

Wow 241

Chapter 241 Transfer Application

Franca's sudden intrusion clearly caused the solemn atmosphere of the occasion to choke for a moment, and the intimate address made the muscles under the right eye of the old man on the high platform involuntarily tremble.

"Eh? Aglaya is also here?" Franca, who strode in, seemingly didn't treat the Judgment Hall, regarded as a solemn place by all the executors, as anything serious.

Aglaya glanced sideways at the noble young lady who was exquisitely dressed.

Her family had significant weight in the city, so much so that her personal behavior often seemed unimportant.

Anyone mentioning her would only remember the family behind her.

But her family couldn't afford to be frivolous in front of Judgment Chief Nolanitz...

'It seems that the young lady has also forged her own path...'

Aglaya withdrew her gaze and looked up again at the Judgment Chief above, "Your Excellency Nolanitz, since you have other matters to attend to, I won't disturb you. Just these two children... I'll trouble you with them."

"Rest assured."

Watching the tall woman's retreating figure, Franca followed the two adolescents with a pair of curious eyes.

To call them children was not quite accurate; after all, she wasn't much older than them.

Their eyes were large, full of vivacity.

The girl had a quiet temperament, serene and reserved.

The boy was lively and sunny, his curious eyes scanning around.

They were said to be refugees?

Yet the black clothes with golden stripes were sophisticated and elegant, suiting them well without the awkward urgency of refugees new to the city.

Are these the two with extraordinary talents?

Indeed, they had an exceptional air about them.

"Franca, why have you come back?" While observing, the Judgment Chief Nolanitz suddenly asked from above.

The previously ethereal and profound voice became more grounded, carrying a touch of closeness.

"The Rat Plague case flopped, came back to report that I'm not dead yet."

The old man fell silent for a moment, his voice slightly reproachful, "It must be that boy Balu being too arrogant..."

"It's not his fault; I let them escape," Franca waved her hand dismissively and turned to ask the boy and girl beside her, "Grandpa, are they the new recruits?"

"Yes... You've come at just the right time," Nolanitz said with a clearly affectionate chuckle in his tone, "You lead them to Asibern at the youth training camp and tell him to keep a close eye on them. These two have started late and will need to work harder than the others."

"Alright~" Franca cheerfully agreed on the spot, her eyes glued to the two children, "Follow big sister, I'll take you to where we train."

"Hold on." As Franca was about to turn, the Judgment Chief seemed to remember something, "The executor that went to instruct the soldiers at the military camp has requested a transfer, leaving a vacancy. Franca, would you be interested?"

"The military camp?" Franca cocked her head thoughtfully, "The one where you mentioned going to do Psychic Pressure Resistance Training for those soldiers?"

"Yes."

"Didn't I submit an application that was rejected?"

"So now I'm giving you the opportunity."

Because nobody else wanted to go...

Initially, hardly any executors were willing to direct resistance training for soldiers without related talents. Those who were reluctantly chosen had all slipped away and returned.

The life of an executor was meant to burn passionately in the hunt for demons; any comfortable life would weaken their fighting will over time.

The executors who went to the military camp all felt the impact of unclean whispers from higher-dimensional spaces deepening, urgently needing fervent battle to purify themselves.

On the contrary, executors newly joined to the Arbitration Place might be more suitable.

"Oh~" Franca tapped her chin with a tender finger, pondering briefly before crisply agreeing, "No problem, I'll go!"

She had already applied last time, only to be rejected by everyone.

This time, with the Judgment Chief personally inviting her, there was no reason not to take a look.

For Franca, anything she hadn't seen was fatally attractive.

"Then it's settled." Nolanitz nodded in satisfaction, "First take them to report to the youth training camp, then head to 'The Slate' to receive your assignment. I will have someone notify Balu."

"No problem." Franca waved her hand, her crisp and lively voice echoing through the hall, "I'll take them now."

On their way, Franca leaned in slightly, her lovely face drawing near Kiro Lan's side, her bright eyes glancing at the two children, "Are you really refugees? What made you decide to come to the city?"

"A great person saved us and brought us back," answered Morphie instantly, taken in by the beautiful big sister's approachable demeanor that lacked any sense of strangeness.

The city's landscape was drastically different from the oasis town where he had spent the past decade or more. Everything was novel and alluring, and the people here seemed universally kind.

It seemed that what Bai E had said was indeed true; the city was a paradise... if only he had known earlier.

"A great person?"

Morphie blurted out without thinking, "It was Bai E."

"The great person from the military camp," Kiro Lan clarified softly, elaborating, "We were actually stranded in the wilderness, and the people from the camp saved us and took us back to the city."

"Oh~" Franca nodded, registering the name "Bai E" and then asked excitedly, "So where are you guys originally from? How could any city let you leave with such talents?"

Kiro Lan turned slightly to look at the delicate features of the amiable young lady beside her. Those sparkling eyes showed cunning intelligence, and her gentle face bore no signs of the ravages of the world.

"Sister... we lived in an oasis in the wilderness, where talents were not valued."

Spiritual Energy?

Can Spiritual Energy be eaten as food?

They lacked a professional system to understand and develop Spiritual Energy; just surviving consumed all the effort of their lifetimes.

There were Psychic Ability users in the oasis too, but only a very, very few of them could maintain their true self without being eroded by demons, not to mention having significant strength.

Or to say, the strong ones had all died...

The stronger the Psychic Ability burned, the more brightly its projected Spiritual Body shone in the higher dimensional space, appearing like a beacon in the dark to those demons.

In the short time they had been in contact with Great Lady Aglaya, they had learned quite a bit of common knowledge about the world of Psychic Ability users.

"Oh~" Franca obediently responded, "I see~"

Then she grew excited again, "How many of you are there... and where did you bring them back from?"

"In the beginning, there were more than six hundred of us. We hid under a wind-eroded cavern and due to our unknown fear of life, a Origin demon was born around us as the core..."

After learning more about demons from Aglaya, Kiro Lan's description became more accurate.

"Origin demon?" Franca was shocked, "Wow! That's not something to mess with."

With that, she pulled Kiro Lan toward a hidden corner of the corridor and crouched down, tucking in, "Come on, tell me all about it..."

"But sister, aren't we supposed to go report to the training place?" Morphie felt something was off about the situation.

Franca waved her hand carelessly, "Hey~ it won't hurt to be a bit slow, right?~"

Continuing with an excited face, she urged Kiro Lan, who had crouched down with her, "Keep going, keep going, I love stories!"

Kiro Lan smiled gently, with no objections. The sister's behavior might be extraordinary and casual, but her sincere attitude made it hard for anyone to dislike her, and she quietly began to recount the past.

"The military sent out three groups of soldiers, but all of them fell there, until the arrival of this group of adults..."

From a corridor frequented by enforcers, the occasional strange glance floated in.

From afar, one could only hear the soft voice of a young girl slowly saying something, interspersed with the exclamations of another lively female voice.

"Gee~"

"So that's considered cool?"

"Yeah, yeah~"

"I'm quite envious of you... emmmm, I mean I'd also like to see what demons look like."

And... what I could achieve when facing a demon.

What others can do, I can do too!

After hearing the story, Franca stood up abruptly, "That guy is called Bai E, right! I'll meet him tomorrow!"

...

Late at night.

Back in his room, too excited to sleep, Weslin sat in his comfortable recliner pondering how to reward the newly created Artificial Human Soldier.

This time, he had almost single-handedly brought back over four hundred Psychic Talent users and two top-tier talents for the city and had legitimately established a foundational relationship with Aglaya—a feat deserving recognition.

Mere military merits?

Those were expected, not an extra reward.

Since his creation, this new Artificial Human had accomplished several meritorious deeds and also proved to be very sensible. Had it not been for concerns about Hamilton's faction's potential opposition, he would have arranged the Gene Optimization Solution reward for him long ago.

Now, the distribution of Gene Optimization Solution had become a sure thing, so it could not be considered a reward either.

What, then, would be a good reward for him?

His hand absentmindedly flipped through the documents on the desk beside him, and seeing a proposal submitted just today, glanced at it out of an innate sense of duty—

"Proposal for the Transfer of Artificial Recruit 95B27 to the Armored Battalion"—Hamilton

"..."

95B27?

Wasn't that Bai E?

Why was Hamilton wanting to transfer Bai E to his Armored Battalion?

Could it be he planned to get rid of him on his own turf?

Such a tactic seemed too foolish.

Because of Carlos's faction's intent to support the Artificial Human, Hamilton had indeed shown an opposing stance to the Artificial Human previously, but essentially, it was to express dissent against Carlos's faction's decisions rather than any real issue with the Artificial Human himself.

It's unlikely that he would directly target the Artificial Human; it would break the "rules."

Looking at the time the proposal was submitted... it was today, just after the special joint squad returned from their mission.

Did he submit this proposal at the first news of Bai E's success? Quite eager, indeed.

Let's see what he's up to...

After reviewing Hamilton's submitted proposal, Weslin shook his head with a quiet chuckle.

So that's his angle...

You Carlos faction want to support him? I'll support him too.

But as a natural person...

Undercutting the foundation!

That was Hamilton's plan.

Chapter 242 natural person identity

Hamilton's proposal for this artificial person was—

to be transferred to the armor battalion, and not just any part, but the very core lineage of the true armor battalion.

To have the chance to be in contact with mecha, becoming a backup mech pilot!

Due to this newly created artificial person's outstanding combat achievements, even factions leaders like Hamilton, who were unwilling to recognize the equal status of artificial persons, had to admit the excellence of this individual.

Since this mission also failed to result in this artificial person's "sacrifice," they might as well stop targeting him.

If they couldn't prevent the opponent's promotion, better to completely make him one of their own with a decisive move.

Previously, Hamilton's targeting of Bai E remained almost entirely within the awareness of these top military officers; the soldier himself was actually completely unaware of it.

Therefore, even now, as they reversed their attitude and started to attract him, he himself should harbor no resentment.

Being transferred to the armor battalion was just a facade; everyone knew that the armor battalion was the exclusive domain of natural persons, and the occasional artificial persons transferred in were only fit for the most menial tasks in the battalion, absolutely unable to get in touch with the core Titan-class armament—combat mecha.

Now, allowing an artificial person to come into contact with this, was essentially granting him the identity of a natural person.

By giving an artificial person a public identity as a natural person, he could only be grateful.

Weslin, who had put down the proposal, had a thoughtful gleam in his eyes—

Hamilton's proposal might just be a fine reward...

Indeed, the identity of a natural person was actually the greatest reward for an artificial person.

This is class.

A person might easily acquire wealth and honor, but no matter how hard he tries, he can only be confined to a circle set at birth for his whole life.

Opportunities to cross class boundaries are rare, and each one is a tremendous opportunity.

If this artificial person warrior wasn't extraordinarily outstanding, and hadn't coincidentally achieved numerous actual combat records, this chance would never have fallen to him, it wouldn't even exist at all.

This reward... would truly show his favor towards him!

He was indispensable! Indispensable indeed!

It was settled then!

But the prerequisite was... that he had to successfully inject the Gene Optimization Solution.

After all, for artificial persons, that stuff was really a double-edged sword.

...

As dawn was just breaking, Bai E heard the call of the life officer outside the tent, "95B27!"

"Here!" A groggy Bai E had formed an instinct, with his eyes not yet open, his mouth had already responded.

"Tidy up your personal hygiene, the marshal is looking for you."

"Yes, sir!"

Could it be the Gene Optimization Solution that was mentioned just last night? So early in the morning?

During his morning wash, Bai E felt a small anticipation.

He had been waiting for this thing for quite a while.

The route to withstand a nuclear bomb with one's body, as mentioned on the official game website, relied on this thing that could push the human body beyond its limits.

Perhaps with this injection of Optimization fluid, he would instantly become a saint, capable of nuclear-explosion palms and nuclear-bomb kicks, invincible in the world.

"Reporting, the individual has been brought here!"

The familiar laboratory was the same one Helen had used before.

Was it really happening?

Bai E's heart thumped with anticipation, only to be quickly restrained.

The Gene Optimization Solution! So close at hand!

"Go in," the officer leading the way gestured.

Hamilton nodded, "Yes, sir!"

He pushed the door open, the familiar white coats standing beside that familiar instrument.

But it wasn't Helen, it was some unfamiliar faces he had never seen before.

That made sense, given that Helen was a senior academician at the Scientific Research Institute; such grassroots work certainly didn't need her hands-on involvement.

Weslin was there too. Upon seeing Hamilton, a friendly smile appeared on his face, "Hamilton, come here."

"Marshal..."

Weslin gestured with his eyes to the three white coats who were busy preparing and explained, "About the Gene Optimization Solution I mentioned to you yesterday, I asked them to come early in the morning."

"Injecting the Optimization Fluid is a time-consuming and laborious task that needs to be done with caution and may take a long while," one of the white coats interjected to explain.

The face of a military marshal deserved cooperation, of course.

"Thank you, Marshal!"

"It's what you deserve..." Weslin said with a chuckle, waving his hand and turning to the three white coats preparing, "Are you ready?"

The fully armed personnel from the Scientific Research Institute nodded, "We're ready, Marshal."

"Then let's begin," Weslin said, looking back at Hamilton and patting him on the back, "Go on, don't be afraid, I'm here."

Hamilton obediently lay down on the familiar workbench, his body being inspected by the three white coats as if it were a corpse.

One of the white coats approached the area above Hamilton's head, looking down into his eyes and speaking to him.

"Before we actually start, there are some things about the Gene Optimization Solution that I need to make crystal clear to you."

"What's happening now is not the real injection; we're collecting your bodily data. Only once we verify through the data that your body is sufficiently prepared can we begin the actual injection. Of course, whether your body is 'prepared' is not for us to say, nor is it for you to decide—it all depends on the data.

If we judge that your body isn't ready for the injection right now, we will provide you with a three to seven-day period of conditioning."

Strange, cold sensations touched up and down his body, as if sharp objects were touching or piercing his skin, but it didn't hurt.

Hamilton didn't utter a word or look down, simply nodding to show he had heard.

"Generally, there's no need to worry, ninety percent of our soldiers can receive the injection directly," Weslin reassured with a smile, speaking from experience.

"Hmm..." the white coat nodded in agreement with Weslin's statement, continuing to explain to Hamilton, "Even with the injection, I must make something clear to you—"

"Your artificial human genes contain interspecies elements. As Number 95 from the artificial human production line, your genes naturally have a part of the orc... The Gene Optimization Solution suited to you also contains this component. After the injection, your genes may express differently."

"It may remain unchanged; or it could be that your human genes dominate and start to expel the interspecies genes, though this is a slim possibility; more likely, the interspecies genes start to spread widely and take over. If the orc genes completely dominate your body, then I'm sorry... your fate will only be to be utterly abandoned."

Interspecies genes are inherently dominant and aggressive compared to human genes.

This is the fundamental reason why the military rarely issues Gene Optimization Solutions to artificial humans.

Compared to natural humans, artificial humans born with interspecies blood inherently carry original sin.

The Optimization Fluid is more likely to amplify this original sin, not to mention the waste of precious resources; it may also create mutant species detrimental to humankind.

Only when the achievements of an artificial human are indeed too significant to overlook would one risk attempting injection.

"But you needn't worry too much... The next part of what I'm going to say may be a bit less 'scientific', or maybe less 'materialistic'... You might not fully understand, but you just need to remember— who you are is for you to decide."

The white coat above Hamilton's head looked into his eyes with a serious and earnest gaze, trying to make him fully grasp the gravity of his words, "Be firm in your humanity, be firm in your pride as a human being. All interspecies, will ultimately be eradicated from this planet!"

"Do you understand?"

Hamilton took a deep breath and replied with a heavy voice, "Understood."

He knew the risks the white coat was referring to.

It was the mutation risk indicated on the panel... medium.

Plus, the intrinsic flaws of artificial humans Helen had warned about before...

Everything converged at this moment.

In the process of enhancing themselves, the original sin from the birth of artificial humans would also grow and strengthen alongside individual development.

Which would prevail in the internal struggle between the genes of different species—those of humans or those of the orcs? No one could know before the answer revealed itself.

Chapter 243 Injection!

After explaining the key points of injecting the Gene Optimization Solution, the scientist in the white lab coat fell silent, and for a moment, the only sound in the room was the occasional light "beep beep" of the equipment.

As time slowly passed, a continuous humming was followed by Bai E's medical report landing in the hands of one of the scientists.

[Physical Fitness]: 14.7/15

[Insight]: 12.5/15

[Reflex]: 12.9/15

These were the basic attributes, a must for the physical examination.

But they weren't the deciding factor for the injection.

The scientist glanced over the other crucial indicators and found them mostly within the acceptable ranges.

The only issue was the activation rate of the foreign genes...

It was flirting with the danger threshold.

Seeing the scientist frowning heavily, Weslin, who had been waiting to the side, stepped forward, "What's the problem? Is there an issue?"

The scientist nodded slightly, speaking with some hesitation, "The indicators are mostly okay, but his foreign genes are a bit too active. Forcing the injection could likely lead to his genes mutating out of control... "

Turning into a monstrous mutant neither human nor beast.

Weslin's eyebrows furrowed, "Is there a way to lower it?"

He knew there wasn't one, but he said it for Bai E to hear.

If he wanted to win someone over, he had to show his concern; silent protection isn't worth a fig.

"No," the scientist shook his head in resignation.

So far, the research had not produced a perfect way to control foreign genes. Perhaps keeping calm, reading more books, eating less meat might help?

But that was even more esoteric than the notion of firmly believing one is human.

In the past, they wouldn't have taken the risk under these circumstances.

"What should we do then..." Weslin pondered, his finger on his chin.

The scientist looked at Weslin, not understanding why the marshal cared so much for a regular artificial soldier, but nonetheless he cooperated and directly presented the options, "There are only two choices: either proceed with the injection, but the risk of mutation is high, so be prepared for emergency contingencies; or... give up the injection."

"Tat tat tat~"

The sound of metal military boots approached, and Weslin moved above Bai E's head, looking down at him with eyes full of worry and sincerity, "I leave this choice to you."

"I want to go through with the injection," Bai E answered without hesitation.

This might be his only chance to get the Gene Optimization Solution. If he gave it up now, there was no telling if he would ever get another chance.

Hope for the players to develop it on their own?

Their facilities were nowhere near as comprehensive as the Scientific Research Institute's full suite of services.

Better to take the risk today than at the players' later.

Human, right?

I was always human!

What about beastmen, bugs, demons? Sooner or later, I'll take a sword to them and wipe them out completely!

Hearing Bai E's response, the scientist hesitantly looked to Weslin, "Marshal?"

Weslin spoke firmly, "I support his decision."

"Fine," the scientist nodded, "then let's proceed with the direct injection. He will need absolute silence afterward; I must trouble the marshal to maintain Order outside. The absorption time of the Gene Optimization Solution may be quick, or it might take long, this varies from person to person. I hope no one will come to disturb him during this period."

"No problem, leave it to me," Weslin spoke in a brief and decisive manner, filled with a military demeanor that instinctively inspired trust.

Finally, with a pat on Bai E's shoulder, Weslin spoke sincerely, "I believe in you."

After leaving the room, Weslin gestured to the guards outside. Immediately, a squad of soldiers outside clicked their safeties off and chambered their rounds.

No matter how much he trusted, he still had to prepare for the worst—and trust wasn't that abundant anyway...

If things turned out well, he'd gain a fiercely loyal little fan; if not... then so be it.

Stepping out into the corridor, the nearly wintery sun cast a warm temperature on him, and a dark silhouette, Yueying, happened to pass by not far away.

Weslin's eyes brightened, and he quickly chased after her, "Miss Yueying!"

...

Bai E glimpsed the solemn actions of the three scientists.

A silver-gray metal case was placed with grave care onto the flat workbench, and under the sound of electronic prompts for a password, the dampened metal case slowly opened.

An icy chill instantly spread as three differently colored tubular syringes were quietly arranged inside.

Red, blue, green.

What effects each had was unknown.

Bai E simply tried to remember everything he saw, as this knowledge might come in handy with the players in the future.

"Close your eyes, feel every change happening in your body. Occasional muscle twitching is normal, as is feeling a warm flow or frost moving through your body's meridians and veins. Don't panic. Remember, control your emotions. Stay calm and relaxed, keep a level head.

Shifting emotions can more easily trigger and amplify the activity of foreign genes; you're already on the edge, and we can't afford any mistakes. Don't answer, just blink to let me know you heard."

As the other two scientists made their final preparations, the lead scientist's voice grew more solemn.

Bai E blinked rapidly, signaling his awareness.

Control emotions? Perhaps "self-restraint" could be helpful.

The expertise that was originally thought to provide little enhancement to actual combat ability is now indispensable in various aspects!

"Begin injection."

"Injecting No. 1 drug."

"Injecting No. 2 drug, start timing."

"...3 minutes have passed."

"Injecting No. 3 drug."

"Monitor the body's data!"

[You have used a dose of "Low-grade Gene Optimization Solution", your body is absorbing and transforming...]

...

"How is it?"

"Breathing steady, body data isn't fluctuating too much."

"Seems like this synthetic human is pretty lucky..."

If mutations were to occur, they tend to come very quickly.

If there's no sudden fluctuation in data within the first few minutes of injection, it essentially means that this warrior is unlikely to encounter any complications afterwards.

Three individuals in white lab coats, two standing by Bai E's side holding sedatives at the ready, and one in front of a monitor, watch the screen attentively, chatting softly with a relaxed tone.

"How much do you think he will improve?"

"At most one or two degrees, the best record in our city was only a 2.1-degree improvement..."

"I wonder if he can awaken a new talent. This synthetic human seems pretty stable."

"It's probably difficult... Out of a hundred who undergo optimization fluid injection, there may not even be one who awakens an additional talent; he's probably not that lucky one..."

The voices of the individuals in white lab coats faded away, and Bai E's mental world plunged into darkness.

Then... his brain felt dizzy, as if everything was upside down and in disarray, followed by an unparalleled sense of clarity spreading throughout his body. His consciousness perceived his body with great lucidity.

Limbs, arms... blood vessels, bone joints... fascia, skin... nerve endings...

Bai E's consciousness swiftly coursed through his body, like a cold probe sweeping over every inch of his tissues.

At a particular spot, the consciousness closed in rapidly. Cells, which were nearly invisible to the naked eye, quickly magnified in the field of vision of the consciousness.

Some cells with green-hued walls stood out conspicuously amid the flood of other cells and seemed disproportionately large on the ramparts.

Yet this magnification did not cease; focusing on a selected cell, vision plunged into it.

The instant a certain boundary was breached, the double helix structure slowly spiraled in the dark Consciousness Space, extending toward the far-off darkness without end in sight.

Numerous glowing particles emerged from the dark "Space" right before Bai E's "eyes", and they floated consciously around the double helix structure, gradually sinking into it.

As those particles infiltrated, certain segments of the double helix structure began to glow faintly.

New "segments" generated from nowhere, replacing the existing structural segments.

Clear, visualizable changes to his genes occurred before Bai E's eyes, yet he could hardly understand the meaning behind each subtle alteration.

While immersed in this enigmatic sight, Bai E could also feel real-time changes occurring in his body.

The changes in his body were as the white lab coats described, like countless warm little snakes roaming within him, with the most notable change being to his brain.

His head progressively became lighter, as if a layer of invisible, intangible membrane was punctured with a "pop," and his thought processes felt quicker to him. His "mind's eye" view of the world became instantly clear.

...

His eyelids twitched lightly, and milky light intruded into the narrow slit.

More immediate than the light to his senses, was the sound that began to echo beside his ear.

"He's waking up, he's waking up... only two hours have passed."

"He came through it so steadily..."

"Wonder how much he improved."

[Gene optimization complete, your attributes have undergone significant changes...]

[Template changed from "Gene Modification Prototype" to "Gene Modification Optimization Stage I".]

[Due to the change in the template, the health points formula from "Base 60 + (Stamina - 10) * 15" has been changed to "Base 100 + (Stamina - 10) * 20". Current health points: 180/180.]

[Gene optimization level changed from "0.1/100 (orientation: Orc)" to "3.3/100 (orientation: None)".]

[Due to the increased gene optimization level, the upper limits of the three basic attributes, Stamina, Insight, Reflex, have changed from "15 points" to "24 points".]

[You have guided the direction of the changes through willpower during the gene optimization process, and your trait has changed: "Trait — Blunt Emotion" has disappeared; a new "Trait — Keen Senses" has been added.]

[During the gene optimization process, you have absorbed enough power, and your "Talent" specialty has undergone changes: Specialty — Fast Recovery (Locked) progress "39%" → "89%", and additional effects have been added, details to take effect after the specialty is unlocked.]

[Trait — Keen Senses: Can add to any ability related to the "Insight" attribute, while thought speed +10%. (Current applicable abilities: Trait — Well Trained, Specialty — Blind-Fighting.)]

Bai E opened his eyes...

Chapter 244 Optimization fluid

"Don't move yet, we still need to conduct some checks on you."

"Hmm..." Bai E blinked his eyes, gradually adjusting to the brightness before him.

The familiar laboratory looked somewhat different at that moment, though he couldn't quite pinpoint what it was.

"Beep~ beep~" A soft beep from the equipment resonated rhythmically, and soon after, exclamations from three scientists in white coats could be heard.

"It's risen by 3.2 degrees!"

"I've never seen it this high!"

"Could it be due to his high alien gene activation rate?"

"His alien gene activation rate was even suppressed after the injection!"

"Goodness!"

The three scientists, through their professional curiosity, began to theorize upon seeing the results.

Conservatively, most wouldn't inject Optimization Fluid into a subject with a high alien gene activation rate, but today's subject had become an exception due to the Marshal's insistence.

Everyone even thought that this dose of Optimization Fluid was going to be wasted, but the outcome was frighteningly successful.

In an instant, the three scientists looked at Bai E with burning enthusiasm.

If they could identify the reason behind these results, they could significantly increase the efficiency of every dose of Gene Optimization Solution!

"How do you feel?" asked a scientist eagerly as he leaned in closer, "Do you feel any discomfort?"

Bai E furrowed his brow and took a moment to assess his condition before speaking softly, "I'm a bit hungry..."

"Of course, you're hungry!" The three scientists gathered around Bai E's bed. One scientist on the left side of the bed cheerfully explained, "The process of gene optimization itself requires the absorption of a massive amount of energy.

Although we injected a highly concentrated nutrient solution into you, your degree of optimization was so high that the energy from the nutrient solution wasn't enough."

It seemed that one of those three differently colored injectable vials was merely nutrient solution... Bai E made a mental note of this piece of information.

The thought flashed through his mind, and a cautious curiosity appeared on Bai E's face, "I don't know... what is optimization rate?"

Normally, engineered soldiers without a panel wouldn't know this, so Bai E needed to use this topic to elicit more information about the Optimization Fluid.

3.3/100

By that calculation, would he need thirty-three doses to max out?

Would he become a deity after reaching the max level? Could he punch out the Bug Race Overlord with a single fist or snip a high-dimensional demon's head with scissor legs?

It was all unknown, requiring effort to uncover.

"It's quite complicated to explain... but for now, just know that most people's optimization rate only increases by 1 to 2 points after their first use of the Gene Optimization Solution. Yet, you've risen by 3.2 points, which is truly remarkable!"

Bai E frowned slightly, "The first time? Can I be injected again in the future?"

"Of course." The scientist on the right quickly answered, "It's with this substance that we humans can hope to surpass the mundane and have bodies that can rival constructs of steel. The highest record known to date is our empire's War God, Ares, who after twenty-three injections of Optimization Fluid, attained an optimization rate of 21.4 points.

Against the War God, those bugs and orcs you see during missions are nothing more than prey to be torn apart by hand!"

Bai E maintained a steady tone, though somewhat stiffly, as he inquired, "Are there any restrictions on injecting this substance?"

Fortunately, the three excited scientists, while stroking Bai E's body as if it were a piece of art, unconsciously replied, "There are restrictions, of course! Big restrictions..."

The optimization rate works in stages, every 10 points marking a new phase and each phase requiring a different concentration of Gene Optimization Solution, all of which needs to be strictly controlled. Otherwise, it's very easy for the body's genes to destabilize and turn into a heap of mush.

Moreover, not everyone can get endless injections.

As a high-profile figure, the empire's War God received almost infinite resources, but even he had to stop after twenty-three injections.

After each injection of Optimization Fluid, a sufficient 'natural cooldown period' is necessary, which is currently the only method found by humans to stabilize the genes.

The result of consecutive injections is always the same—gene collapse, followed by sudden death.

Of course, the length of the 'natural cooldown period' varies, as individual constitutions are different.

For some, it's a few months; for others, it could be decades... There's no certainty.

"So, will I have another chance in the future?"

"Maybe... That depends on whether you can earn it through significant deeds; it's an internal military matter."

No sooner had the scientist on the left finished speaking than the one standing above chimed in, "Yes! You must! If not you, then who else? Once your cooldown period is over, even if you haven't achieved anything significant, I'll find a way to get you another dose!"

"..."

"..."

Even his two companions looked at the man in the white lab coat with disbelief—What do you mean, buddy?

Xu Nuo's bold declaration didn't make the man in the white lab coat flinch as he raised his head to look at his companions, "What, you're not curious? He increased by 3.2 on his first injection, who knows how

much he could improve in the future? He might be the next Empire War God! Even the War God only increased by 2.9 on his first injection!"

"..."

"...That seems to make sense."

"That's what I said, as long as you keep improving, I'll find a way to get you another dose as soon as the cooling period is over!"

A good man indeed!

Bai E felt somewhat moved, "But could you stop pinching the root of my thigh... it's kinda ticklish."

"Oh, oh~"

The man in the white lab coat wiped his hands on his clothes, "Occupational habit... habit... Anyway, you are very special; it's just that we don't know how much you'll improve with your next injection. I hope you can maintain this trend."

"Does the increase vary with each injection?"

"Generally, it decreases over time. If an individual has had more than eight injections of Gene Optimization Solution at the same phase without advancing, they are generally deemed a 'failure.' Of course, that's for the noble offspring. In practice, commoners who don't improve by more than 6 points after three injections usually don't get another chance with the Optimization fluid.

You definitely won't be a 'failure'... presumably."

It seems there's still a long way to go.

I thought this Optimization fluid was a one-off deal; turns out it's a pay-to-win item!

Dammit!

Bai E nodded to show he understood, "Can I get up now?"

"Yes... yes... as long as you don't feel anything unusual, you are free to move around."

"Eager to leave? If you don't have any urgent missions, why not stay and chat with us for a while?"

"..." Facing the eager gaze of the other party, Bai E pressed his belly, "I'm about to faint from hunger."

Not lying.

Limb weakness, mind blank.

I really am about to pass out from hunger.

"Oh, oh~ Then you go ahead."

"If there's a next time, we can talk more..."

In the face of this "miracle" they had never seen before, the three men in white lab coats were terrifyingly enthusiastic.

Bai E burst out of the door and headed straight for the cafeteria.

Hungry hungry hungry hungry hungry!

...

The door opened.

The guard outside, who had not been given the "sound of a cup as a signal," saw Bai E and silently lowered his gun barrel.

The captain of the guard watching over the premises came up smiling at Bai E, who didn't show any abnormalities apart from a bit of unsteadiness in his walk.

Weslin, who had gone after Yueying, left him two contingency plans—

If Bai E had not mutated, notify him to get ready to receive a reward.

If Bai E had mutated, shoot him dead amidst the chaos.

It was clearly the first scenario...

"Marshal Weslin wants you to wait for him in the council hall."

"Can I eat something first..."

The captain of the guard assessed Bai E's condition and remembered the marshal's instructions—no mutation, everything is negotiable.

"Then go ahead, but be quick."

Chapter 245 Natural Person's Identity Incentive

...

Seeing that it was still early, Bai E initially wanted to leave the camp to see if he could run into some players and issue the tasks that had been interrupted over the past few days.

He hadn't expected that Weslin seemed to have other plans for him, and today he probably wouldn't be able to go...

"Hmm~"

Can't think, dizzy head!

A lump... another lump... yet another lump...

It was still early, and the canteen was empty.

The porridge-serving machine didn't require manual supervision; take as much as you eat.

The deserted canteen witnessed the birth of a glutton.

The "satiety" normally provided by the delicious porridge seemed like a joke in front of the ravenous stomach, as the Gene Optimization Solution had enhanced Bai E's body, not just the upper limits of his basic attributes.

There were more direct and specific changes manifesting in his body, such as a stomach that digested food faster... a heart that pumped more blood more quickly when it mattered...

It was these substantial physical changes that provided the foundation for even higher attribute gains.

After gulping down about ten times the normal amount of food in one go, his voracious body finally slowed its urge to continue eating.

"Burp~"

Pleased with the hearty belch, Bai E stood up and stretched lazily, feeling truly reborn.

The impact of the Gene Optimization Solution injection was far from just an invisible increase in attribute caps.

He only felt now that he was faster, stronger, could jump higher, and was brimming with energy.

The amazing physical fitness brought about an exuberance of vitality.

His forceful aura was almost constantly radiating from within Bai E, full of life.

[At last, I have taken the first step towards the extraordinary.]

Until now, no matter how strong the physical and technical abilities, they were still within the realm of humans; it was only at this moment that Bai E truly felt power surging through his palms.

They wanted to see him?

Then let's see what those high-ranking officers really had in mind...

Bai E stepped forward, striding towards his destination.

...

In the meeting room, the assembled senior officers all looked at Weslin blankly, completely unaware of the purpose of his sudden call for a meeting.

After all, there were no urgent combat plans or large-scale unusual movements among the alien races recently...

Only Hamilton, seated to his left, had a flicker in his eye, thinking of his own proposal.

Upgrading the status of artificials to that of naturals, granting them the same promotion opportunities within the military as naturals, was unprecedented.

Setting such a precedent now could be a reason to gather everyone together.

Facing everyone's inquiring gazes, Weslin didn't play coy.

He knocked on the table and swept his gaze over the crowd, "In a moment, a soldier you all are somewhat familiar with will come here."

"A soldier?"

The particular choice of words made the more than ten senior officers present raise their brows involuntarily.

In a gathering of high-ranking officers, what was a mere soldier doing here?

'Could it be the direct descendant of some high-ranking personage from the city?' some looked at Weslin oddly.

After all, the current marshal had parachuted in this way.

Starting from scratch... having been a low-level soldier for three days.

Then directly ascending to marshal.

"This soldier made an indelible contribution to the city in a mission a few days ago, the specifics of which will not be made public. I'll just say a few words about it here orally," said Weslin.

All present were senior officers who knew each other's background well, and there were generally no stab-in-the-back incidents.

"..." No one spoke; they waited for Weslin's next words.

A soldier who had made a significant contribution to the entire city?

This combination of words left their imagination coming up short.

Even Hamilton, who was originally full of confidence, began to doubt whether it had anything to do with his proposal after hearing these words.

"The mission was to escort a group of migrants back to the city from the northwest, normally not a special task. But during the journey, an accident occurred... resulting in over four hundred migrants becoming Spiritual Energy talents."

"Hiss~" Suddenly, a chorus of sharp intakes of breath filled the room.

Over four hundred Spiritual Energy talents - what did that notion imply?

...

If they all survived and developed, it would no doubt be a terrifying wealth beyond imagination for the city.

No one dwelled on what kind of upheaval had led to all this. Since Weslin had said it in such a setting, it was certainly no joke.

Weslin knocked on the table, urging everyone to stay calm, because more stimulating news was yet to come.

"At the same time, two of them are extraordinary talents, who, solely in terms of potential, rank among the top five Spiritual Energy users in the history of Blackwater City."

It was like a deepwater bomb, instantly whipping up towering waves.

Potential that ranks among the top five Spiritual Energy users in the history of the city, and there were two of them!

What did that imply?

Every peak-level Spiritual Energy user before had pushed some aspect of the city forward by a large step.

Spiritual Energy users were the group of people most capable of creating miracles in the world.

And those at the peak... were almost comparable to True Gods of different dimensions!

The more than four hundred Spiritual Energy talents might be a terrifying wealth, but it was still only "wealth".

The extraordinary talent capable of developing into peak-level Spiritual Energy users, that was a "miracle" that could not even be bought.

The piercing noise was uncontrollable, even these high-ranking officers struggled to contain their shock.

But what did all this have to do with that soldier?

The officers, having regained their composure, looked at Weslin, waiting for his answer.

When the noise finally subsided, Weslin slowly began, "They were all supposed to perish, but it was this soldier, who alone pulled them back from the abyss... This was witnessed by all the soldiers involved in the mission as well as the more than four hundred Spiritual Energy talents, without any falsehood."

Of course, bringing back more than four hundred Spiritual Energy talents for the city wouldn't be attributed as the merit of that soldier, it was the military's achievement!

But personal rewards were indispensable.

"So, to let this soldier know that we see his efforts, I've decided... to grant him the public status of a natural person!"

"Natural person status?"

This special form of reward instantly made all the officers present realize the original status of the soldier Weslin spoke of—an artificial human soldier.

Piecing together the task involving the refugees from the Northwest, as well as the message received last night about having returned to camp... the answer was almost calling out.

Carlos and Hamilton instantly looked at each other, finding the answer in each other's eyes.

"Knock, knock, knock~" The soft knocking on the door sounded from outside, followed by Weslin's adjutant's voice, "My lord, 95B27 has arrived."

Bai E pushed the door open and entered.

Focus narrowed to a single point.

95B27.

It was 95B27 again!

The look in the eyes of the officers said it all.

No wonder Weslin said they might all find this soldier familiar.

In the short time since the birth of this artificial human soldier, he had almost achieved what all soldiers struggled to accomplish in their lifetimes.

If it was he who had done everything Weslin mentioned... it seemed quite reasonable?

["Lucky Strike" charge +7.]

[Am I actually getting charge points for this too?]

"..." Bai E stood by the door, eyes on his nose, nose on his heart, silently.

"Bai E, come over here," Weslin beckoned to him from the front of the long table.

"Yes! Commander!"

When Bai E stood beside him, Weslin looked again at all the officers present, "Of course, the status of a natural person isn't something we can simply adjust in our records; it requires the recognition of all eyes within the camp. So, I've decided, starting from today, to assign him to the core unit of the armored battalion, to become a reserve Mech Pilot for Titan-class armament."

Weslin paused slightly, his hands pressing against the table, his body leaning forward slightly, "That is the reason I've gathered you all here today... What are your thoughts?"

The cards are on the table!

Hamilton's eyes were somewhat glazed.

All this roundabout talk, and it turned out to be his own proposal in the end...

No!

It had now evolved from his proposal to his assertion.

This was an attempt to win people over.

He knew that 95B27 was quite exceptional, but he didn't expect such extraordinary extent that even Weslin was starting to entertain his own little schemes.

Chapter 246 joins the armored battalion

It seems that his decision to break away from previous thought patterns was not wrong.

As for who proposed this proposal, does it matter?

Hamilton glanced at Carlos, who still looked somewhat dazed as if he had not reacted—

In the end, didn't the person end up in his hands?

Hmph!

["Lucky Strike" energy +2.]

"I have no objections! This is the well-deserved honor of 95B27! He has made so many contributions to the barracks, risking his life from birth to death. He should have been reused and promoted long ago!" Hamilton was the first to express agreement, then turned to Carlos, "What about you, Carlos, what do you think?"

It's not necessary to convene this kind of council to promote a natural-born soldier normally, as the barracks are already the most straightforward force in the city.

The able rise, the weak fall.

With real merit laid out, no one would have any objections.

However, Bai E, this synthetic being, was already the focus of contention between two factions, his fate was out of his control, and he had become the battlefield for the confrontation between the two factions.

Any decision regarding him could invite criticism from the opposing faction.

Not to mention that the decision to promote a synthetic being to the status of natural-born had never been made before.

The first time, it always required the collective decision of everyone.

Carlos's face was gloomy.

He had never expected Hamilton, who appeared to be a rigid pure natural-born partisan, to be able to show such adaptability.

This unforeseen tactic, one that had never been used before, had indeed disrupted his strategy.

"What's the matter? Your constant talk of hoping synthetic soldiers could have a bright future wasn't just lip service, was it?" Hamilton looked at Carlos sarcastically. "Now he has the chance for a glorious future, yet you're still hesitating. Or were your past convictions merely a pretense to support synthetics as an excuse to seek your own benefits?"

"..." Carlos furrowed his brow tightly, sensing that things were going south.

Hamilton's words, of course, had flaws to exploit—

If a synthetic being becomes regarded as a natural-born in the records and in everyone's perception, then all his future achievements and efforts will become the glory of the natural-born, having nothing to do with the synthetics anymore.

It's essentially about class...

Synthetics can only enjoy equal rights by being promoted to "natural-born."

But what he wanted was for all synthetics to be able to enjoy the full treatment of natural-borns from birth, hoping to use Bai E, an excellent synthetic, as an example to lead the charge under the banner for synthetics.

The starting points are diametrically opposed.

It's just that Bai E himself was also present at the scene, which was the most troublesome part.

If he were to express any reservations about his promotion, then even if he forcibly kept him, Bai E's heart might not be free of a gap, likewise letting Hamilton triumph completely.

Such a vicious plan!

Carlos's gaze swept over the faces of Weslin and Hamilton, the architects of this stalemate.

The Marshal had always maintained a neutral faction, but now... had the Marshal made some kind of deal with Hamilton?

Regardless, it was time for him to make a decision.

If he couldn't retain him... then it was time to let go completely.

He truly pitied the tragic fate of the synthetics, which is why he joined the faction that supported synthetics to fight for the lifelong rights of all synthetics.

Now...

"I agree..."

"But I would like to keep his special squadron assignment." The old Marshal, who had been sitting quietly at Carlos's right as if he were asleep, suddenly spoke up.

The elderly man slowly opened his eyes, and his aged gaze seemed clouded, "He has only been born for a short time and still needs to learn more. Since he is now a natural-born, he should learn everything about this world."

'Pah! Old coot!' Hamilton cursed silently, somewhat irritated.

The things that a reserve mech pilot from the armored battalion needs to focus on training are only one thing—Titan-class armaments—which could almost be said to be treasures rarely displayed outside the barracks.

Severing his ties with the outside world completely and making him entirely his own, wouldn't it be up to him how to brainwash him when the time came?

But the old Marshal's remark meant that he would still spend half his time exposed to people from other factions.

As for which side this soldier, promoted from a synthetic to a natural-born, would sit on... that would be really hard to say.

And to top it off, the excuse he gave was to climb on top of what he, himself, had said, all for the sake of the soldier's own future.

Damn! Indeed, the old are wiser!

"Right!" Carlos, reminded, suddenly had a gleam in his eyes, "I agree to his promotion to natural-born, and that he participate in the reserve mech pilot training at the armored battalion during his free time, but also to maintain his special squadron assignment, aiming to learn all that a natural-born needs to know."

This is even better...

Weslin was indifferent, he just wanted to reward Bai E.

After all, Aglaya had said that his contribution was undeniable... and considering that the two extraordinary talents seemed quite fond of this soldier, it couldn't be guaranteed that he wouldn't remember old affections as he grew in the future.

His full support for the promotion might not be very evident now, but it might come in handy at some crucial moment in the future!

"Carlos is right, does anyone have any objections?"

"None." Hamilton didn't make a sound, but the officer sitting next to him glanced at his face and responded in a muffled voice.

The neutral faction cared even less, if there was merit, then one deserves the position; they were the purest of soldiers, "Let's do as Carlos says..."

"Then it's decided." Weslin gave the final verdict.

The decision took effect; inside the barracks' records, Bai E's identity had completely transformed from synthetic to natural-born...

From... Black Street.

Background... orphan.

"Let's go! I'll show you the sights of our armored battalion!" Hamilton's broad palm wrapped around Bai E's shoulder.

Although the result wasn't entirely satisfactory, at least it had been a thorn in Carlos's side.

Hamilton, who glanced back at Carlos, raised his head high like a victorious rooster.

"Yes, sir!"

Bai E answered expressionlessly.

From start to finish, he hadn't said a word.

They had summoned him only to reward him, but nobody had asked for his opinion.

In fact, he himself didn't have much attachment to such a title; any status that could help him acquire more resources was a good status.

Since he temporarily couldn't leave the military camp, he had to find ways within the camp's system to acquire more things to aid his growth.

The Gene Optimization Solution he had just been injected with proved this point; who knew where to get that stuff if he went elsewhere?

As for which side he was really on...

Talking about that was premature when he hadn't clearly seen this world yet.

If he were to take a side, it would only be the side of humanity.

...

"Squeak squeak squeak~"

Broad tracks dragged the heavy tank bodies slowly past, kicking up a whirlwind of yellow sand.

Out of the hazy dust emerged two indistinct shadows.

"Cough cough~" Hamilton waved away the dust from in front of his mouth and nose, "As you see... cough cough~ our battalion's main training focuses on these steel vehicles."

The armored battalion's camp was entirely different from ordinary soldiers' training camps; upon perusal, nearly everything within the camp was composed of those cold and formidable creations of steel.

Rows of Multi-function Infantry Vehicles lay quietly arrayed, V3 rocket vehicles laden with missiles ready to deploy at any moment, massive tanks maneuver diversely across the field, their turrets swiftly turning in practice, trying to aim at non-existent targets.

This was their daily training.

And the mechas...

The towering mechas stood at the back of the camp, those mechas he had seen countless times from a distance in the regular training camp only became truly imposing when he got up close, conveying a sense of pressure only massive objects could impart.

Watching Bai E's gaze sweep interestedly over the moving tanks, Hamilton, with his sonorous voice, said, "If you want, you can train with those too. In your free time, my hope for you is to be an official Mech Pilot adept at handling our Titan-class armed mechas!"

"Hmm~" Bai E nodded slightly.

Hamilton's glance swept over his profile, growing fonder of this silent warrior the more he saw.

His opposition was always specifically focused on Carlos's faction, the ones who wanted to give artificial beings and natural humans equal status. With status comes aspirations.

Then, what was the purpose of creating these artificial beings?

To resist all surrounding natural disasters and calamities, the city needed to suffer so many deaths every year; if not using the lives of artificial beings to fill the gaps, should they draw lots to let artificial and natural humans compete fairly?

The plan of producing batches of two thousand artificial soldiers four times a year in the military camp was specifically designed to handle this level of human attrition.

The number of deaths due to warfare each year was around eight thousand, and the production of artificial beings was to plug this loophole.

Humans have always had the capability to mass-produce soldiers, and the production line of artificial beings could even handle more than four batches a year at peak efficiency.

But if too many artificial beings were produced and they didn't die in battle, what would be used to sustain them?

They would only encroach upon the already scarce resources of natural humans.

Wanting to give such creatures, created for sacrifice, a status was undeniably naïve idealism.

If they weren't needed to die, then there was no need for them to be born.

If they were needed to die, why bother hypocritically granting them human rights?

This was the fundamental difference in political views; Hamilton held no sentiment for individual artificial beings sent to life-or-death situations.

However, this artificial being was special...

He was already a natural human, and he was now in his command.

No officer dislikes a strong and obedient soldier.

The fonder he looked...

["Lucky Strike" charge +1.]

"..."

Bai E hesitated internally, "Sir, when can I start participating in the formal Mech Pilot training?"

That was a mecha!

No man could resist the allure of a mecha!

"You can start now, but the training for Mech Pilots now involves more than just operating mechas. You saw it last time during the assault on the hive, without a strong spirit, no matter how formidable the armament, it's just a lamb to the slaughter."

Hamilton shook his head and sighed, "At this point, they should be undergoing Spiritual Energy stress resistance training."

...

"Hello everyone, I'm your new instructor."

The girl's clear voice arose in front of a group of warriors standing with their hands behind their backs, showing no hint of levity.

Franca, in her tight light blue combat suit, looked over the soldiers before her with a smile brimming with cheer.

"From today onwards, I'll be specifically responsible for overseeing your training in resisting Spiritual Energy impacts!"

Chapter 247 Psychic Pressure Resistance Training

"Perfect timing." From a distance, Hamilton smiled when he saw the assembly of warriors gathered in front of a massive square cabin-style device, "It hasn't started yet, you can still make it to this training session."

After taking a couple more steps and getting a clear view of the slender execution officer from Arbitration Place, "the instructor", Hamilton paused slightly in surprise.

"A new face?"

He muttered softly to himself, but Hamilton didn't care too much.

The goings-on of Arbitration Place weren't their concern, and personnel changes there didn't need to be reported to him; as long as someone was present, that was all that mattered.

"Go on," he patted Bai E on the back and stood with arms crossed, waiting to watch the show.

The city's resources were limited, and although they claimed to provide support for the armored battalion, up to now, only one training pod had been built.

It was certainly not enough for every warrior in the battalion, so only the reserves of Titan-class armed mecha were qualified for training.

And during each training, the spectacle provided by the warriors was varied and highly entertaining.

Bai E carefully made his way to stand at the very back of the last row.

He saw a familiar face...

The young lady on the stage was none other than the officer from the Arbitration Place he had seen in Black Street with Gong Yan.

This made Bai E feel a subconscious twinge of guilt.

But then again, he thought there wasn't much interaction between them besides that one time... except for the incident in the sewer.

After all, in the sewer incident, he knew it was her, but she didn't know it was him.

It was just a fleeting encounter, and the young lady probably wouldn't even remember him.

The warrior standing next to Bai E glanced at the newcomer, but seeing that their superior officer, standing next to the instructor from Arbitration Place, hadn't said a word, he paid no more attention and focused on listening to the noble-looking lady who seemed so out of place yet was addressing them.

"I don't know how my predecessor demanded of you..." Franca's large, clear black-and-white eyes swept over each warrior with an effortful authority, striving to make a compelling first impression.

The figure who had suddenly joined from the back was undeniably eye-catching; Franca's gaze lingered for two or three seconds on the face of the straight-standing, expressionless warrior but could not recall where the familiar visage came from.

She decided not to dwell on it.

"But listen! I have only one demand for you! When you think you can't hold on any longer, endure for one more second! Whether you enter standing up or leave carried out horizontally, you are the city's most elite soldiers! The responsibility for protecting this city lies on your shoulders! You are meant to be the city's sharpest sword, its most sturdy shield!

I've heard how your predecessors fell in battle, and I'm sure you're not unaware!"

In that moment, the tall lady appeared surprisingly reliable. With her pale fingers posed like a blade, she pointed towards the south of the city—

"There! Where they were sliced in two by the vermin without any resistance! We won't stumble at the same spot a second time! Next time, the next time we face that creature, I want each one of you to strike it with your blade! This is our vengeance! This is the only way we can honor our fallen comrades!"

"Remember the shame of that day, and repay it twofold tomorrow!" Her crisp, slightly childish voice, like a young tiger reaching maturity, roared for the first time to the world, "Now... let go of your hearts, step into the training pod, pit your will against the world!"

Franca stepped aside, and the doors of the pod slowly swung open to the sound of pneumatic valves.

The dark interior of the training pod was shrouded in darkness, like a beast in flood waiting for the naive to step into its trap.

The warriors stepped firmly, lining up instinctively as they entered the pod.

The warrior walking in front of Bai E whispered with others.

"Passion, it's flaring up..."

"The new instructor is much more passionate than the last one..."

It wasn't just passion...

Free from the dulling order of mourning, Bai E's now exceptionally sensitive senses could feel an invisible force that had, unbeknownst to him, started to surround him.

It was like a mischievous and elusive sprite... pushing his body forward from behind.

Could it be... the effect of Spiritual Energy?

The practical application of Spiritual Energy?

Bai E pondered secretly, keeping pace with the queue ahead.

However, as he neared the entrance, a small foot clad in a brightly-colored combat boot gently lifted and blocked his path.

Bai E stopped in his tracks and looked up with a puzzled face at the young female officer who blocked his way.

"Instructor?"

Franca's eyes were lively and aggressive, sizing up Bai E's face in a way that was somewhat elusive, "Have we met somewhere before?"

"I don't remember, Instructor."

His voice was gentle, yet filled with strength.

'Such a familiar voice.'

A fleeting inspiration crossed Franca's mind as she stared into Bai E's eyes with even more curiosity, "We must have met somewhere... You don't usually talk like this."

Now this... is too humble.

You shouldn't be like this.

"You might have mistaken me for someone else."

"Perhaps..." Franca said noncommittally, but then her words took a turn as she asked casually, "What's your name?"

"Bai E."

"Bai E?" Franca's delicate body shuddered, and her eyes fixated on the familiar warrior before her, "Are you the one who brought back over four hundred... refugees?"

"If Instructor is referring to the four hundred and five refugees from yesterday... then I was involved."

"..."

With the answer in hand, Franca's lips curled into a fleeting, somewhat wicked smile.

'So it's you, huh.'

She stepped aside and gestured for Bai E to proceed, "Please enter, our great hero."

[I've been noticed...]

I was told not to spread the word, yet it seems like the whole town knows.

Bai E sighed inwardly and stepped into the cabin.

Inside was not pitch-black; once everyone entered, soft milky-white lights illuminated at the edges of the cabin wall.

The interior was quite spacious, allowing the twenty-six-member reserve mech pilots to stand apart comfortably, yet everyone still instinctively lined up and waited.

Franca followed at the rear with her hands clasped behind her back, walking in slowly.

As she fully entered, the operator on duty, upon receiving the command, pressed the switch and the expanding doors of the cabin slowly closed again.

"Some of you might be here for your first training session."

Franca's voice grew more distant, ethereal and hollow.

"I have only one requirement for you, endure at least thirty minutes. Those who don't meet the requirement will be considered for extra individual training~"

The world spun around.

An endless humming sound arose from nowhere, entering their minds like tangible characters, mixing with Franca's voice that came in sporadic bursts, yet clear enough for everyone to hear.

Those milky-white lights twisted into vortexes before their eyes, shrinking and boring into their pupils.

A blinding white light surged into their minds, turning the world into tangled chaos.

Caught in the midst of it, Bai E felt himself upended, unable to distinguish left from right...

No! It was as if he had lost all sense of spatial orientation as well as the perception of time in relation to changing events.

The space-time around him became utterly confused in his perception.

In his dazed state, the only thing that echoed unreal in his mind was the voice from the panel—

[Side mission triggered—Resilient Spirit.]

Chapter 248 Resilient Spirit

[Resilient Mind: In preparation for future resistance against mental assaults, your instructor is testing your limits with a Spiritual Energy suppression pod to solidify your willpower, requiring you to persevere for at least 30 minutes to achieve extraordinary growth. Mission requirement: Remain consciously aware and persist for at least 0/30 minutes. Mission completion reward: Mystery +0.1.]

Bai E had no time to consider the mission's description and reward, as the pod assailed his consciousness with a continuous barrage of lights, sounds, and an indescribable spiritual oppression.

Self-suppression was still reliably in effect, prioritizing its protective role against mental onslaughts over its secondary function of hormonal regulation.

But it wasn't enough!

Nowhere near enough!

Bai E's capabilities at this moment were entirely different from when he faced the Bug Race's dominator.

Back then, he was on the battlefield, his blood boiling with fervor.

In the heat of battle, the mind naturally ignores certain external psychical impacts; the reason Helen accepted his determination to stand firm because of his mission was precisely because it was the truth.

Now, without such conditions, no matter how prepared he felt internally, the training during peacetime hardly compared to the sheer battle-driven will on the field.

More crucially, his artificial traits had shifted—from Thought Dullness to Sensory Acuteness.

The prohibitions placed upon artificial beings were limitations as well as protections.

Previously, whether facing the Bug Race's dominator or the demon known as the Fear Lord, it was the trio of heated battle spirit, self-suppression, and Thought Dullness that allowed him to act freely.

Without just one of these, he might have met the same fate as the other warriors.

But now, with one taken away and another added...

The protection offered by Thought Dullness disappeared altogether, replaced by Sensory Acuteness, which made him extremely sensitive to every minute change in his body as it responded to various lights, sounds, and tightly linked spiritual afflictions.

The assault applied by the pod was, for a time, far more difficult to bear than what he had previously encountered with the Bug Race dominator or the high-dimension demons.

He knew he was standing in place, but even maintaining his stance required real-time muscular adjustments throughout his body.

He reeled, his head and eyes dizzy, not even sure how to coordinate his body to ensure he wouldn't fall.

Yet, he was trying hard to maintain it.

Confronting this kind of psychological pressure training for the first time, Bai E had no known tricks to rely on.

Perhaps there were no tricks at all.

The purpose of the training was to obtain mental resilience or, in other words, to strengthen one's spiritual will.

Maintaining his chosen state could perhaps help him pull through.

Bai E didn't know the correct approach, but setting a minor goal and striving with all his might to achieve it could perhaps enable him to last longer.

Was his body moving?

Swaying?

About to fall?

Indistinguishable...

The overwhelming spiritual onslaught restricted to the mind robbed Bai E of any perception of his surroundings.

Perhaps he had already fallen, but it felt like he had not.

The tactile sensation of his body hitting the ground would undoubtedly be different from what he was experiencing now, not to mention the distinct feeling of the ground's support if he were to actually fall.

Don't move...

Don't move!

Hold on!

In a turbulent sea of consciousness, these brief tenets echoed relentlessly.

...

"Thud~"

"Thud~"

Sounds of warriors collapsing occasionally reached his ears; the abnormal noises emitted by the pod were perhaps insignificant irritants to Franca, but they posed a tremendous challenge to those soldiers unaccustomed or less trained in Spiritual Energy.

Although they might have been conscious, the complete sensory loss of control over their bodies was undoubtedly more distressing for these warriors, so used to dictating their every move.

And there could be no compromise!

In real combat, the intensity of psychic assaults one might face is constant, but in training, that intensity continually increases.

The spiritual assaults simulated within the pod grew stronger by the second, with no such thing as getting progressively accustomed to it.

One needed to remain resolute from the beginning to barely stay undefeated in this struggle of spirit.

Those who fell too easily would just as readily be completely vanquished.

Franca's amber eyes shone as they swept over each figure before her.

She did not know how the previous instructor had taught these warriors, nor did she intend to reveal fundamental strategies on their first meeting.

For some of these soldiers, it was their first time in training, and many firsts often reveal much more.

Those still standing... regardless of future achievements, showed a firmer will in this moment.

And among them... that particular individual was present.

Standing upright, his body trembling slightly yet with a posture hardly different from before the pod was activated.

Indeed, it was the same individual who faced demons with unshakable courage, leading everyone out of demonic control—a luminary leader.

Artificial being?

What did it matter if he was an artificial being?

Aglaya still clung to that rigid mindset of prioritizing Spiritual Energy users alone.

In facing Spiritual Energy, those with Spiritual Energy would confront it head-on, like warm and cold currents in the sea battling and blending with each other.

Artificial beings may struggle to comprehend the mysteries of Spiritual Energy, but their natural resistance to it was like the steadfastness of rocks amid raging seas.

All they had to do was to deepen and polish their foundations, becoming resistant rocks capable of becoming a central force against demons.

In this era, every life is insignificant, yet every life can also be grand.

Franca never underestimated the power of any being, as in their singular moments, each could create miracles.

This warrior named Bai E had already demonstrated his remarkable combat will and strength. As for now... considering how he fared against demons, it might take an hour to reach his limits.

So... let's just wait and see.

...

The world twisted into distortion.

A diffuse white light and a buzzing, distorted sound filled all that Bai E could perceive.

And it became ever more distorted.

The semi-illusory, semi-real nightmare scenes of his teammates' spiritual worlds that he had encountered previously at the domain of the Lord of Fear seemed to churn up all at once at that moment.

In a pitch-black world, deep and dark purple cross-shaped fissures emitted bizarre flashes before his eyes, and numerous tiny gray-white tentacles seemed to creep and grow inward from the edges of his field of vision.

Cold pine needles rubbed against his skin, slowly piercing into his body from all angles, while fierce flames rose up from beneath his feet, the heat causing his back to grow damp and clammy.

The intertwined illusions, both formless and with form, overlapped with reality, making for an utterly chaotic and bewildering sensation that left Bai E feeling waves of faintness.

Time would not heal all that he was experiencing.

["Sub-quest—Resilient Spirit" current progress 28/30...]

["Sub-quest—Resilient Spirit" current progress 0.8/30...]

["Sub-quest—Resilient Spirit" current progress 388/30...]

How much is it?

Just how much is it?

Even the progress displayed on the panel could not be truly understood by his current consciousness.

Bai E's body suddenly staggered, and he quickly stepped forward with his right foot to stop himself from falling.

Relaxation at his task's imminent completion nearly became the final straw that broke the camel's back.

Realizing this, Bai E almost instantaneously re-established his spiritual defenses.

Although he had been in this world for only a short time, after enduring several crises and ordeals, he was no longer the corporate drone who loved gaming.

All his experiences transformed into the foundation of his soul, only revealing their true magnificence in such moments.

...

'Losing stability?'

It's been less than half an hour?

Franca, with crossed arms, furrowed her brows as she watched the warrior named Bai E.

Just now, there was a violent shake in his body, his right foot attempting to move, but in the end, it was just a slight bend of the knee that halted his descent.

Temporarily stable, but the increasingly chaotic aura of the person indicated that the pressure exerted by the chamber was pushing him close to his limits.

But given his combat record, it shouldn't be like this.

With the intensity of this chamber, it would be difficult to match the pressure exerted by the Bug Race master they encountered before within the first hour of starting the mental assault, let alone the authority of the source demon.

Is it because he's not on the battlefield?

This disparity in performance is too great.

Larger physical movements indicate an imminent breakdown.

In the struggle of the spiritual world, a moment of inattention can lead to instant defeat, to say nothing of doubting one's own abilities?

31...

32...

35...

Franca silently kept time.

"Thunk!"

The figure in the simple training attire collapsed heavily to the ground.

His mind was a blank, his vision dark.

["Sub-quest—Resilient Spirit" current progress 35/30, task completed.]

[Task Reward: Mystery +0.1, issued.]

"..."

Watching the fallen figure, Franca remained silent, inevitably feeling some disappointment.

Bai E wasn't the first to fall, as the ground was already littered with warriors rolling their eyes back, foaming at the mouth, convulsing, and even some who had lost control of their bladder and bowels, waiting for his addition.

The fallen Bai E had a determined expression, and his posture could be considered the most upright of them all... However, compared to what she had expected of him, it was too much of a discrepancy.

Was this really the invincible War God who carried Morphie and Kiro Lan through the source demon, the one who was described as full of leadership by them?

Was it simply that the source demon was too weak? Or was it just that Morphie and Kiro Lan's impressions were excessively amplified by their personal subjective wills?

Indeed... Aglaya had already confirmed his talent.

Although that woman upholds the supremacy of Spiritual Energy users, she seldom neglects true talent.

After her contact with this man-made warrior, there had been no follow-up, perhaps because these accomplishments happened to coincide, rather than because of extraordinary strength.

"..."

Disappointment.

She had thought she would see an extraordinary individual climbing up from the grassroots, only to realize it was a name without substance.

"Sigh~"

Franca exhaled lightly, feeling lackluster.

The greatest joy of coming to the barracks was gone.

Bai E's training performance was actually quite good; prior to this training and even currently, only three others persisted.

But dashed high expectations always lead to weariness.

With a sense of duty, Franca continued to monitor the status of the remaining three warriors.

38...

41...

Chapter 249 Teaching Breathing Skill!

"Awake?"

A deep, husky male voice came from nearby.

Bai E struggled to open his heavy eyelids, and the orange glow of the sunset instantly flooded his vision.

The memories before he passed out surged up—

He was supposed to be undergoing Psychic Pressure Resistance Training.

But it was only the beginning of the afternoon at that time, and now... it was already dusk?

How long had he persisted? And how long had he been unconscious?

The task completion record on the panel provided the answer—he had hung on for 35 minutes, then fell unconscious until now...

The good news was that the task was complete, Mystery Happiness +0.1.

The bad news was that he had been unconscious for way too long. Did this thing really have such severe aftereffects?

A large hand waved in front of him, and the neighboring soldier asked enthusiastically, "Hey, brother, haven't gotten over it yet?"

Bai E blinked, looking towards the owner of the moving arm, while also glimpsing from the corner of his eye the other soldiers who seemed to have been strewn across the ground originally.

They were not too particular about sleeping positions.

He wasn't the first to wake up, but he wasn't the last either, "Does this training always leave you unconscious for so long?"

The soldier waved his hand indifferently, "Hey~ it depends on the person. It's pretty good for your first time in training."

How long you're unconscious isn't a sign of strength, how you perform is what matters.

Not having skewed eyes, slurred speech, or an uncontrolled bladder was already the most impressive feat for a newcomer.

The soldier spoke with warmth, appearing incredibly friendly, "Brother, where were you selected from? I saw our big BOSS personally bring you over, not everyone gets that kind of treatment."

"From that military camp."

"I know from that military camp, only the soldiers with the best performance in their original assignments get directly transferred to our armoured battalion's mech pilot reserve. That's how all of us were chosen," the soldier said with a proud smile, "I mean your original assignment."

"Special forces squad."

"Awesome!"

"Hey? Where do you live?" Another awakened soldier leaned in, asking with curiosity and enthusiasm.

We're all natural-born, and the most important thing in controlling mechs is the close and seamless cooperation between each other; we're all brothers.

Isn't that how relationships heat up by chatting like this?

However, Bai E was taken aback, "Home?"

He shook his head, "I don't have a home..."

"How can you not have a home?" a soldier asked, not quite believing it.

"My home is in the military camp..."

"I mean outside..."

The man who spoke first pulled the other soldiers who had come over to join in the excitement, giving them a knowing look.

Not having a home... it wasn't impossible.

In this era, there were always some orphans who lost their parents at birth.

Picked up by the military camp, they directly considered the camp their home.

A pitiable background.

"No worries, buddy~ from now on, we're your brothers!" the first soldier who spoke patted Bai E's shoulder hard, "Tomorrow night is our chance to get some air. I'll take you to see my wife! She makes delicious food!"

"Oh, oh~ thank you."

"Who knows, maybe we'll end up in the same group later on. Just follow my lead then, I'll guide you."

"Oh, oh~"

Was he talking about mech piloting skills?

Bai E didn't understand any of it; at this moment, he just nodded in agreement.

"Chatter chatter chatter..."

"Oh, oh~"

"A string of nonsense..."

"Oh, oh~"

"Let's go eat!"

"Oh, oh~"

...

The new "buddy" he made was a real chatterbox, giving lectures even during meals.

Bai E managed to slip away from him sneakily, thinking of sneaking out of the camp.

It had been several days since he last received feedback on a task. Without topping up his daily routine for the players, it felt like ants were crawling on him.

As his attributes increased, the attributes gained from player feedback became less significant, but over time the accumulated amount was still considerable.

Not to mention he had just injected the Gene Optimization Solution, his three basic attributes had skyrocketed. If not now, when else should he let the players intensely level up for him?

However, a slim, dark figure appeared out of nowhere, blocking the path ahead.

Bai E didn't even notice when the figure had taken up position there; he instinctively stopped in his tracks as his heart skipped a beat.

"Yueying?"

Yueying turned around, her thin lips parting slightly, "Follow me."

"... Yes."

Following Yueying, Bai E felt a strange anticipation as they wound their way through the military camp at night.

Yueying rarely took the initiative to seek him out.

But if she did come looking, it usually meant there was some great news waiting for him.

Thinking of the "task" he was still burdened with on her behalf, Bai E's heart throbbed with excitement.

Finally, in a hidden corner, Yue Ying came to a stop.

Turning to face Bai E, she slightly lifted her jade-like face, and a pair of willow-leaf-shaped eyes shone brightly beneath her hood in the evening light.

"I've heard from your marshal about what you've accomplished..."

Yue Ying spoke softly, her tone filled with sincere admiration.

Even though Weslin had emphasized his own wise command, she was more concerned with the achievements of the warrior at the execution end who had created legends.

To fight head-on and defeat a high-dimensional demon with no prior experience in manipulating Spiritual Energy, even among her extraordinarily gifted Elf Race, was an exceptional feat.

"You really are remarkable..."

"'Lucky Strike' energy charge +3."

"[Current task—Yueying's recognition, progress has reached its peak. You have demonstrated your excellent strength and qualities numerous times and in all aspects before Miss Yueying of the Elf Race, earning her complete recognition. The task reward is now available, please proceed with caution...]"

"I just did what had to be done."

"What you deem necessary is precisely what many find difficult to achieve," Yueying shook her head gently, "Regardless, you've now been involved with incidents concerning high-dimensional demons, and it will be difficult to avoid them in the future."

Prime demons can resurrect and remember who it was that shattered their bodies in the material world, and if you lack the relevant abilities, you're likely to find yourself easily targeted by those cunning demons and fall into the abyss."

She didn't want to see that happen.

She didn't want to see a human hero plunge into an inescapable quagmire due to an unfamiliarity with high-dimensional demons... with Spiritual Energy.

It was this impulse that had driven her to approach Bai E of her own accord.

If humans were unwilling to teach, she would teach.

Artificials have an innate prohibition against emotion?

But half the effort is always better than none at all.

She acted according to her own desires, not weighing the comprehensive pros and cons like humans did.

The only concern was that she had never heard of humans practicing their Elf Breathing Skill.

While the Breathing Skill emphasizes mental cultivation, because the physiological structure of elves and humans is different, the basic "breathing" rhythm might also be different, and therefore, the rhythm of adjusting one's spirit might also vary.

There was no way around this; she would have to watch over him in real-time during the actual teaching process and carefully adjust for him.

"If you wish to possess some countermeasures against high-dimensional demons in future encounters, I can teach you the way to cultivate Spiritual Energy."

Under the dim night sky, Yueying's eyes glimmered like jewels.

[As expected!]

Bai E was thrilled.

He had always hoped for the Breathing Skill, and unexpectedly, he received his answer this very night, as though all good things were happening to him today.

Suppressing the urge to leap for joy, Bai E nodded seriously, "Then, I'll be in Miss Yueying's care..."

Yueying nodded, somewhat pleased with the human warrior's eagerness to learn.

Even the most willing impulse to teach needed a diligent and eager student.

From the past few lessons, she observed that this human warrior had quite an exceptional aptitude, a rarity even among her own Elf Race.

She wondered how he would fare with the completely unfamiliar Breathing Skill.

"Sit down."

With these words, Yueying assumed a seated, legs-crossed posture, demonstrating for him.

"Yes."

This was a secluded spot untouched by others and distant from the bustle of life, a quiet place that Yueying had found.

Bai E sat cross-legged and listened attentively to Yueying's voice.

"Close your eyes..."

"Slow your breathing..."

"Empty your mind..."

"Inhale~"

"Exhale~"

"[You are learning the Elf Breathing Skill...]"

"[Initiating teaching task—The Way of Breathing.]"

"[The Way of Breathing: Spiritual Energy is innate and even those who have never manifested external talents of Spiritual Energy can tap into their inner reserves. Powerful Spiritual Energy can twist reality and achieve anything, while contained Spiritual Energy can protect oneself comprehensively.]"

Task requirement: Follow Yueying's guidance to maintain a completion rate of ???% for 'multiple' cycles of the Breathing Skill. Task completion reward: Skill—Spiritual Power Breathing Skill.]"

"[Teaching: Breathing Skill is a completely new field for you, and you need to pay a certain price (combat experience/universal experience) to follow the other's guidance to gain mastery of the Breathing Skill. (Cost: 10 experience/min)]"

Yueying's voice continued to resonate peacefully beside his ear.

"Inhale~"

"Exhale~"

Her voice rose and fell in a strange rhythm, calm and beautiful, like a violin playing a solitary concerto in the moonlit night...

Guiding Bai E towards a state of mental tranquility and special awareness.

Moonlight crept from behind the clouds, its quiet glow like silver foil draping over the two of them.

Maintaining the deliberate breathing rhythm was undeniably challenging for Bai E. Trying to follow Yueying's rhythmic guidance made him tense instead, unable to achieve a state of ethereal calm.

Only after paying with experience points did the suffocating and bloating tension slightly ease.

"[You are using combat experience to adjust your breathing rhythm...]"

"[Current follow-through rate: 87.3%]"

"Inhale~"

"Exhale~"

Yueying's voice remained unwavering.

Of course, she knew that Bai E, being new to the practice, would have difficulty keeping up with the pace.

The Breathing Skill, after all, was a capability that only took effect once one was so familiar with it that it became instinctive.

Chapter 250 Breathing Skill Practice

"Inhale~"

"Exhale~"

"Inhale~"

"Exhale~"

Yue Ying guided with all her heart, constantly monitoring Bai E's physical reactions and adjusting the rhythm of her instruction accordingly.

The purpose of the Breathing Skill was to adjust a person's body and mental state to be most suitable for sensing Spiritual Energy. If one was too deliberate in following, it was impossible to truly quiet one's mind and feel that profound and mysterious power of Spiritual Energy.

Most people might never come into contact with such seemingly subjective power in their lifetimes. Living in a materialistic world, they would need to completely break and discard their inner "prejudices" to glimpse the "truth" of the world.

The first time was particularly difficult.

The reason why only those so-called "talented" individuals, whose Spiritual Energy easily emits outward, are allowed to practice Spiritual Energy within the human community is because these naturally gifted

ones find it easier to get started. They can sense the so-called Spiritual Energy without needing overly focused one-on-one guidance.

This process is incredibly time-consuming and energy-intensive, and the efficiency is touching.

Their vast population also allows them to make such luxurious selections.

Didn't work with this group? Just switch to another.

Therefore, humans do not have a process of acquiring the Breathing Skill from scratch, only improving from having it to perfecting it.

At least Yue Ying had never heard of any human Cultivation Skill that included tricks to guide the untalented to the threshold.

This was probably also why human organizations of Spiritual Energy practitioners paid no attention to Bai E, an artificial human without talent and born with prohibitions. To them, he was a waste.

But the Elf Race was different. With their smaller population, they needed to value every member.

Even those who did not show great potential would have elders from within their own race diligently guiding them into the realm of Spiritual Energy, ensuring they had enough power to defend themselves.

The Elf Breathing Skill was all about teaching indiscriminately.

[You are using combat experience to adjust your breathing rhythm...]

[Current follow-through completion: 94.7%]

Sensing Bai E's increasingly smooth and gentle breathing, the corners of Yue Ying's mouth curled up slightly.

Regardless, this human warrior's comprehension was as exceptional as ever.

Under her guidance, he had quickly gotten on the right track in a short amount of time. Although it might still take a little while for him to sense Spiritual Energy, the fact that he could use the Breathing Skill to adjust the state of his spirit and flesh to enter the ethereal state was already a significant progression.

As Yue Ying guided Bai E's breathing, she did not relax control over her own body.

Years of practicing the Elf Breathing Skill had integrated this special skill into her instincts, where every inhalation and exhalation was a chance to refine her body and spirit. The cultivation of Spiritual Energy continued every moment, as long as she was breathing, her power was growing every second.

Breath flowed into her nostrils, circulated through her body, and was then exhaled.

A faint Spiritual Energy was mixed within it, and if one had excellent Spiritual Energy vision, they could vaguely see thin strands of milky white Spiritual Energy within the breath.

"Inhale~"

"Exhale~"

Their breaths enveloped the two of them.

As the guide, Yue Ying intentionally infected Bai E with her own rhythm and insight to lead him into the entry-level teachings.

The milky white Spiritual Energy exhaled from her flowed into Bai E.

The breath, threaded with Spiritual Energy, circulated between the two, temporarily connecting all their sensations on a certain level.

Their connection was seamless and unending.

In Yue Ying's "eyes," Bai E "saw" a dazzling and illusive world.

Multitudes of stars of different colors hung far off at the edge of the sky, and streams of light ribbon fell far before the eyes... Red, orange, yellow, green, cyan, blue, violet - the infinite stars all seemed to hang on the horizon, waiting for one's harvest.

And among them, a vast, cold white "sun" sat at the very center of the "starry sky"...

"Exhale~"

"Inhale~"

"Cough, cough!"

[Node record +1, collect more Breathing Skill tricks, and you will be able to become fully accustomed to this breathing rhythm.]

Bai E's breath hitched, and he suddenly bent over, coughing violently.

Yue Ying, seated with her legs crossed, watched the suddenly disrupted Bai E with a slight frown.

It wasn't Bai E's fault.

It was... the Breathing Skill's fault.

The Breathing Skill of the Elves, created specifically for them, wasn't quite suitable for humans, considering the differences in their physiques.

The proper rhythm for elves might not be as smooth for humans.

The close connection between spirit and flesh was inseparable. The adjustment of the Breathing Skill was not just about reaching a relaxed and peaceful mental state; the mobilization of certain body parts was equally important.

Humans did not have the tricks to get started, and the Elf Breathing Skill wasn't quite fit for humans.

It seemed that artificial beings were naturally excluded from the realm of Spiritual Energy, with no Cultivation Skill fit for their practice in the world.

However, since Yue Ying wished to teach, she naturally considered all of this.

If it didn't exist in the past, was it impossible for the future? If there was no Cultivation Skill suited for artificial beings in the past, why not try to adapt one?

All these required time...

"Continue."

Yue Ying's voice rose, steady, unaffected by minor setbacks.

The exact physical momentary state of Bai E and the role the Elf Breathing Skill needed to play at that moment replayed over and over in her mind. Harmonizing the cooperation between the two was the most crucial point.

Since she wanted to do something unprecedented, it would naturally require extensive practice to continually refine her ideas.

Would it work? She did not have a solid idea herself.

But many things first require faith to undertake before there is a chance to see the results.

She didn't share these thoughts with Bai E.

Only she had the vision, and only she could make improvements.

Telling him might only cause him to conjure unnecessary and chaotic self-correcting thoughts, which could be counterproductive.

'I can do this!' Yue Ying affirmed with conviction.

There aren't many paths in life an elf can take as a belief, but they treat each difficult challenge with seriousness.

After all, it's only in the pursuit of "the path" that the sensitive needs of the body and desires can be briefly suppressed.

"Yes."

Bai E adjusted his posture, sitting cross-legged.

He recognized the issue he had just encountered and understood why the mission requirements for completion were marked with "???".

It was because the Elf Breathing Skill wasn't entirely suitable for humans.

Just now, his completion rate had nearly hit one hundred percent, yet the result was his own undoing due to a bout of breathlessness in his chest.

Under the guidance of someone at Yue Ying's level, there's rarely any mistake, so the issue could only be with the Elf Breathing Skill, which didn't fully match the human body.

Yue Ying was clearly looking for a solution to this problem; under her deliberately changing guidance rhythm, his completion rate was actually fluctuating and not unchangingly approaching one hundred percent.

But... it was too slow.

[Free Creation Mode: You are attempting to combine the skills and abilities you've learned with your own characteristics to create a new Breathing Skill that better suits your constitution. Based on your abilities, the current success rate is "extremely small". However, you can assist your creation by paying a certain price (combat/general experience). (Cost: 20 experience/min)]

The required experience is double that of mere learning, but it allows the creation of something never mastered before under the panel's "hint feature."

Of course, even the Elf Breathing Skill itself was not something Bai E was familiar with. Learning and creating had to be done simultaneously.

Thirty experience points per minute is something he could afford to burn.

But not right now...

How could Bai E talk about creation when he wasn't fully familiar with the Breathing Skill?

He would need to become more acquainted with it before considering making his own improvements.

Bai E focused his mind, not perturbed by his earlier failure.

As long as there is hope and a clear direction for effort, many can persevere.

Yue Ying, sensing Bai E entering the state almost instantly, nodded to herself in approval.

Not falling into self-doubt after an accident is also a significant aid in cultivation.

"Exhale~"

"Inhale~"

Yue Ying's gentle guiding voice rose again, and the hidden corner was filled only with sounds made by her alone.

Patrolling soldiers passed not too far away, but Bai E, barely disturbed in his thoughts, remained unaffected by the outside world.

The patrolling soldiers also failed to notice the two of them.

Yue Ying's aura enveloped the space where they were. Unless it was a Spiritual Energy practitioner with sharper senses, ordinary patrolling soldiers would never discover them.

His state was gradually improving.

[You are paying combat experience to adjust your breathing rhythm...]

[Current Completion Rate: 85.1%]

The completion rate is neither high nor low.

Having had one experience, Yue Ying chose to be more cautious. Under her guidance, Bai E's breath stabilized, and those extraordinary forces seemed to pour into him through the crown of his head, cleansing his body that was fully open to embrace.

If one wants to cultivate Spiritual Energy, they must first accept it.

From the mind to the body.

Purely mental power requires an equally mental approach. It's not just the mind and will that must accept, but also making the indescribable instincts of the body familiar with the existence of Spiritual Energy, which is the first step in cultivation.

Resistance... Any bit of resistance could cause the loss of Spiritual Energy.

In this process, both sides need to become familiar.

The breaths of the two formed a bridge of fusion, completely enveloping the small space they occupied.

If an outsider were to discover this secluded corner, they would see two spaces gently rippling like water, emitting wonderful halos of light, dark, deep, and flickering intermittently.

Ordinary people without Spiritual Energy capacity would feel dizzy just by glancing at it, unable to maintain focus.

Of course, Bai E could not yet embark on formal cultivation; this was Yue Ying using her own methods to let him personally perceive the mysteries of Spiritual Energy, their Elf Race's style of guidance being this harmonious mixture.

In the midst of guiding, Yue Ying quietly opened her eyes. She did not need to concentrate wholly during this process, allowing her to think about more things—

Bai E was not resisting Spiritual Energy, from body to soul; he allowed it to pass through smoothly. The so-called ban on artificial humans didn't seem to show more resistance in him, not at all like the challenging impediments typical of a first-timer's experience.

Perhaps because he indeed had encountered demons before, experiencing Spiritual Energy firsthand?

No matter what, this was good news.

Next, she had to continue to push the limits.

Only by allowing Bai E to error test with his body could she tailor make a Breathing Skill just for him... or rather, a Breathing Skill that would enable humans, even those without talents, to embark on the path of cultivation.

"Exhale~"

"Inhale~"

[You are paying combat experience to adjust your breathing rhythm...]

[Current Completion Rate: 97.3%]

The progress was picking up again.

Bai E was very satisfied with Yue Ying's decision.

She needed to trial and error, and he needed the complete information on the Elf Breathing Skill.

Only when the panel judged that he had collected enough tricks of the Elf Breathing Skill would the success rate of creation naturally rise...