint of concern, "I don't understand how Blood God dared accept this match. Although it's not a death match... these experts, when they really start fighting viciously, even our people may not be able to control the situation."

"You don't think highly of him?"

"Hard to say..." the staff member cautiously glanced at the surveillance camera above his head, then leaned in and whispered gossip, "Every once in a while, sacrificing some controversial fighters is a way to keep the arena hot. Sir... if you ever find yourself in that situation, you better be very careful."

"Oh?" Bai E glanced at him and casually tossed a couple of banknotes his way, "You seem to really care about people."

The staff member bowed and scraped as he went to pick them up, "Mainly because I can see you have the bearing of a king! I wouldn't tell just anybody..."

...

Mad Lion, who also had a private resting room, was hugging a girl while enjoying the service of another behind him. Doubt from a girl's voice reached his ears, "Young Master, do you think Blood God stands a chance?"

"I don't know..." Watching the four unwavering experts on the field, Paul was frowning as well.

He knew that with his current strength, it would be difficult to win against any one of these four alone, so he wasn't very confident in his judgment of this highest-level confrontation.

But...

"Since Blood God dared accept it, he must have some level of confidence."

Of the many star fighters in this arena, only Blood God was satisfying enough for him to want to recruit.

The character of artificial people is resolute and stable. Having suffered unjust treatment for so long within the barracks without showing any dissatisfaction, recruiting him would undoubtedly be an excellent acquisition of a top-notch fighter.

The precondition is... he must not be disabled by those three guys in this battle.

After a brief mutual appraisal, the four fighters burst into action almost simultaneously, fiercely initiating combat.

Even facing three opponents, Blood God displayed a highly comprehensive combat ability.

The fight between them was extremely dangerous.

It was evident that the other three experts, in their first cooperative fight, were not perfectly in sync, which gave Blood God a slim chance to find vulnerabilities.

From a distance, Bai E could not clearly see every minute movement of the four, but an obvious fact emerged after the fight began.

That old soldier named Graff seemed to show a slight reluctance toward the battle.

In comparison to the swift and treacherous Grim Reaper, and the Mechanical Viper with slightly delayed response due to his mechanical arm but with tremendous force, the veteran seemed... somewhat disengaged.

No discernible personal characteristics were apparent.

Of course, it could also be that it was simply his fighting style. Bai E didn't dare make a rash judgment.

His main focus was still on Blood God.

This camp's strongest close-combat warrior, who did not use Gene Optimization Solution, might also be the benchmark of a common human's pinnacle in this era.

...

On the field, amid the rapidly changing figures, Graff's eyes clouded slightly. Normally, this was not allowed in such a situation, as any distraction could be fatal, but it was only the cover from his two peers of equal rank that allowed him some leeway to slack off.

The words of the arena manager still echoed in his mind, "Either you three kill him or he kills the three of you! From the moment you set foot in the arena, you only need to remember this—kill him, and you will get a generous reward; if he kills you, I will make sure your families are well cared for. They will be safe, happy, and grow up without being bullied.

I have already submitted this agreement to the Council for backup; you can rest assured. Understood?"

Blood God does not fight in death matches.

But why force a fighter who doesn't participate in death matches into such a life-or-death scenario? And he himself remains unaware of the reason.

Looking at the artificial humanoid warrior in the midst of combat, his face serene as he focused on fighting, Graff felt a pang of pity.

"What are you thinking!" Amidst the melee, Viper's chilling voice reminded him, "If we don't kill him, we all die."

"I know," Graff muttered in response.

From the moment he signed the agreement, he knew this outcome, and even thought he was mentally prepared for it. But, upon actually entering the arena, he still saw his own past self in the figure of the opposing warrior.

Clenching his fists tightly, Graff seized the opening left by his teammate, surging forward with a shout.

The flicker of Spiritual Energy disrupted the space, the powerful suction momentarily causing Blood God to falter, nearly letting Graff grasp him with his left hand.

But even as he escaped the grasp, the sudden interference deformed Blood God's movements.

In such a perilous situation, any slight distraction could lead to a fatal blow.

Chapter 197 Blood Sacrifice Ritual\_3

It was just a moment, but Blood God's situation was precarious.

...

Apart from the piercing music, the gladiator arena suddenly fell eerily silent.

The joint combat of the four experts produced an aura akin to a genuine fight to the death, spreading a chilling murderous intent that silenced the usually raucous spectators, leaving them inexplicably heart-pounded and mute.

Watching the Blood God struggle from the control room, a subordinate looked at the person in charge with some confusion, "Boss, was the sacrifice we chose for him too strong?"

Those three were selected sacrifices, crucial for the enactment of this ascension ritual; but, looking at how things were developing, the 'sacrifices' seemed capable of bringing down the 'main character'?

"So what if they are? What does it matter?" The person in charge retorted with an eerie smile, seemingly indifferent to the situation in the arena, "Only the blood warriors who fully embrace combat can become servants of the master! If they can't overcome this, then let them die!"

If one cannot face their inner self in battle and embrace the power that comes from bloodshed and slaughter, then they should die!

How can a sacrifice that lacks qualification compel the most fervent, purest desire for slaughter!

Blood God is neither the first nor will he be the last.

This arena was never simply for profit; it exists solely as a training ground for nurturing servants for the master!

...

"Roar!"

The warrior, who had maintained a calm and even cruel demeanor, suddenly erupted into a furious roar.

A deep crimson flashed through his eyes, and visually, his speed and strength increased dramatically in an instant.

The sudden burst caught the viper, engaged in direct combat, off guard, and its half-mechanical body was flung far away in an instant.

Quickly stabilizing his form with mechanical limbs, Viper immediately regained composure, eyeing the figure entangled by his teammate with wariness.

[He's become stronger...]

How is that possible?

Many had analyzed Blood God's abilities; without the Gene Optimization Solution, his displayed combat power had already reached the peak level of a normal human's physique.

The peak level of a normal human's physique should not be able to overpower the strength of mechanical limbs powered by internal energy sources!

Had he finally broken through the stubborn military officials and received the Gene Optimization Solution after coming back from a mission just the other day?

...

This is trouble!

"Don't hold back anymore!" Viper growled lowly at the old soldier who was still hesitating to strike.

"Understood!"

When someone is fated to die, it can't be yourself dying...

Graff's eyes took on a misty gray sheen—

Spiritual Energy talent.

The most basic level of Spiritual Energy talent.

If it wasn't for his advanced years and the fact that he was a natural human, the military would never let him leave... That's under the assumption that he had never used any of the military's resources for Spiritual Energy and genetics, otherwise, even in death, he would die within the military.

...

As an opponent, no one could better understand the intentions of their adversaries than Blood God.

It was just a gladiatorial match... Following the deep-seated prohibitions against harming natural humans implanted in his synthetic self, he never wished to harm any natural human without explicit military orders. Hence, even while training his abilities in this underground fight club, he never took any lives and refused to participate in death matches.

He would fight earnestly but never deal a fatal blow.

But now... the resolute killing intent of the three opponents was unmistakably evident.

They... did they really want to kill him?

The most primal urge to survive surged within, and a savage rage began to overwhelm his once-calm intellect.

It was just a match... just a match...

Why... Why!

The frenzied, sinister atmosphere that pervaded the arena seemed to invisibly penetrate his very marrow.

Rage surged wildly!

...

In the rest area, Bai E's eyelids twitched, feeling as if something tremendous had occurred before him—

Taking on three at once... That guy, did he really win?

Chapter 198 Another task?

Three figures, looking somewhat pitiful, lay on the ground as if they had completely lost the strength to resist, powerless.

The red glow attached to his eyes gradually dissipated, and the Blood God, controlling himself to calm down, looked at his hands with a bit of surprise, then at the three opponents lying on the ground.

They... had already lost?

So he turned and looked towards the sidelines, waiting for the referee to announce the result.

No matter how it felt before, the final outcome was that he had achieved victory, and some murderous intent in actual combat... should be normal, right?

Behind him, the Viper lying on the ground looked at the back of the Blood God, a cunning light flickering in his eyes, "This is an opportunity!"

If he couldn't win head-on, then he would launch a surprise attack.

The person in charge only needs them to kill the Blood God; the referee has not made a move for a long time, obviously, he has received orders to cooperate and wait for their uprising.

The cold mechanical blade quietly sprang out from the Viper's prosthetic limb, and he also passed two of them to his comrades.

Bai E, who had been watching the situation on the field closely, abruptly stood up; however, the outbreak on the field was faster than any spectator's reaction.

The Blood God's reaction was clearly a beat too slow due to exhaustion, and only when the Reaper's blade tore through the skin of his arm did he realize that these three opponents weren't planning on stopping.

The scorching red light once again attached itself to his eyes, and the recently subsided rage swept back in an even more violent manner.

"Bang!"

As the Viper watched, a punch came flying from behind the Blood God, and he saw his mechanical arm forcefully pressed down by a fleshy wrist, losing out completely in this contest of pure strength.

Following that muscular, bulging arm upwards, the Viper's eyes met a pair of fiery red ones.

"Boom!"

With a punch thrown, the Viper's entire body was sent flying like it had been hit by a truck instantly, his head bending back completely while in mid-air, showing that his neck had broken under that blow.

The Blood God, whose rage persisted, flashed behind in the blink of an eye, grasping the wrist of the Reaper, whose movements were not as agile due to lack of strength.

"Crack!"

The acute pain of crushed bones instantly spread throughout the body, and in the next moment, the Reaper felt himself being lifted off the ground.

Having his ankle grabbed, he was hoisted up like a bag.

"Thud! Thud!"

Left and right, he was slammed against the iron plate, the sound of the collision creating earth-shattering noise.

The Reaper, whose bones were shattered, became like a boneless dead dog at that moment, a lump of mangled flesh wrapped in skin, casually tossed against the coarse nets at the side of the arena.

The last one, with a blade imbued with Spiritual Energy, wasn't quicker than the Blood God's reaction, and the Blood God, trapping the dagger with his chest muscles, grabbed the equally robust old soldier by the shoulders with both hands.

"Huff~ Huff~" Amidst heavy breathing, consciousness struggling to awaken, the Blood God's forceful grip slowly relaxed as the red glow in his eyes flickered, easing the pain-wrinkled frown of the old soldier.

"Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!"

Voices from the spectator seats, not knowing when, unanimously chanted together.

They didn't care about the consequences; they only wanted madness.

Not to mention, in a situation where one side had already violated the rules, any retaliatory action by the counterattacker was tacitly allowed here.

Blood, violence!

This was a carnage of frenzy for everyone!

The feverish atmosphere soared high, with all its core focusing on that one single focal point.

Any slightly calm thought was drowned in endless bloodthirsty qi.

Blood... Slaughter...

Savage desires erode the will, endless fury overwhelms the mind.

Enough noise!

"Ah!" The Blood God roared furiously.

"Bang!"

Muscle tissue tore apart, and a rain of blood like fluttering snowflakes gently scattered upon a face that was gradually becoming clear and seemed confused.

Warm...

Sweet...

Subconsciously licking his cracked lips, the Blood God looked at his heavy hands.

Two pieces... corpses?

Playing back what had just happened in his mind, the Blood God narrowed his eyes and stood silently in place.

The sheer brutality and bloodshed had inflamed the entire audience at that moment, their emotions surging skyward...

Bai E took one last look at the figure on the field, receiving countless cheers, then turned to leave.

The gap was significant.

But what puzzled everyone was that the previously declining Blood God seemed to suddenly muster an explosive performance, with both speed and strength increasing significantly.

Did he also possess an ability similar to Overlimit Drive?

Unclear...

The hints from the explosion rate didn't show all of a person's abilities, and it was normal for some hidden abilities to go undiscovered. He still didn't know much about him.

...

After exchanging the 750 black water coins won for Chavez, Bai E stepped into the growing darkness of the night, heading towards the secret base to change his clothes.

Apart from the rat-men, no one was in the base. With the nightfall, it was an excellent opportunity for the players to go on their missions.

"My lord..."

Hearing the noise made by Bai E, the rat-man instantly became alert, only to relax when he realized it was Bai E.

Recalling what he had heard in the afternoon, the rat-man whispered to Bai E, "My lord... this afternoon when I overheard their conversation, they seemed to mention something about the warehouse."

"Oh? What did they say?" Bai E asked with a smile.

"They said it's troublesome to wait for you to be present every time something is exchanged or contributed. It would be better to have someone specifically to look after the '...'—I didn't understand the word. In the end, they also mentioned that this '...' was fun but too realistic, so it's too troublesome."

The rat-man looked perplexed, "They didn't avoid me when they talked, but often I don't quite understand what they say, or can't hear it clearly..."

System keyword censorship?

Bai E looked at the rat-man with a somewhat astonished gaze... The words he couldn't understand, could they be "NPC," "game," or such indescribable and ineffable things?

Impressive!

The more he experienced, the more Bai wanted to uncover the truth behind this world... No matter what, Bai E wouldn't believe that everything he had experienced was merely the product of a virtual game. There had to be a deeper story behind the appearance of players, but perhaps his current level was still insufficient to access it?

But that didn't matter. As long as he kept progressing, he would eventually be able to lift that mysterious veil.

Walking under the starlight, Bai E quickly returned to camp.

It was still early, and none of his tentmates had rested.

Seeing Bai E lift the tent flap, everyone's faces brightened.

"Speaking of which, we haven't gone on a mission together since Bai joined the team... The battlefield doesn't count," Dashan was the first to speak.

"We have a mission the day after tomorrow that's just come up for our squad. You're okay with that, right?" Tiger looked at Bai, formally asking.

Chapter 199 Problematic Refugee Slum?

Members of a regular special forces team are definitely supposed to follow the team and their missions without question, but Bai E was a special case. Since joining the team, he basically had not followed the standard procedures and regulations of the special forces, so much so that even when on an official mission, Tiger had to confirm with the person involved.

"It's fine..." Bai E hesitated a moment, thinking carefully, "It should be fine, I guess."

A mission? Going on a mission would be great.

He loved going on missions, and going on a mission... that meant there might be a chance to go on a mission.

"What's the objective of the mission?" Bai E asked casually.

"In the wilderness outside the city, we sometimes find humans who exist outside the city's boundaries. They often end up in such situations for various reasons—like having offended someone in another city, or being cut off by wild beasts or environmental barriers, or not knowing the way to the city, etc. That's why we frequently organize teams to search and rescue those wandering in the wild.

No matter what, finding shelter in the outskirts of the city is always much better than trying to survive in the unforgiving wilderness."

"Hmm~" Bai E nodded to indicate he was listening.

"The day after tomorrow, our mission is to escort a group of refugees from the wilderness back within the city's sphere of influence. The advance reconnaissance has already been roughly completed by scouts. The target community is hiding in a wind tunnel cave for survival, with a population of at least two hundred people.

It's quite a large number, and they may be attacked by wild beasts in the wilderness on their way back. Protecting as many of them as we can and ensuring their safe return to the city is the mission's requirement."

Tiger explained the purpose of the mission in a calm tone.

Bai E became curious, glancing around the tent, "Just the five of us?"

"Due to the larger scale of the target community, there will be two other special forces teams working with us on this mission."

This was the largest scale for a mission with a non-combat main objective. As for deploying more soldiers...

The value of over two hundred refugees probably wasn't worth the expense of sending out more soldiers for a mission.

In this era, countless lives were sacrificed, yet life was the cheapest commodity.

Such a mission was just another routine task for the team.

Tiger didn't go into details, as there were things not every soldier needed to understand so clearly.

Bai E nodded, "Got it."

"Bai..." Dashan gazed eagerly at Bai E, "I heard you were teammates with 'The Blood God' on a mission a few days ago. How much do you know about him?"

After the successful completion of the mission, some secrets were no longer so secret.

Although Minister Likok's actions were reckless, the outcome was good.

Not only was the server rebooted, but the electronic demon threat to humanity was also perfectly resolved. As the executor of this operation, the military could be said to have gained quite a few benefits.

Therefore, the control over the secrecy of the mission wasn't so strict, and those with even a slight connection had roughly heard some rumors.

At these words, Bai E was taken aback, "The Blood God? Is he going too?"

If that weren't the case, Dashan probably wouldn't have brought him up.

"Yeah!" Dashan's eyes lit up, "I've heard of his reputation a long time ago, but never really had the chance to spar with him. Is he really that powerful?"

Bai was also very powerful, but Bai's strength and The Blood God's strength were on different levels.

Dashan was an artificial human; The Blood God's batch preceded his by quite a margin, and Dashan had been hearing legends of The Blood God since his creation.

Many warriors with close combat talent nearly all regarded The Blood God as their ultimate goal to strive for, and Dashan was no exception.

This opportunity to work on a mission together was most exciting for Dashan.

"Him? Well..." Bai E instantly recalled the scene he had witnessed that evening. The Blood God, when truly unleashed, was terrifyingly ferocious, so his tone carried a hint of lament, "Indeed, very powerful."

"With him with us, there's no way we'll have any problems with this mission!" Dashan was somewhat jubilant, worshiping his idol unconditionally.

Experts always provided the greatest sense of security. The mission's targets had all been scouted by the advance reconnaissance soldiers, and the route had been clearly planned. Aside from a few roaming beasts whose patterns were unpredictable, there was virtually no other danger.

It was like earning military merit while lying down.

Every mission came with military merit points, and in this era, straying from the vicinity of the city meant danger – opportunities to earn military merits without much risk were rare.

It was like a pie falling from the sky.

"Okay..." Seeing Dashan's excitement, Tiger couldn't help but interject, "That's enough, rest well. Make final preparations tomorrow. Regardless of who accompanies us, the first thing we need to do is ensure we take care of our own tasks."

"Got it, got it..."

"As long as you have the time," Tiger walked over to Bai E's bedside and patted his shoulder, "We'll talk about the more specific details on the road. Be careful during tomorrow's training."

"I know."

...

[Feedback from the commission: your Insight +0.2.]

[Feedback from the commission: Long-range Weapons Mastery Experience +48.]

[Feedback from the commission: Light Weapons Mastery Experience +23.]

[Feedback from the commission: your Reflex +0.1.]

[Feedback from the commission: Hand-to-Hand Combat Mastery Experience +27.]

...

[Feedback from the commission: your Physical Fitness +0.1.]

...

[Feedback from the commission: Tech - Basic Electrical Manufacturing and Processing Experience +137.]

[Feedback from the commission: Knowledge - Computer Hardware Maintenance Experience +11.]

...

Every morning, upon seeing the rewards of the players' efforts during the night, Bai E felt his mood for the day would be exceptionally good.

Not afraid of slow progress, only afraid of no progress at all.

The slow trickle still brought a significant cumulative improvement. However, speaking of which... currently, he actually had four task assignment slots each day.

Aside from that trio, Wen Jie was a rare sight in the inner city. When he had time, he still had to rely on himself to find another player to work for him...

With the funds of 1250 blackwater coins, including the principal, Bai E arrived at the training ground in the early morning.

Taking advantage of the time before the assembly, Bai E went to Chavez and stuffed the money into his hand.

"I placed a bet last night, and the Blood God won."

"He's back..." Chavez collected the blackwater coins without a fuss, squeezing them in his pocket, his expression slightly puzzled, "Didn't you join in?"

"I did join..."

"Was it fun?"

"It was alright."

Chavez nodded and then jerked his chin towards the field, "Now that you're back, train well. These kids have been slacking a lot these last few days in your absence."

"Uh..." Bai, slightly hesitant, still told the truth, "Instructor, I might have another mission tomorrow."

"Another mission?" Chavez was momentarily startled, then remembered Bai E's true outfit, "Right, you're part of the special forces; it's normal to have many missions."

He then casually asked, "What's the mission?"

"They say it's to escort a group of refugees back to the city..."

"Refugees?" Chavez was taken aback, turned to face Bai E squarely, his expression becoming serious, "Is it the refugee slum in the northwest?"

Bai E wasn't sure, after all, Captain Hu hadn't gone into such detail, so he just shook his head, "I'm not too clear either, the captain notified us."

Chavez frowned, "I'm not sure about other places, but there's something wrong with that refugee slum in the northwest. A scout I know mentioned several brothers have fallen there. They say disappeared, but in this era, when you disappear in the wild..."

Everyone knows what it means.

As a natural human instructor, Chavez had deep connections in the camp and hence heard plenty of rumors.

"This..."

"You best find out if it's that refugee slum in the northwest. If it is... better to back out if you can," Chavez turned to look in another direction. The steadiness of a natural human guided his thoughts. Talking to a fighter he quite liked, he was as sincere as could be, "It's not worth risking your life for the little military merit of one mission."

Bai nodded, "I will look into it..."

Chapter 200 Challenge Instructor

Bai E continued his training, immersed in his own world.

Turn it down?

He knew the instructor might mean well, but was it too cautious to turn down a mission just because of some rumors he'd heard?

Not to mention, he wasn't even sure if such an action was allowed in the camp, especially since he had no other valid reason right now.

An even more important point... as an artificial human, he probably didn't have the same level of freedom as natural humans.

Most likely, it wasn't as simple as wanting to turn down the mission.

Besides, even if he didn't go, there would always be other soldiers to take his place.

Bai E didn't take the matter to heart, perhaps it would be somewhat challenging, but he had to witness it firsthand.

...

[In strenuous exercise, you've pushed past your own limits, physical strength +0.1.]

14.7 now.

The closer he got to his limit, the more complicated Bai E felt, after all, waste was shameful.

Poking at the colorful mush in front of him, Bai E's eyes became slightly unfocused.

He was also unsure about the status of his application for the Gene Optimization Solution.

As for hoping for the contingency plan he had in place on Wen Jie, that was probably still far off.

From the feedback received, Wen Jie was probably being overworked with some sort of electronics research and manufacturing, and it would be a long road before he could access truly advanced knowledge.

"Bai E."

Suddenly, a figure sat down opposite him at the dining table.

Carlos's voice came in low and sudden, "You know about the mission you have tomorrow?"

Bai E's eyes refocused, and he calmly looked at Carlos, "I know."

"Good, you must go on this mission."

"Huh?" Bai E looked puzzled, then nodded as if he finally understood, "Isn't that my duty?"

"No... the information you got might not be complete. This mission is risky, the three previous scout teams sent to investigate the target area have all disappeared without a trace, with the only information returned being a preliminary size analysis. Normally, a target with incomplete information like this should be further investigated... or ignored.

They wouldn't just send you directly to rendezvous with refugees."

Carlos glanced around sharply, his gaze keen as can be, and continued in a low voice, "So, you don't have the full mission details. What I mean is... if something seems off, run. Bring back any information you've gathered, but remember, this time your mission is not to focus on assisting the refugees but to investigate first. I suspect those refugees themselves are the threat."

This wasn't unusual.

Certain demonic cultists or mutants who couldn't make it in the cities nearby... Of course, cultists were fewer, as most needed to follow demons' orders to infect more humans in the world, whereas mutants tend to be ostracized and leave cities on their own.

For such beings, if it's not convenient, the military wouldn't bother to go after them specifically.

After all, this world was full of enemies, whether it was humans, bugs, orcs, machine intelligence, mutants, or demonic cultists... encounters always started with a fight.

Of course, the possibility that the group of refugees are normal humans but hostile to the city wasn't ruled out.

Or maybe some unspecified risks are involved with the environment near them.

There were many possibilities. What made this particular Refugee Slum stand out was that three scouting parties had somehow carelessly vanished while exploring it.

Whether to continue to investigate or to give up in such circumstances wasn't really the issue; sending out more elite squads for a joint exploration was standard procedure.

Soldiers, well... they're there to be used up, for scouting and collecting information; it's all in a day's work.

But from the perspective of the squad being sent out, if misled by intelligence and heading unprepared into a cave, they likely would end up like those three scouts.

And yet, Bai E couldn't afford not to go.

Fortune favors the bold, and if he refused such a mission that was optional at best, his application for the Gene Optimization Solution would inevitably face complications.

"So you have to be extra careful. The mission can fail, and it's okay to gather intelligence, but you must return safely. After you come back this time, you should be able to get the Optimization fluid injected."

Delaying and finding ways to make the applicant have an accident, these tactics were all too obvious, yet an open strategy he couldn't refuse.

Bai E appeared to be digesting the information and after a while, he slowly nodded, "I understand."

"Good, just be careful, and try to keep your teammates alert as well," Carlos emphasized, patting Bai E's shoulder across the dining table, then turned and left.

Even though he wanted to support Bai E, the necessary training experience was indisputable.

The growth of any warrior is incomplete without facing risks over and over again, with each crisis serving both as an opportunity to toughen oneself and a good chance to establish prestige.

Being injected with the Gene Optimization Solution was just the starting point for Bai E's hoped-for advancements; climbing step by step within the military framework was the real long-term goal.

From his recent covert operation, Bai E had already shown a certain level of leadership, with a few more impactful victories, his advancement in military rank and position would naturally follow.

Keep up the good work; the future is always bright.

Watching Carlos leave, Bai E narrowed his eyes.

It could be said that Chavez's rank was limited, but now that even Carlos said this, it seemed this mission indeed had some trick to it.

It looked like he had to arm himself to the teeth before leaving.

In the latter half of the morning, practical combat training.

"Now, pair up and spar. Use all your strength to defeat your opponent. If no winner emerges within 1 minute, you'll train for a whole day!"

Having not heard his voice for several days, Drill Instructor Dan's voice was still deep and resonant.

"Reporting, Drill Instructor!" A voice suddenly rang out from the assembled training group.

Dan's gaze turned towards the recruit who had been missing for a few days, his expression calm, "Speak."

"I wish to challenge you."

It wasn't that Bai E was getting carried away; just last night in the arena, he was able to trigger the sparring mode and rigorously learn from the combat experience of those bare-knuckle fighters. Could he repeat this process with Dan?

Indeed, during the previous secret operation selection competition, the sparring mode hadn't been triggered—Bai E initially thought it might have been due to the attitude of his opponents.

But after reflecting last night, could it also be a factor of his own mindset?

In fact, back then, his experience storage was limited, and even if the option for sparring mode had appeared, he wasn't in the mindset to learn.

In other words... he had "refused" this method of improvement himself.

It seemed that in many of the tasks he triggered before, the factor of his own "desire" was also present, so could his mindset also affect the triggering of tasks and modes in the game system?

Regarding the various features of the game system within him, Bai E didn't yet understand them fully; he could only try to fumble through in various situations.

Upon hearing Bai E's request, Dan's bright eyes instantly lit up.

Challenge him?

Good! Very good!

No matter the strength level, this kind of courage deserved commendation.

Moreover, since he dared to issue a challenge, he must have some skills, right?

"All units, take a break and watch!"

Whether for the purpose of learning or to let other soldiers understand the gap, Dan had the training group pause their training and observe the sparring between her and Bai E.

This was the first soldier who had taken the initiative to challenge her; she couldn't let this rare teaching opportunity go to waste.

Dan clenched her fists, an excited flush visible on her face.

"Come!"

...

"A new recruit is challenging the instructor."

"What the fuck, which new recruit is so fierce?"

Even during training, unusual commotion easily attracted attention from other training groups in the vicinity.

A few drill instructors gathered together, their eyes filled with surprise.

"Has there been a revolt among Dan's new recruits?"

"I feel like I've seen that recruit before..." one of the instructors said, stroking his chin doubtfully.

"Isn't it that rookie of honor?"

His war record of rescuing 423 comrades on the battlefield was well known, but in their view, the most crucial aspect was the "Number 3 throat strip," the miracle drug. This soldier could only be commended for his willpower.

The slight display of ability was perfectly intercepting air strikes with a Type 77 rifle, as mentioned in passing by Marshal Weslin.

However, they were neither marksmen nor had they witnessed it with their own eyes—who knows the true merit?

But no matter the merit, that shouldn't translate to ability in close combat.

Now, arrogantly challenging his own drill instructor, even that commendable quality seemed to have vanished...

Ignorant of his own limitations!

Simply put, he's become inflated.

...

"What's going on over there?"

The officer who was closely following Yueying likewise heard the commotion on the training field.

After observing for a while, he located the focus of the controversy—

All the training groups in this area were made up of new recruits from recent batches; it was rare to see a soldier bold enough to challenge an instructor.

But from a distance, he couldn't make out the appearance of the soldier; to him, the soldiers in uniform training attire nearly all looked the same.

But it wasn't important; what good could a presumptuous new recruit gain under an instructor's watch?

He would probably be put down within a few moves; there was nothing interesting to see.

"Miss Yueying?" Dunpus looked puzzled as he observed the Elf Race lady suddenly stop.

Yueying gazed far into the distance, her sight traveling through space, "Let's see."