

Wow 251

Chapter 251 node records

One minute...

Two minutes...

In a state of ethereal selflessness, time passed without leaving a trace.

Bai E was even indifferent to how much experience he had exactly expended.

Ever since the last return from the demon lair, his experience reserves had already hit the roof; such a minor expense was nothing in his eyes.

Unsurprisingly, upon approaching a near-hundred percent completion once again, the Breathing Skill suitable for the elf physiology gave Bai E that suffocating sensation.

"Cough cough cough!"

[Node record +1, collect more tricks of the Breathing Skill, and you will become fully familiar with this breathing rhythm.]

"..." Watching the hunched-over and coughing figure of Bai E, Yue Ying moved her mouth, trying to organize her words to comfort him.

She wanted to say that all this was normal, that beginners were just like this, and not to feel discouraged or to think it was his own problem.

However, while she was considering what to say, Bai E had already sat up straight again.

"Again!"

His voice was firm, unwavering.

The words she had prepared seemed useless to him...

"..."

Yue Ying nodded slightly, "Okay."

...

"Cough~"

[Node record +1...]

"Pfft!"

[Node record +1...]

As Yue Ying went full force, Bai E's body could not withstand the high-pressure rhythm, and the frequency of his failures increased.

"Cough cough cough cough!"

[Node record +1...]

Hearing Bai E's cough that nearly expelled his lungs, Yue Ying frowned with concern.

"How about we call it a day?"

A Breathing Skill that always pushed human physical limits could invisibly harm his body. Once or twice might be negligible, but now...

It was too much of a good thing.

She never expected to teach it in one session; instructing a human-made warrior to learn the elves' Breathing Skill was an unprecedented challenge, and she had reserved a great deal of patience, not in a hurry for quick results.

"I can still continue."

Bai E caught his breath and insisted in a somewhat hoarse voice.

The Breathing Skill that exceeded human tolerances indeed inflicted no small harm on his body, and his now more sensitive sense of touch seemed almost able to perceive the cries of various organs under high pressure.

But his rapidly healing talent, having unlocked to 89%, was quickly repairing his damaged physique, even advancing to 90% completion.

There was nothing more to say.

Everyone's talents had different applications; some directly affected combat abilities, others shone in logistical support. His quick recovery allowed him to sustain long and exhaustive training.

Yue Ying looked at Bai E's profile with slight worry, but still gently agreed, "...Alright then."

Willpower was also a critical factor affecting Spiritual Training, and besides, human medical technology was impressive; even if something went wrong, he could simply be sent straight to the military camp's medical department, which should not be a big problem.

What was more valuable was his ability to endure internal pain without letting the body's distress signals affect his Breathing Skill, a testament to mental fortitude already close to their elves' strong control over hormones and emotions.

Self-restraint was a prerequisite for elves to practice the Breathing Skill, but for humans with less sensitive bodies, it was not necessary, and training that was time-consuming and difficult, not worth teaching.

In her view, humans who could achieve this without self-restraint were rare.

"Continue."

[Node record +1...]

[Node record +1...]

...

The Elf Breathing Skill had countless demands on the body and soul; fortunately, after a night's investment of experience, Bai E finally saw the chance of freestyle creation mode shifting from extremely low to moderate.

Tomorrow... when continuing the training, he could attempt a dual approach, learning and creating at the same time, developing a Breathing Skill truly suited to his body!

As for today? It was definitely not possible.

He was distinctly aware of several ruptures in his internal organ membranes, not to mention bleeding in the inner walls, and a tearing pain in his chest, as if his ribs were broken.

The beating and expansion of his heart and lungs were slowing down, and his blood flowed with a languidness.

It looked serious, but with his current constitution, along with regenerative blood and rapid recovery at play, a day and night's sleep should see no major issues.

Still, to recover swiftly, Bai E patted his backside as if nothing were amiss and headed straight for the medical room for the injured.

Watching Bai E's receding figure, Yue Ying silently shook her head.

To push himself to the limit, even if it meant enduring inhuman pain.

Perhaps it was this resolute will that was at the core of the many miracles he had achieved all along.

The weak have many excuses, but the strong show remarkable similarities.

...

On duty was the diligent Mashati.

"Doctor, I need medical attention."

"I'm just a nurse..." Mashati, who was looking down at her work, responded subconsciously at the familiar voice, pausing abruptly as she looked up and saw Bai E, "You... what brings you here?"

"Medical attention."

It was better to let the military doctors tend to him than to tough it out using his own constitution; why ignore such good medical facilities?

"You..." Mashati gave Bai E a once-over with some hesitation.

It was rare for someone to come by walking on their own...

Generally, being able to walk meant it wasn't serious.

So, he couldn't be just making up an excuse to come see me, could he?

The girl's thoughts wildly danced, but still adhering to her duty, she took Bai E to the doctor's office.

Looking at the scans, the doctor stared at Bai E with shock on his face.

"How can you still be standing?"

"..." Bai E glanced at the white bed in the clinic and obediently walked over, "Should I lie down?"

"You, you, you... do you know your organs are nearly failing?" the doctor stood up, his demeanor serious, "How did it get like this?"

"Training..."

"..."

"Awesome!"

["Lucky Strike" energy +1]

"You people just don't treat your bodies as bodies," the doctor with thinning hair pressed down on Bai E's upper body while speaking and working, "Lie down and don't move. Mashati, go get me some Powerful Resuscitation Powder. And don't worry, there's no one here we can't save."

"Oh~" Bai E responded, then quickly advised, "Use the Ultra-effective Heart-saving Needle, that one's more powerful."

"That usually can't be tolerated by the average person..." the doctor paused, trying to explain.

"..." Bai E looked into his eyes and sincerely said, "I'm not the average person."

"No, wait..." The doctor ignored Bai E's response and instead gripped the only three stubborn hairs left on his head, "How do you know about the Ultra-effective Heart-saving Needle?"

"...I also know a little about medicine."

"..."

"..."

The two men locked eyes.

"You kid..."

Watching Bai E who had just received an injection get up from the bed and walk away, the doctor, still clutching the remaining two strands of hair on his head, wore a puzzled expression, "Where did this kid come from? Is it really okay for him to push himself like this?"

"The dean had previously mentioned taking him as a disciple," Mashati, who knew a thing or two, looked adoringly at the fading figure.

"Oh... eh?" The doctor, now with only one stubborn hair left to hold, fell into deep thought.

["Lucky Strike" energy +1]

...

In the early morning, Bai E got up from bed feeling refreshed and clear-headed.

Seeing his tent-mates like Tiger and You, his mood was good.

After all, they were comrades who had been sleeping together every night since they arrived in this world. It was indeed fortunate to not have been transferred out of this special forces team...

"You haven't been around these past few days. What have you been busy with?" Da Shan casually asked while dressing.

Bai E replied just as casually, "I was sent to join the armored regiment for training with them."

"Ah?"

"Ah?"

All four men turned their gaze to him, filled with confusion—

What's the deal, little brother?

The armored regiment isn't something you can just join whenever, right?

There has never been a story about a man-made soldier from there who ended up with a happy ending.

Dying on the battlefield is nothing; it's a glorious sacrifice.

But spending all day in the armored regiment with that humans-first atmosphere, occasionally receiving covert hostility, is far more painful than being outright stabbed.

"Didn't we tell you not to go to the armored regiment before?" Song Ying said somewhat regretfully.

Bai E blinked and with an innocent look up from the bed, "The orders were from a superior officer..."

"You could have suggested otherwise, though. Your achievements should be enough to negotiate some leeway."

Although the team didn't know the extent of Bai E's military achievements or how the senior officers viewed him, they knew enough of his credited actions on two joint operations to believe that there was room for maneuvers.

"Yeah... Why don't you talk to the commander and ask to be transferred back? You don't belong in that place."

Not only was it a waste of time, but it was also uncomfortable to live there.

Only You noticed something amiss, "How come you're still sleeping here if you've been sent to the armored regiment?"

"The commander said I could retain my special forces assignment...", Bai E explained.

"Ah?"

Song Ying was puzzled. Since when could an armored regiment assignment coexist so harmoniously with a regular one?

Isn't that place famously autocratic?

"I just need to participate in the necessary training at the armored regiment."

"Ah?"

Tiger couldn't understand it at all. Could one actually enjoy such freedom after joining the armored regiment?

Were all the stories from the past man-made soldiers just hot air?

"Aside from controlling mechas and undergoing Psychic Pressure Resistance Training, I don't need to go at other times."

"Ah!?!?"

???

Mecha?

Psychic Pressure Resistance Training?

Da Shan found it hard to swallow, "What exactly are you responsible for in the armored regiment?"

"Mech Pilot reserve..."

"..."

"..."

"As a natural person..."

Bai E hadn't planned on keeping this a secret from his companions, with whom he spent every day. You couldn't keep all secrets buried in your heart; that would drive a person mad.

"..."

"..."

"Awesome!"

Da Shan voiced what the teammates were thinking.

They knew Bai E's achievements might be significant, but they hadn't imagined they were great enough to compel even the famously intransigent armored regiment to make compromises.

"Do good work..."

Song Ying came over and patted Bai E's shoulder, "Don't blow your cover."

"We should get to training," Tiger said, noticing his teammates engulfed in shock, his voice firm.

He knew Bai E would rise quickly, but he hadn't expected it to be this quick.

As his newness hadn't worn off yet and he was already so far ahead, they, as teammates, shouldn't always be holding him back.

It was time for them to go all out too!

"By the way..." Tiger said, lifting the tent flap and turning his head to the left, "Since you still have your special forces assignment, I expect you'll be on the list for the joint mission in a few days. The target is

probably the new type of 'Sandworm' from the Bug Race that can burrow underground, recently discovered. I'm just giving you a heads up. Don't forget what preparations you need to make."

"Sandworm?" The new type of bug they encountered on the way to the Root Server ruins last time?

So the other military personnel were not just sitting on their hands; they'd already made a battle plan, had they?

Bai E nodded, "Got it, I'm aware."

As for now... today was actually the first official lesson in mecha control training.

Chapter 252 Regular Mech Pilots

It seemed that the mecha pilot reserves mentioned yesterday some characteristics of mecha training—

This thing can't be operated by one person alone, it requires everyone to divide the work and cooperate during training.

Like a tank, does it require several people inside to operate different module systems?

One person responsible for movement, one for fire control, one for reconnaissance?

What's the difference between that and driving a humanoid tank? It's quite different from the mecha of my imagination.

I don't quite understand, but it's not important, I'll know once I go and see today.

Bai E was in high spirits at the prospect of piloting the legendary mecha, but as he set foot in the heart of the armor camp's mecha training area, his now extremely sharp senses detected some kind of oppression hanging over the training area.

Almost all eyes converged invisibly on himself the moment he entered...

The comrades who had been on good terms with him yesterday now looked at him a bit strangely...

"..."

Bai E remained expressionless, but was inwardly alert.

Had something happened that he didn't know about?

However, it wasn't important, as he had never relied on the kindness of others to live his life.

Having nothing to do with others was fine, it spared him the trouble of dealing with social niceties.

Standing alone to the side, within a three-meter radius of Bai E, no one approached until the mecha piloting instructor arrived.

"Assemble!"

At the command, the soldiers formed ranks instantly.

Bai E stood at the back, somewhat excited as he watched the instructor, the unknown mecha waiting ahead, uncertain of the control mode.

"Some of you may be participating in our mecha pilot reserve training for the first time, so I'll introduce myself. My name is Brandon Trollope, and unless something unexpected happens, I'll be in charge of all the mecha piloting training before you grow into ace pilots.

Before we begin formal training, there are a few things you need to understand—

First, I need you to grow up as fast as possible and be able to stand on your own. Everyone should know about the recent battle to exterminate the bug nest. In that battle, the other components of the camp were basically intact and able to fulfill their duties, but our armored camp's main mecha pilots were almost wiped out.

During this period, none of the camp's combat operations have considered deploying our armed mechas. This is a consideration, but also a disgrace.

I can only give you half a month's time, which is the deadline for you to go from reserve mecha pilots to official mecha pilots! If you can't make it, I'll ask the superior for a replacement batch, willing to pilot mechas, I imagine they are not rare in this military camp."

[Triggered side mission—Regular Mecha Pilot.]

[Regular Mecha Pilot: Due to the massive loss of mecha pilots, the armored corps is in dire shortage of regular pilots who can perfectly operate armed mechas. In order to fill this gap, your instructor requires you to learn the ability to perfectly operate armed mechas as soon as possible. Mission requirement: Obtain full driving ability of the specific vehicle (armed mecha) within 15 days.

Mission completion reward: Knowledge—Mecha Modification Plan 2.0. (Countdown: 14 days 23 hours 59 minutes 59 seconds)]

"..."

A mission right from the start?

Bai E's gaze sharpened, and his blood boiled.

The ability to pilot a specific vehicle? After raising his standard vehicle capabilities to Level 3, he was told that he met the prerequisites to master the ability to pilot specific vehicles.

Now it was time to put it to use.

The instructor's voice did not stop, he just kept talking: "Second, trust in your training content! I know many of you have been transferred here from various assignments such as tank soldiers, multi-function infantry vehicle drivers, and armored vehicle drivers.

There are always soldiers who are skeptical about the shape of our armed mechas, feeling that using the same materials to build fighter jets or tanks could also dominate the battlefield, or might even be more useful. But..."

His voice paused slightly, his gaze sweeping over all the soldiers present, emphasizing firmly, "That's a wrong idea! All of you here today will be the pillars of our city in the future.

What I'm about to tell you is also the cutting-edge theory discovered by the academicians of the Scientific Research Institute—everything in this world that you consider inanimate could potentially give birth to a 'spirit of armors'!

The more you embrace and resonate with the object in your daily use, the greater the possibility of it developing a 'spirit of armors'. An armed mecha paired with a 'spirit of armors' will perform at least one grade higher than a normal armed mecha.

There have been definitive records indicating that an armed mecha that developed a 'spirit of armors' had crossed seas of bugs under its Mech Pilot's control and beheaded a bug nest's brain bug... Although this is a record from the Golden Age, it is without a doubt true.

The humanoid form of the armed mechas is undoubtedly the easiest for you as humans to familiarize with and accept. At the same time, the academicians of the Scientific Research Institute are also trying to replicate the empathetic cockpit from the Golden Age. Once that's in place, these armed mechas will be an extension of your limbs— one person... is equivalent to a legion.

Getting accustomed to the use of humanoid armed mechas in advance and accumulating experience in mecha use is also a remarkable contribution you make for the whole of humanity!"

The future is grand, but the reality is minute.

"However, at this stage, you still need to learn to work together, to jointly pilot the current armed mechas... Next, when your names are called, pair up two by two, and we will start with basic cooperation training."

"Random Soldier A, Random Soldier B."

"Random Soldier C, Random Soldier D."

"Benson, Bai E."

"Report to the superior, I refuse!"

As the last name was called, suddenly a resentful voice roge out of the line.

The instructor looked over with hollow eyes, "Benson? Do you have any objections?"

The soldier stood up straight, his expression unchanged as he responded, "I can't work with an artificial person!"

"..." The instructor's eyes immediately became as sharp as an eagle's, "Who said that?"

Bai E was special.

He was promoted from artificial to natural person status.

Hamilton had personally advised him to pay extra attention in training, not to let other soldiers create a rift.

Hamilton knew himself, and he knew the core of the armored camp that he had handpicked.

If I could weigh the pros and cons and make some tentative compromises, the kids under my command don't know anything about that.

The belief in the supremacy of natural-born humans has taken deep root in the hearts of people.

The wheels that have been set in motion are not even something I, the instigator, can stop.

And now... have these natural-born soldiers really found out?

At this point, the instructor had no intention of disputing the matter, just looking sternly at the other person.

Remedial action was necessary, and those who gossiped deserved punishment.

The soldier, arms folded across his chest, responded indifferently, "The truth doesn't need to be voiced; everyone is well aware of his origins."

Yesterday, at first, nobody realized what the story was with this newcomer, but by evening, once we hadn't seen Bai E around and gathered to think it over, someone remembered an all-troop commendation ceremony that had taken place—

The one regarded as the glory of artificial human recruits, 95B27, seemed to be this newcomer called Bai E.

A bit of inquiry into Bai E's background and physical characteristics made it impossible to conceal the truth.

If there was anyone to blame, it was only for the deeds he had accomplished in the past that were too dazzling.

The instructor glanced at Bai E, but couldn't find the words to say anything.

Blame him for being too high-profile before? If it hadn't been for those accomplishments, he wouldn't have been promoted by Hamilton out of the ordinary run.

The distinction of being elevated from an artificial human to a natural-born one was the first such occurrence he knew of in military history.

The instructor's face darkened like charcoal as his silent gaze swept over the proud soldiers—these were all men he had once trained.

But this Bai E, he was Hamilton's new favorite.

A father loves both his children...

"No matter what identity he had in the past! But now, at this moment, he is your comrade, your brother! Whether in records or in perception, he now has a natural-born status just like you. He can get promotions, retire, and start a family, just like any of you. He is your brother!"

"Artificial humans can't be trusted; this was decreed by our superiors!" the soldier declared loudly, without a trace of compromise, "I can't work closely with an artificial human!"

"You'll have to do it! This is an order!" The instructor's voice was icy, trying to exert pressure.

"Piloting an armed mech requires the pilots to have complete and implicit trust in each other, without genuine trust, the training is meaningless. Sir! I am just discussing the facts!"

"..."

The instructor fell silent for a moment.

Indeed... piloting a Titan-class armed mech required the pilots to cooperate with perfect understanding, without the comradeship of brothers, the idea of effectively piloting an armed mech was pure fantasy.

What Benson said... wasn't entirely without reason.

Yet, the authority of orders must be upheld.

"Benson, you blatantly defy a military order. Go and receive a third-grade military punishment and then confinement for three days!"

The soldier saluted, "Yes, sir!"

He left at a brisk pace.

The instructor's gaze followed the retreating figure before turning once more to the rest of the soldiers.

"What about you? Anyone willing to pair up with him?"

"..."

Silence prevailed.

No response came.

"..." The instructor's eyebrows furrowed tightly, his gaze occasionally sweeping over Bai E, who was standing in the corner of the formation.

The soldier who had been promoted from artificial human status didn't seem to be emotionally disturbed by this, which was the only piece of good news for now...

"..." The tense atmosphere lasted for a while, before the instructor finally let out a hesitant sigh.

It wasn't that he didn't want to stand up for him, but it was truly impossible to hold everyone responsible.

Calling them out one by one would be pointless, as they could all be determined like Benson to accept punishment.

And he couldn't really dismiss them all.

"Commence training! Bai E, you're with me."

The development of fundamental understanding didn't have to take place on a mech, as just moving an arm on that thing requires a tremendous amount of energy. The camp had a special simulation chamber to provide training for this kind of cooperation.

Taking Bai E in front of the simulation chamber, the instructor spoke with a hint of helplessness, "I'm sorry you have to endure this... but what he said is also true. Piloting a mech indeed requires the pilots to have a whole-hearted trust in each other, and harboring doubts means that even if training is forcibly passed, it will still pose significant problems on the battlefield.

For now, I will train with you... I will report your situation to Hamilton later for him to decide."

"Instructor! It's okay, I'm fine."

Bai E didn't care too much.

His gaze merely glanced curiously over everything inside the simulation chamber—those were models constructed to the scale of the actual mech cockpit functions.

These things, do they really require two people to work properly?

Chapter 253 Specific Vehicle Driving

"Come in,"

The instructor settled into the simulation pod and greeted Bai E, "First, let me introduce all the functions the templates inside the cabin can have when operating a mecha."

This work should have been done by Benson, as it is a longstanding tradition for an old soldier to mentor a new one in the mech pilots reserve.

He was a reserve member of the last batch of formal mech pilots, and because he was not qualified for frontline mecha combat, he was lucky to survive the last battle against the Bug Race.

And now, the previous batch of reserve members had become the reliable main force of today's mech pilot training camp.

When the main force couldn't be relied upon, the instructor had to step in personally.

"The mechas you will be able to get your hands on are currently only this type of Owl Dragon I, as more types of mechas are generally not used as your regular vehicles. Of course, if one day you have the chance to deal with the Mechanical Court, then you might also see a few other kinds of mechas, but for now, we will only talk about this one.

"The entire control module inside the Owl Dragon I model is mainly composed of four parts, which are motion, action, the arsenal...and the energy center."

[You are learning "Knowledge—Specific Vehicle (Armed Mecha) Operation," progress 1%.]

"Motion refers to wide-ranging movements like walking, running, jumping, moving left, right, forward, and backward, etc...."

"Action, on the other hand, is the precise control of smaller areas such as forearms, upper arms, calves, thighs, back, waist, and other parts."

"The arsenal can be regarded as tactics for combat, our armed mechas' standard arsenal includes the Alloy Chainsaw Sword, the Fire God Machine Gun with a firing rate of 3600 rounds per second, the Giant Flamethrower, two small missile arrays, and two small-yield nuclear warheads.

Of course, the mecha has reserved slots for special equipment, so if you have a particular weapon you are fond of, you can apply to your superiors for individual fitting or minor modification. We can talk about this more once you're familiar with operating the mecha."

"As for the energy center, it's a bit special; we'll talk about that later."

"Normally, it takes two mech pilots to operate this model and engage in combat."

Simply put, a mecha is a large human body, and the mech pilots act as the nerves and blood vessels inside the mecha.

Imagine the intricate coordination of bones and muscles inside the human body during battle for any possible action; the existence of the mecha is to finely dissect those numerous processes that are instinctively smooth on the human body into independent actions.

Pilots in the cockpit transmit commands and force to the respective parts at the exact moment to simulate the agility and adaptability of human movements.

"Typically, one person controls the motion module and selects from the arsenal, and we call this person the 'main mech pilot,' who is primarily responsible for strategic decisions like advancement, retreat, and selecting tactical weaponry against specific opponents—essentially the brain of the mecha."

"The one who solely controls the action module is called a 'combat mech pilot.' To achieve agility similar to the human body, there are a vast number of small parts on the mecha that can be individually controlled. The 'combat mech pilot' has total control over these parts. Tactical combat movements in battle are mostly led and completed by the 'combat mech pilot.'"

"As for the energy center I mentioned earlier... different parts require constant adjustment of driving power, and control over it is not fixed in either pilot's hands."

"Only with teamwork between the two can one perfectly operate an Owl Dragon I model armed mecha. The more skilled the group of pilots, the more agile and sensitive the mecha's performance becomes, approaching the sensibility of the human body."

"I've heard that you are quite good at both combat and shooting, right?"

As he spoke, the instructor suddenly turned his gaze towards Bai E.

Meeting the other's gaze, Bai E lowered his eyes somewhat "at a loss," "I can... do a bit."

"Be confident... I've heard quite a few legendary stories about you," the instructor patted Bai E's shoulder and continued to explain.

"In fact, operating a mecha has certain similarities to the bare-handed and armed combat you do with your body. Warriors good at combat tend to have astonishing performances in mecha operation as well.

But there are many differences too. For example, to throw the most powerful punch with the human body, you typically need to draw your fist back as far as possible to ensure there is enough distance to generate force. However, a mecha with an internal power system does not need to do this.

As soon as the command is given, it can complete the maximum output within a limited success rate in the shortest distance.

Of course, the commands given by the mech pilot also need to be preempted, to ensure the mecha's internal power systems have enough time to produce power, but the mecha itself will not be constrained by the human body's limitations and need not perform some of the excess movements. You will be able to feel the difference between them when you operate the mecha practically."

[You are learning "Knowledge—Specific Vehicle (Armed Mecha) Operation," progress 17%.]

"Your actual combat ability is formidable; maybe in the future, you could become an excellent 'combat mech pilot.'"

Having said these words, the instructor paused, seemingly concluding the introduction.

Bai E finally had an opening to ask his own question, "Is it impossible for someone to operate a mecha alone?"

"Hehe~," the instructor chuckled heartily.

The pinpointing from others just now might not have caused much turmoil in his mentality as a man-made warrior, but it might also have stirred some pride.

If no one wants to pair with me, then I'll just form a team by myself.

But that, is impossible.

"Many new mech pilots, like you, have such ideas when they first encounter mecha training, but you have to understand, it's not possible. Now, imagine you want to do a forward roll right now, how would you operate?"

As the image of a forward roll flashed through his mind, Bai E's gaze towards the cockpit's layout filled with various buttons and joysticks became somewhat bewildered.

The instructor didn't push them too hard, his words were just meant to spark Bai E's imagination.

While speaking, he also started explaining and demonstrating, "Come, let's break down this movement step by step—starting with the motion aspect, we need to use our legs to generate power and jump forward, right?"

[You are learning "Knowledge—Specific Vehicle (Armed Mecha) Piloting," progress 21%.]

"Mm-hmm," Bai E nodded, indicating he was listening.

"Then our upper body needs to lean forward as much as possible to move the center of gravity forward. You have to understand, a mecha's body is not limited by human muscle tissue, but it still has to follow the laws of physics."

"Hmm..."

"What about the arms? To maintain the center of gravity, and to ensure we maintain the right combat posture after rolling, they need to move accordingly. It's not too different from making a normal rolling motion with your own body, right?"

"Right."

"So in this seemingly simple action, how many movement commands do we need to execute?"

"Three?" Bai E tilted his head, following along with the instructor's explanation.

"No..." The instructor shook his head, "It's nine. To jump with the thighs, first we need to send a command to the power center to adjust the leg's energy supply level and then we can leap; that's already two commands. At the same time, upper body pressing forward, upper arms, forearms bracing forward, that's three commands.

After the hands press against the ground, the waist drives the legs to flip backwards, increase the arm's energy supply, upper arms, forearms straighten to push the body back to a standing combat posture, that's four commands. Nine in total. Complicated, isn't it?"

When the human body wants to do something, once the idea is there, the body naturally allocates the energy and carries it out like an instinct.

But a mecha is an inanimate object; humans are its brain and nerves, its blood vessels.

Every tiny decision requires a decisive command from the human for thorough execution.

Increase the power supply but don't move the body, and you'll just be roaring in place.

Move the body without giving it energy, and of course it won't budge.

[You are learning "Knowledge—Specific Vehicle (Armed Mecha) Piloting," progress 23%.]

"What I've described is the simplest procedure already... To go into more detail, when we do a forward roll, our body can't do without the process of bending the knees, right? That's something the body must do to exert force."

"Mm-hmm." Bai E nodded.

"But in piloting a mecha, the process of 'bending the knees' isn't actually necessary to accomplish the action of 'rolling forward,' right? Because a mecha's body doesn't need to rely on 'bending the knees' to generate force."

"Right."

"But what if we don't input the 'bend knees' command? What do you think would happen?"

Images flashed through Bai E's mind—

The mecha fell forward stiffly, and then, like a diver's motion in reverse, its legs straightened out and were pushed up stiffly by the arms.

"Do you understand?" the instructor looked at Bai E as if he were deep in thought, "We could choose not to execute 'bend knees,' but that would undoubtedly increase the magnitude of the movement, take more time, and expose bigger vulnerabilities. In real combat with our own bodies, that moment could be enough to decide life or death."

And you have to understand, all of this is based on a simple environment without any interference. Imagine—if you were on a battlefield, after you've completed this forward roll dodge, you have to immediately decide which weapons to counterattack with upon getting up, where to launch your attack, and so on.

Leave aside the complexity of these tactical decisions and the simultaneous or sequential command outputs in an instant; even deciding whether the bullets about to be chambered in the Fire God Machine Gun are armor-piercing, concussion grenades, or incendiary rounds requires you to make a quick choice in the blink of an eye. Do you think you could handle that?"

"..."

It did sound, indeed, a little difficult.

"What if there were more people?" Bai E asked curiously.

"More people?" The instructor shook his head, "As I just explained, the execution of a major action relies on the coordination of various commands. Even cooperation between two people is a test of understanding, let alone with more operators. One arm forward, the other back, thighs squat, calves drive a jump up... Can you imagine that kind of chaos?"

Mechas are different from tanks and airplanes; to achieve the flexibility similar to a human body, the fewer "brains" there are issuing commands, the better.

One person can't handle it, and more people just add to the chaos.

Two people, as has been determined after long-term practice, is the most reasonable configuration to pilot a single mecha.

"Oh~" Bai E nodded, committing it to memory.

[You are learning "Knowledge—Specific Vehicle (Armed Mecha) Piloting," progress 25%.]

Chapter 254 I'm just one step ahead in skills

"Next, I'll introduce you to the functions of these buttons and toggles... This controls the forward and backward movement of the left and right legs, this is..."

[You are currently learning "Scholarship - Specialty Vehicle (Armed Mecha) Piloting," progress 50%.]

[The learning progress for "Scholarship - Specialty Vehicle (Armed Mecha) Piloting" has met the requirements; the subordinate "Knowledge Point - Basic Mecha Maneuvering" has been unlocked.]

[Current unlock required: Universal Experience *1000. After unlocking this knowledge point, the next stage "Knowledge Point - Advanced Mecha Maneuvering" will be initiated.]

"You've just started mech pilot training, and it's already impressive that you are memorizing all these key positions and lever functions so quickly. Of course, I have tentatively positioned you as a 'battle mech pilot,' so it's acceptable if you only remember the functions related to 'actions' for now.

I also have an operation manual here for you; you can read it in your free time when you go back, but remember... don't lose it. Although it's not extremely important, it is still classified as city confidential."

"Hmm..." Bai E nodded, holding the booklet, "When can we begin official training?"

The instructor was taken aback, "Have you memorized the functions of these operation modules?"

Bai E blinked, "Pretty much."

[Payment: Universal Experience 1000 points.]

[Acquired Knowledge Point - Basic Mecha Maneuvering.]

[Basic Mecha Maneuvering: From now on, you can perform all standard actions of mechanical operation mechas with a complexity of "moderate."]

The instructor raised an eyebrow in disbelief, "You remembered the main mech pilot's control modules as well?"

"Yeah."

"???"

The instructor squinted and stared into Bai E's eyes, "Are you sure?"

"How about... we try it?" Bai E said cautiously.

The instructor fell silent, saying nothing.

This was a talent Hamilton had made an exception to promote; perhaps there really was something special about him.

But everyone else has to memorize for days; you've memorized it just like that?

I want to see how much of a genius you truly are!

"Fine!" The instructor suddenly broke the silence, "I'll work with you."

It is said that only with the ultimate implicit understanding between two mech pilots can a mecha be perfectly operated, but in fact, if one can fully accommodate and understand the other, the result displayed can be just as flawless.

If one feels everything about piloting a mecha is so smooth it's unimaginable, it isn't necessarily due to the pairing; it might be that their partner's comprehensive grasp utterly outmatches.

Now, let you feel the superior consideration from an instructor.

"You'll start as the main mech pilot."

In the basic training of mechas, the main mech pilot always takes the lead, while the battle mech pilot is more responsible for coordinating limbs, arms, and other parts.

Undoubtedly, it demands more thought from the battle mech pilot to align with the main mech pilot's actions.

The main mech pilot, in turn, needs to plan the actions for the training targets.

There are various targets in the training as well.

Upon confirming the start of the training challenge, the simulation pods' screens in front of them slowly brightened from dark, revealing a challenge scene filmed on location—

Within glass windows constructed from grey-black steel at all sides, a gigantic tree lying on the ground came into view.

Step over it!

A simple action, yet when performed with a mech operated mechanically, it breaks down into several separate movements that must be executed one by one.

For new mech pilots, even a mere stepping action often causes them to panic.

Planning a sequence of fluid movements also takes thoughtful consideration.

This is normal...

The instructor relaxed his posture, quietly waiting, knowing it won't be so quick...

...how did he start moving already?!

The mech status display on the simulation pod's screen showed he directly activated the right leg...

The shockingly startled instructor instantly sat up straight, his hands catching up with the control sticks, swinging the mech's arms to maintain balance.

"Click-click-click~"

The mechanical structure emitted various sounds of gears meshing, and the simulation pod's screen showed the gigantic tree obstacle lying behind them.

Passed... have we passed?

Just like that?

Although as the initial challenge of basic training it wasn't particularly difficult, how could you, a mech pilot who has just touched the controls, pass it like this?

Gazing at the giant tree now behind them, the instructor fell into contemplation—

Is this really your first time?

Bai E did not stop.

The simulated cabin screen was not merely a display of one segment; one challenge followed another, naturally preventing any pause.

The mech strode forward, the actual scenery outside the window and the cameras in all directions within the cabin simulating the forward progression.

Even the instructor, with his solid fundamental skills, maintained subconscious control over the mech despite his astonishment.

Jumping, leaping, climbing...

One by one, the challenge objectives were tackled.

Unbelievably smooth.

For the instructor, the content of the novice training was something he was thoroughly bored with, something he could complete even on autopilot using muscle memory alone.

So, the instructor really did switch off his brain...

His full attention was on Bai E at the mech pilot controls beside him.

Incredibly stable.

Although he was merely executing a series of basic maneuvers, he did so seriously and accurately.

More crucial was the fluidity of movement; the screen showed the mech's forward strides steady and unwavering, continuously moving ahead.

Many soldiers, even after one or two months of training, would still falter and pause to think about how to tackle these basic training stages – the complex control rods and intricate maneuver analysis often required considerable mental effort.

But him... It was as if he had ingrained mech piloting into his instincts.

Was this really his first encounter with mech controls?

It was too incredible!

Hmm... why is he frowning?

Has he finally encountered a challenging stage?

The instructor's spirit was jolted as he caught a glimpse of a subtle change in Bai E's expression.

...

It's too slow...

Bai E slightly knit his brows.

The difficulty of the basic training was quite foundational, teaching one how to run, jump, climb, and turn... It was like an alien species, taking its first awkward steps in a human body.

It reminded Bai E of the many idiot-proof new player tutorials he encountered while gaming.

To many players with even a slight talent, the teachings of those tutorials were meaningless even if it was their first encounter with the game.

It was like an old lady's footbinding cloth, stinky and long.

And they still wouldn't let you skip... Training was making him sleepy.

Then, why not speed things up?

Bai E lightly pushed with his right hand—

Energy supply shifted up, scaling to the third stage.

Legs accelerated, the screen in the simulated cabin began to rush towards his eyes at high speed.

"Hey, hey, hey?"

The instructor reacted instinctively, swinging the mech's arms to balance its center of gravity, "What are you planning to do?"

No one had ever used more than a single-gear energy output in the novice basic training before.

It's too fast, you won't be able to handle it!

A half-body height demolished wall loomed nearby, and the speeding mech looked set to crash into it.

With no control over the decision, the instructor could only watch helplessly as the simulated mech hurtled forward...

...and then it soared into the air.

The mech's legs kicked off to the side, and the belated instructor hurriedly controlled the arms to brace against the top of the crumbling wall.

The simulated damaged wall exhibited realistic texture and collapsed instantly under the colossal force of the mech, fortunately, the brief moment of leverage was enough to deem the mech successfully hurdled over the broken wall.

In a display only visible to the instructor, the mech's hurdle was replayed from various angles in the observer's view.

Watching the mech elegantly clear the wall in the screen, the instructor felt a tinge of pride.

'Good thing I'm a cut above.'

Even when cooperating with Bai E's abrupt ideas and actions, he managed to respond in time and make the necessary adjustments.

Who else could execute such a perfect arm-supported hurdle?

Um...

How come the screen still shows rapid progress in the corner of his eye?

Chapter 255 Parkour game?

Leaping over the decrepit city walls was just the first barrier to cross after acceleration.

If the speed was to be increased, it would certainly be maintained to the end.

The difficulty of the subsequent levels had increased compared to the previous ones, yet Bai E's advancing speed accelerated even more. The rapidly approaching simulation screen seemed to blow onto his face with the gale, and it was only then that Bai E felt a bit of the thrill.

[It's like a parkour game...]

The guy could play Temple Run until his phone's battery exploded.

"Stop, stop, stop!"

Just as Bai E increased his speed to fifth gear, reveling in the joy of getting through the levels, the instructor suddenly interrupted him urgently in his ear.

He had to admit that this synthetically engineered warrior truly had exceptional talent. Not only could he remember every module that a main mech pilot could use clearly, but he could also quickly choose the most suitable solution for the challenges he encountered.

It had been said before that his ability to adapt on battlefield was strong, and now it seemed indeed true.

There were many warriors with strong adaptive physical abilities, but few had the imagination and execution to transfer that dexterity from their bodies to the operation of a mecha.

Bai E was clearly one of those minorities.

But... it was still early days!

The basic actions were not very difficult. A warrior who remembered the operation of each mecha module and had practiced for a while might easily accomplish them—he was just at a higher starting point than the average warrior, but that didn't define his limit.

Moreover, as a combat mech pilot, he had almost perfectly coordinated with him through the levels.

While he strategized as the main pilot, his own piloting actions that followed were the core reason why all those moves were executed flawlessly.

If it had been another newbie pilot in Bai E's place as soon as he started accelerating at the first level—the dilapidated city walls, they would have crashed straight into them.

So now...

"Come, let's switch places."

The main pilot strategizes, the combat mech pilot supplements the details and coordinates.

You say you remember all the modules needed by the main and combat mech pilots, right? Let's see what level you can reach.

The instructor, with lengthy teaching experience, did not believe that a warrior on his first day with a mecha could get the hang of it without any hindrance.

"Good."

Bai E had no objections.

Being a main pilot wasn't very interesting; even at fifth gear, there wasn't much to operate. Once the combination and division of basic movements were ingrained in his mind and body like instinct, the choices he needed to make at any level came naturally, without any conscious thought.

On the other hand, the operations of the combat mech pilot, controlling many more parts of the mecha, were more intense. Bai E, who occasionally got distracted watching the instructor's operations, had long wanted to try it out himself.

The instructor buckled his seat belt, and the simulator's driving position also mimicked reality. The mecha's cockpit was a form of semi-mounted, semi-reclining style.

While having a certain carrying capacity, the limbs were suspended in the air to provide more operating space, with the main pressure points on the hips and waist.

"Are you ready?" he looked at Bai E, who was also fastening his seat belt.

"Click!"

After a crisp click of the buckle, Bai E's calm voice responded, "Ready."

"Do we need to start from the beginning?"

The training mode's difficulty increased the further you progressed, so not resetting the progress meant that Bai E would face a serious challenge as soon as he took the position of a combat mech pilot.

"No need," Bai E replied, his expression calm.

It was this thrill that he sought.

Displaying his talent was also undoubtedly a way to allow himself quicker access to a real mecha, and to kick off advanced combat training.

"Good," Brandon nodded in satisfaction.

He liked this overconfident attitude. Confidence is an essential quality for every fighter.

Brandon slowly shifted gears, understanding that before any action, he needed to determine the power output gear—three.

If he were the main pilot, he would not start at one like all the trainees who began training, but considering it was Bai E's first time, he did not recklessly switch to too high a gear.

The roles of the main mech pilot and combat mech pilot were sharply different. Being able to handle the main pilot role did not mean one could play the part of a combat pilot as well.

Moreover, despite Bai E's remarkable display of talent in the recent basic training, it was still within the realm of "basic."

The simulation pod's screen timely simulated the scenery outside of the mecha, showing the vast yellow wasteland reduced to insignificance before the towering mecha.

"Here it comes." Before nearing the obstacle, the instructor considerately gave an advance warning.

"Hmm~" Bai E answered, fully focused.

Cliffs... Broken bridges...

The mecha leaped high into the air.

Bai E, who was constantly focused on the independent screen in front of the combat mech pilot, instantly grasped Brandon's intention—

He wanted to fly directly over, instead of jumping down to the relatively low base of the cliff for the mecha.

The simulator provided more than one way to pass each level. The main pilot could make more than one choice, while the combat mech pilot needed to adapt quickly and follow suit.

To leap, one would need to grab onto both the cut-off steel bridge and a large chunk of protruding rock by the cliff's edge to leverage.

A simple prediction of the movement flashed through the mind and instantly disintegrated into several separate steps, each passing through the mind in succession.

As for how to go about it, Bai E had a plan in his heart in an instant.

As the powerful steel body leaped from the cliff's edge, Bai E employed his hands and feet, sending a series of control commands in quick succession. The Mecha, with its logical sequence of front and back, would naturally perform these movements in their proper order...

The mechanical palm stretched out vainly twice, attempting to grasp the last chance, but failed to accurately seize the protruding rock. The steel bridge held by a single hand was corroded and could not provide enough support for such a heavy body.

Without a reliable fulcrum to provide power, even a Mecha with built-in power sources could not forcibly defy the laws of physics.

The huge body fell powerlessly and crashed to the ground.

The earth quaked and the mountain trembled.

The simulated image raised a large cloud of dust, like a mushroom cloud, with striking realism.

'That's more like it...'

Brandon, who failed to coordinate, felt this was only to be expected, "Don't be disheartened, this is normal. This level is not easy. Many Mech Pilots who have trained for ten days to a fortnight make frequent mistakes here. Plus, if it were a real Mecha, there would be a jet propulsion unit on the back, and this height would easily be surmounted."

"..." Bai E frowned slightly but said nothing.

He stared at his palm, slightly distracted, feeling something was not right...

Yes, the tactile feedback was off.

Too late...

The Mecha was responding to his commands too quickly.

In other words, the process of issuing commands was done too rapidly.

The commands should be delayed a bit more so that the Mecha's keen response could be executed at the right moment.

However... this was entirely different from the sensation he felt in the main pilot's position.

The response speed of the function modules operated from the main pilot's position was much slower than this.

Initially, he had felt somewhat uncomfortable with this, but after crossing several levels, he became accustomed to it.

Now...

Was it his misconception?

Or was it the original setting?

Having clarified the key point, Bai E looked toward the instructor, his eyes filled with evident doubt, "Instructor, why did I just feel like the Mecha's response got faster?"

Brandon was slightly surprised to hear this and muttered softly to himself, "Such sharp insight..."

He then nodded in agreement, "You're not wrong. The control module response speed of a combat pilot is always a bit faster than that of the main pilot. As for the reason... it's to follow."

Combat pilots need to take the initiative to cooperate. After sensing the intentions of the main pilot, they need to act promptly, ensuring their commands are executed quickly.

A main pilot combined with a combat pilot constitutes a complete Mecha pilot team. Their commands always need to be integrated together to achieve the desired effect.

It's like the timing of a command from the brain reaching the extremities... This is not solely dependent on the brain's decision or the speed of nerve conduction; it requires both to work together effectively.

Additionally, the combination of the Mecha's built-in action trajectory prediction and the response speed disparity between the two pilot's control modules forms the basic condition for the coordinated combat of the two pilots.

"Of course, this response time difference can be freely adjusted depending on the Mech Pilots' driving habits and the level of coordination between them. Our current simulation cabins are set to the default maximum time difference of 2 seconds."

A 2-second delay might easily decide life or death in human combat, but in battles involving reliable Mechas, it is not such a fatal issue.

This is also why the movements of Mechas in previous frontal battles appeared somewhat slower compared to those of humans.

Of course, the shorter the time difference that both pilots can control, the more agile the Mecha's movements will be—this is beyond doubt.

Even the most outstanding technical pair in the military struggled to reduce this time difference below 0.5 seconds, except for the monsters from the Mechanical Court...

[You are learning "Knowledge - Special Vehicle (Armed Mecha) Piloting," progress 70%.]

The instructor explained everything with a chuckle.

Suddenly, the smile on his face froze.

Recalling the scene that just happened—he thought of something.

The left hand of the Mecha that should have grasped the rock... swung too early.

The Mecha's feedback and ability to improvise was clearly not on par with a human body, even if it wanted to correct a failed action, it would depend on whether the Mecha's internal system could respond fast enough to allow it.

So... it fell.

In other words, it was not an issue with Bai E's personal operation.

It was because he had not informed him of the different response time delays between the two pilot seat control modules, leading to Bai E's misjudgment of the timing to act.

"..."

An unspeakable shock rose from his heart.

Brandon swallowed hard, his gaze returning to the present.

"Let's try again!"

Chapter 256 Cooperation with

The mecha restarted from the base of the cliff.

In a way, the simulation pod displayed a training field that was also a semi-open map. Even after falling to the bottom of the cliff, there were other routes and challenges waiting ahead...

The speed had unconsciously reached the fifth gear.

Rotating, jumping.

Bang, bang, bang! The heavy footsteps quaked the earth; the mounts on the simulation pod somewhat simulated the vibrations felt when actually piloting.

Actions that humans could normally perform could be replicated on a mecha. This was the outcome that basic training hoped the soldiers would eventually achieve.

And now... this was already the result achieved.

Brandon felt something peculiar.

Their cooperation was like that of old partners who had worked together seamlessly for years; it was as if the other knew every intention of his, and even the occasionally unorthodox moves he made were timely followed by the other without a hitch.

Although the chief mech pilot was mainly responsible for guiding decisions, when options were too limited and the complexity of actions too low, there was no difficulty for him.

At most, he would deliberately make some unconventional decisions to give Bai E a challenge.

On the other hand, as a combat mech pilot, Bai E had to pay full attention to follow his choices. Miraculously, from the first mistake to the present, Bai E had not made a single mistake in their cooperation.

He felt a long-lost enjoyment in the control and coordination.

But something wasn't quite right...

"If someone can keep up with all your actions, it might not be a sign that the two of you have a tacit understanding. It's more likely that the other person's level is far above your own..."

Dammit! Could I have become the noob that gets carried by a superior player?

Brandon was performing the controls mechanically and furrowed his brow in distraction, then suddenly remembered something else—wait a second, weren't we just teaching a newcomer the first-time operation of a mecha? What's with this level of coordinated operation?

And how can he keep up with my rhythm?

Hmm... How is the mecha moving so fast? Fifth gear... Fifth gear!? When did we reach fifth gear?!

Shit!

"Tss tss tss~"

The mecha's steel feet braked sharply on the ground, and the rest of the mecha's limbs balanced the body even with the sudden braking.

The metal creature halted its strides, and Bai E's puzzled gaze came through.

Everything was going well in the training, so why stop?

All knowledge requires a combination of practice and theory.

The instructor's words laid the foundation for him, and in the simulation pod, he felt the kind of... rhythm truly necessary for piloting a mecha.

The rhythm of Mechanical Rhythm.

Mecha had a human shape, but it was not a human body.

Command transmission required time; the enormous body of the mecha relayed commands from the cockpit to the extremities. The electronic system needed time to respond, and the mechanical structure required time to rotate and mesh.

It was like some massive multi-limbed creature, where commands issued from the central intelligence core took an immense amount of time to reach the farthest tentacle segments.

To operate a mecha, one must become familiar not only with the system's set delay times but also with the essential delays inherent to the mecha's structure itself.

Every action's actual effective moment required a certain degree of anticipation, and the anticipation needed for different parts varied. This was something that could not be taught or passed down through an instructor's experience but had to be figured out through one's repeated use.

Fortunately, progress was still acceptable...

[You are learning "Knowledge—Specificity Vehicle (Armed Mecha) Piloting," progress 89%.]

"..." The instructor didn't make a sound for a long while, simply digesting the fact that he had encountered a monster.

"You did very well."

Brandon unbuckled his safety harness with a trace of melancholy, unaccustomed to encountering a talent of this caliber for the first time.

"Do you have any other questions?" he asked casually, though Brandon was just going through the motions.

"Yes," Bai E said with utmost sincerity in his eyes, "I find it exhausting to follow your maneuvers..."

He honestly expressed his feelings.

Feeling tired was to be expected, of course.

A secondary Mech Pilot must completely follow the lead Mech Pilot's decisions, having no initiative and needing to constantly concentrate to guess the intentions of the lead Mech Pilot.

But it shouldn't be this tiring since they were only doing basic movement following, which hadn't yet involved more complex combat.

Even so, he had almost entirely devoted himself to following the instructor's desired maneuvers, and it was hard to imagine how much mental effort a regular soldier would need to cope with the demands of an intense combat environment.

The key issue was that this level of focus had to be maintained for a very long time... unimaginable.

"Tired?" Brandon smiled, "Being tired is normal. That's why we need to train for understanding and coordination. Every Mech Pilot has their own control habits. If we practice together over a long time, the secondary Mech Pilot will learn the lead Mech Pilot's habits, and much of the coordination will become instinctive, naturally saving a lot of energy.

Plus, you can also pay attention to the display screen in front of you."

In front of the secondary Mech Pilot is a screen that only they can see clearly.

It doesn't show the scenery outside, but the current status of the Mecha and its external actions.

It's not in real time.

It's predictive.

Whenever the lead Mech Pilot issues a command, the Mecha's main core chip will simulate the actions the Mecha is about to execute in the first instance. Maybe it doesn't carry them out as quickly, but it can simulate the state after the command is executed in advance.

The secondary Mech Pilot can rely on this display to better understand the lead Mech Pilot's intentions, of course... the speed of response remains the core element in measuring how smoothly a driver operates a Mecha.

[You are learning "Knowledge—Special Vehicles (Armed Mechas) Driving," progress 90%.]

"Oh~" Bai E nodded, having observed a bit earlier, but now with the instructor's clear explanation, he understood its function even more clearly.

"Additionally, there's this..."

Brandon patted the iron plate supporting him at his back, "The simulator doesn't have a real installation, but in a normal Mecha here, there is an emergency Stimulant that can be injected, which can help you improve your reaction speed very quickly. The side effects are quite significant though... you need to finish the combat quickly and get treatment from a doctor."

"Oh~"

"Do you have any other questions?"

"Not for now..." Bai E shook his head. After the instructor had explained each module's function, he knew he needed to familiarize himself with them through practice.

"Then let's leave it at that for now." The instructor headed for the exit of the simulation pod, looking back and waving his hand, "You go ahead and familiarize yourself with the modules in the simulator, I'll check on the learning progress of the other students."

Bai E was not the only soldier who had just started training or had not been training for long, and the instructor needed to cleanse his eyes with other people.

In fact, according to his plan, he was only going to teach Bai E some basic knowledge, and then he could go busy himself with other matters, letting Bai E familiarize himself with the various functional modules, which constituted the entirety of the first lesson.

Normally, that's how most soldiers got through their first lesson, and often the second one as well.

Just memorizing the intricate module functions already required all the soldiers' mental focus, and managing to stumble along with a little jog or jump was considered exceptional performance.

But Bai E...

"Alright, Instructor!" Bai E responded readily.

Being left to explore on his own was fantastic!

Chapter 257 Solo Practice

Bai E had interacted with both pilot seats, so he felt... it seemed that it wasn't strictly necessary for two people to get along in order to play.

At least in terms of the operational intensity in basic training, this was true.

Let's try...

The instructor was not there, alone, he furtively explored.

Because everyone's body shape is different, with varying arm spans, leg lengths, and other measurements, the various control modules inside the simulation pod had a certain range of motion.

Similarly, the positions of both pilots could be adjusted.

Bai E hadn't asked about how to adjust the mechanical structure, and the instructor hadn't mentioned it, but... Bai E flipped open the manual.

"You are learning 'Knowledge—Specialty Vehicle (Armed Mecha) Piloting', progress 93%."

Following the guide in the directory, he easily found the operation to adjust the position.

"Click~"

"Click~"

The mechanical structure made a frictional noise when coupled together.

He pushed the copilot's seat to the back, the main pilot's seat to the middle, pulled all kinds of control modules close, and Bai E secured himself again at the main pilot's position.

The surrounding function modules were dazzling, all piled up before his eyes.

Bai E rubbed his hands together, feeling a hot sensation in his palms.

Operating the mechanical structure had an addictive tactile feedback, especially exhilarating and focused amidst the flurry of hand shadows.

Starting from the beginning...

Bai E reset the difficulty level of the course.

Now practicing alone, he couldn't be overconfident.

"Buzz~"

The speakers in the simulation pod began to simulate the buzzing sounds made by various structures of the mecha when operating.

The slight shaking and vibration also transferred to his body from the support point behind him.

Completely immersed in everything displayed within the simulation pod, the experience was quite realistic.

Bai E truly felt as if he was piloting a towering mecha, walking across the vast land.

First gear... second gear... third gear...

Bai E advanced the gear, and the power began to increase.

While preparing to swing his legs, Bai E also pre-entered the instructions for the arms to follow.

Balance, center of gravity... these were more pronounced while driving a mecha than with his human body's senses.

The memory of that ready-to-tip-over feeling during a few sideward slants while coordinating remained fresh.

Feeling the process happen slowly but being utterly powerless to change it only pressed a heavy sense of helplessness on his heart.

This was the lack of confidence that came from imbalance during operation, and when controlling it alone, he needed to be even more mindful of this sense of loss of control due to slight flaws in coordination.

Recalling all the issues he faced during his recent practice, Bai E's hands became blurs, and the mechanical structure's buttons and levers created a cacophony before his eyes...

"Boss... how's that guy doing?" someone breezed through a level and turned to ask the instructor behind him.

Brandon was dutifully overseeing the coordination training between each group of mech pilots.

Everyone's progress was different, with some veteran pairs being reserve mech pilots left over from the previous batch and, due to incompatible habits or personalities for taking on newcomers, keeping their original pairing for practice.

They were almost guaranteed to be the newly appointed regular mech pilots.

And having trained for a long time, they were quite familiar with the instructor, which made their conversations somewhat more casual.

Remembering the outrageous scene from just before, Brandon shook his head, "Don't bother him when there's nothing wrong, he's a talent personally recruited by Hamilton."

"Talent?" scoffed the training soldier. Weren't talents abundantly available in this world?

His identity as an artificial human doomed him to not be taken seriously here—it had been an unwritten rule in the armored camp for a long time.

"Instructor, it's not that we're deliberately targeting him, but just look around and tell me who would want to be brothers with an artificial human? Who knows when he might go crazy and stab us in the back."

The "discrimination" against artificial humans naturally needed factual corroboration, with mutinous artificial humanoid incidents being the most publicized arguments here.

Without anyone willing to cooperate, they couldn't always expect an instructor to accompany his practice or even join him on the battlefield, could they?

To become a regular mech pilot, it wasn't about the capacity of one soldier, but that of a pair of soldiers.

Even if he was highly gifted, strong, and renowned elsewhere, in this armored camp... it didn't count for much.

Under these circumstances, that guy certainly wouldn't be able to become a regular mech pilot, and would probably end up like the other artificial humans who came to the armored camp, becoming a member of tank or rocket vehicle crews.

That said, the training soldier was still curious about the artificial young man's learning ability.

The soldier stretched his neck trying to see the tablet computer the instructor was holding.

It recorded the performance results of each group of soldiers during practice. "How did that kid perform just now?"

"Very impressive," the instructor said truthfully, hoping that his subordinates would be a little more cooperative with the superior's wishes, "so I'm telling you, don't mess with him. Hamilton really values him, and later they might even transfer someone from elsewhere to pair up with him."

If those at hand were unwilling to cooperate, they would find someone who was.

This was the only plan he had come up with.

Since they were all new recruits, starting fresh and developing a tacit understanding of coordination wasn't a bad idea.

Whether he would do this or not depended on whether the superior's consideration of him was sufficient.

"Oh~"

The speaking warrior responded perfunctorily and also glimpsed the information he wanted to see.

Group 2, current evaluation "Excellent", comprehensive evaluation "Good+".

There was also a rising green arrow...

This was almost certainly a fixed spot for a regular Mech Pilot... and it was his own.

As expected, but still a delight in his heart.

Then looking at that kid... Group 21, current evaluation... "Excellent+".

No comprehensive evaluation, because this was his first lesson...

Huh?

Really?

Plus?

"Instructor, are you sure you're not favoring him?" seeing this result, the warrior could hardly believe his eyes.

"He really is impressive," Brandon sighed sincerely.

The other warrior training in the same group shook his head in disbelief, "Could their performance be worse than the instructor's? Even the dumbest newbie can be corrected by the instructor..."

"..."

Such words would usually be pleasant to hear, but today they especially burned his face.

Brandon felt his face heating up.

Not to mention the complex training to come, just speaking of the basic training that had just taken place... it wasn't clear who was rescuing whom.

But at this moment, even if he told the truth, these lads probably wouldn't believe him, let alone that it would undermine the authority of the instructor.

Brandon coughed discreetly, "Anyway, don't go too far, he really is quite good and is someone the superior specifically asked to be looked after, that's enough."

"Alright, alright, we promise not to target him."

But they wouldn't cooperate either...

You train by yourself, let's see how you become a regular Mech Pilot.

"Look!" a warrior who glimpsed something suddenly laughed, "As soon as the instructor leaves, this guy can't do it, right?"

Current evaluation——"Poor".

The tablet in the instructor's hand was just a presentation panel collecting internal evaluations of the warriors currently training by the simulator system.

The true grading wasn't decided by the instructor himself, the motions being up to standard were judged by the simulator system.

At that moment, the simulator system was faithfully reflecting the training status within each simulator.

The feedback information unique to Group 21 was flashing a bright red light, alerting the instructor that this "group" had significant issues in their training situation.

Seeing this, Brandon frowned and murmured to himself, 'What's going on? Weren't they training well just now?'

"..."

That's not right, damn it!

Who was this kid training with after he left?

Or was he just casually using the lead Mech Pilot's module for fun?

Could he be tripping over himself walking? Otherwise, he wouldn't be rated as "Poor" by the system.

Who was the person he had coordinated so well with just now?

Damn it!

Brandon quickly put away the tablet to prevent the training warrior from peeping, and just instructed coldly.

"Train properly on your own! Don't slack off, got it? Even if you're the highest level in this group, it doesn't mean you're guaranteed to become a regular Mech Pilot. If your skills aren't sufficient, going into battle would just waste the city's resources. The final selection isn't up to me."

Having said this, Brandon turned and walked away. He was going to see what that synthetic boy was up to!

...

"I'm not quite used to this..." Bai E grimaced, "It feels uncomfortable."

Operating alone, his own plans for himself couldn't have been clearer.

But the two-second latency difference between the principal and the war Mech Pilot was too uncomfortable.

Distracted by calculating this time difference, he struggled even with the most basic level that he had initially passed effortlessly.

"How do I adjust this..."

It's not in the operating manual either...

"What are you doing?" Brandon's puzzled voice came from behind.

Chapter 258 Mechanical Rhythm

Has the simulation capsule control room before me, which has undergone a drastic layout change, remained the same familiar simulation capsule control room?

"Familiar with the control module?" Bai E asked back with some confusion.

Isn't this what you told me to do? Why do you look so surprised?

'Did I tell you to do the work of two people alone?' Brandon felt a tightness in his chest, as if he were painfully suffocating.

"I have said that it's very difficult for one person to take on the load that normally requires two people."

Brandon said with a cold face.

Don't believe it?

Let you not believe it! Let you not believe it!

Now you can't even walk straight, can you?

The basic training might be simple, but it's not something a newcomer to mecha operation can easily handle.

In his view, Bai E's behavior was not uncommon; at their armored camp, there had always been people who tried to pilot the mecha alone.

But it was only the professional mech pilots who would occasionally try to do so during basic training.

And very few could show a performance that matched that of two pilots operating together.

The cooperation between two well-synchronized mech pilots would indeed make it easier to control a mecha. Instead of being arrogant, it was better to practice diligently according to the truths they had discovered. That was the best solution at the current stage.

Bai E's attempt was understandable, but it shouldn't be indulged.

If nobody was willing to cooperate, the superiors would handle it...

But first, you had to face the reality of the gap.

"Understand how difficult it is now?"

"I understand," Bai E nodded sincerely. It was indeed difficult.

"But I'd like to ask how to adjust the latency differences between the dual-pilot systems?"

Looking at Bai E's earnest expression, Brandon couldn't quite tell if the kid had really taken in what he had said.

The aloof nature of these artificial humans was sometimes damn hard to grasp; no wonder some soldiers instinctively disliked these guys.

It was hard to discern their mental activity from their expressions, which for many people created a sense of superiority and loss of control over the other party, always making one feel uncomfortable...

Brandon narrowed his eyes and explained in a deep voice, "When you become an official mech pilot, you naturally gain that authority."

To prevent students from changing settings recklessly and thereby reducing their training progress, the delay differences in the simulation pods were locked. Only after proving their capabilities would they be granted access to adjust these settings.

"However, for now..." Brandon sighed, remembering that this kid was the one everyone targeted, feeling a bit sorry for him, "I can adjust it for you."

After accessing the backend system with his credentials, Brandon turned to Bai E and asked, "How much time do you want?"

"0.1 second?"

"???"

Bai E hurriedly explained, "I'm practicing on my own, and I always know my own thoughts."

"..." Brandon sighed and shook his head before saying, "Suit yourself... but just this once."

He couldn't always accompany him for practice, and sadly nobody was willing to be grouped with him. Baldly pretending he needed to memorize the module features was a joke; didn't he remember everything after just one explanation?

Without allowing him to practice alone, what could he do here?

"You need to understand one thing. When you're piloting alone, the difference in latency times actually becomes less important," Brandon explained while adjusting the system.

There were other mech pilots in the armored camp who had tried single-pilot basic training practices, so they had some experience.

"Our mecha operating systems have a certain logical judgment to help you make small adjustments to all the commands you input in a short time."

For example, a large motion requiring thirty small action commands to be combined and completed, whether the pilot inputs these commands within one second or takes three seconds to input them, the mecha will execute the entire set of moves as smoothly as possible—this is the smart logic integration and application within the system.

A very basic application, because with the presence of electronic demons in previous years, the city dared not to intensify research in this aspect.

"So at this point, the factor that affects the smoothness of your mecha operation is not the latency difference between the two pilot positions, but the speed of your entire set of input commands. You can slow down, but the order must be correct... but you can't be too slow, either."

The simple smart logic of the system still cannot handle errors in the order of operations; integrating and executing actions continuously in a short time is the extent of its capability.

Moreover, the specific measure of "short time" is not easy to grasp; the input of commands can be slow, but it must be steady.

Evenly inputting thirty commands within five seconds can achieve a complete expression.

However, if you input ten commands in the first second, pause for two seconds, and then input twenty commands in the next two seconds, the Mecha might treat the first ten and the latter twenty commands as two "separate" actions and execute them separately, which might result in uncoordinated movements of the Mecha's limbs.

These are lessons learned from the past.

The fastest speed that previous ace Mech Pilots in regular training could achieve when outputting a complete set of commands was also fluctuating between 1 to 2 seconds. Without the time to guess teammates' intentions but with twice the operational volume, the actual agility shown by the Mecha didn't increase by much.

Now, as a beginner, Bai E is trying to practice this... He is not very optimistic about it.

"Although the electronic demon has been completely solved, I have also heard from the Scientific Research Institute that they are researching new ways to operate Mecha and intelligent assistance systems, but the results are not coming that fast," Brandon knew more news and said it casually in the moment.

Painting a grand vision for his warriors from time to time, they can have more hope for the future.

"Oh~"

Only by reaching a certain level can all unknown areas be unlocked; Xie's words filled in the last piece of the puzzle for Bai E's understanding of basic Mecha operations.

[You are learning "Knowledge — Specific Vehicle (Armed Mecha) Piloting," progress 100%.]

["Knowledge — Specific Vehicle (Armed Mecha) Piloting" learning progress has met the requirements; the subordinate "Expertise — Mechanical Rhythm" has been unlocked. (The current expertise needs to be unlocked through training.)]

[Training: From the instructor's mouth, you have acquired all the theoretical knowledge of operating a Mecha, and now is the time to verify how much you have truly mastered.]

Through rigorous training, you can gradually learn and perfect your mastery of the current "Expertise — Mechanical Rhythm." You can also accelerate the learning or perfection of this expertise by paying a certain price (combat experience/general experience). (Cost: 20 experience points/min) (This mode becomes ineffective after the expertise level exceeds level 3.)]

[Current expertise level: 0/7 (Mechanical Mecha's upper performance limit)]

Simple learning demands less experience, while mastering abilities through practice, combat, or even creation requires more experience.

But that doesn't matter!

What I have now is experience!

"Thank you, instructor!"

"Then you practice on your own." Brandon sighed softly and walked away.

...

[Successfully navigated the target obstacle by independently operating the Mecha, "Expertise — Mechanical Rhythm" experience +1.]

[Current "Expertise — Mechanical Rhythm" experience 1/100, at 100 points you can master "Expertise — Mechanical Rhythm (1/7 level)."]

[...experience +1.]

+1

+1

+1

Expertise can only be improved by practice, just like previous skills such as stealth or blind fighting, which cannot be directly increased with combat experience and can only grow through missions or over time.

'So slow...'

Operating alone reduces the time spent guessing teammates' thoughts and coordinating, but the double workload indeed leaves no time to spare.

Bai E, moving again, couldn't maintain the fifth gear speed he had when cooperating with the instructor; keeping at the second gear without making mistakes was already the fastest speed he could achieve.

Even that... couldn't guarantee a 100% completion rate.

Only each correct successful completion of a challenge has a chance to add one point to the expertise experience.

After practicing and roughly understanding the way to increase experience, Bai E realized that this expertise indeed could grow through training in this kind of simulation pod.

If that's the case, burn through my experience!

[You are paying with combat experience to aid your training progress...]

[Learning efficiency has increased to: 200%]

The brain, augmented by an invisible force, has a clearer and more decisive analysis of the actions of operating a Mecha momentarily.

The extraordinary power transformed from experience seems to substitute Bai E's thinking, only requiring him to become familiar with and remember the decisions and habits in this state; these abilities will eventually become his genuinely exceptional personal understanding.

+1+1+1+1+1+1

The pulsing of experience becomes more frequent at once.

Chapter 259 Top combat power!

...

"It's about time..."

Keeping an eye on the clock and looking at the green displayed on his tablet, Brandon satisfactorily shut down the simulation process in each simulation pod from the main console.

The results weren't too bad, with no particularly poor scores.

As long as one isn't a fool, prolonged practice can make most people master the methods of driving a mecha, not to mention that those selected to come here are the elite of the elite. Aside from possibly being a bit arrogant, there are generally no other issues.

The previously mentioned 15 days was just to instill a sense of urgency in these kids; getting a handle on operating a mecha isn't hard, the difficulty lies in mastering it.

To maneuver a massive mecha with the agility of a human body and thereby exert extra combat power, even among the previously enlisted regular mech pilots, there were few who could manage it.

I'm no exception...

Peak mech pilots and ordinary regular mech pilots are simply two different species. The latter can get by with hard work, but the former... one in a million.

The prompt that suddenly popped up on the screen let the warriors know that the session had ended, and many walked out from the spherical simulation pods with a sense of reluctance.

This thing is somewhat like playing a video game...

And for most people, training with such a novel gadget is addictive, the joy derived from the release of dopamine satisfying them with each new discovery.

Every mecha training session is hugely popular, but sufficient time must always be left for reflection.

Moreover, they are warriors, and there are many other training objectives that they need to master.

"That's it for today, dismissed!"

As he watched everyone leave, Brandon began to thoroughly check each simulation pod for any signs of wear and tear or outdated damage.

Purely mechanical systems are prone to wear out from frequent day-to-day use, and if not properly maintained, they will break down quickly.

These are all responsibilities that fall to me as an instructor... and being an instructor isn't all that easy.

He checked each pod in turn until he arrived in front of pod number 21... Looking at the unique structure inside the chamber, Brandon sighed with a tinge of regret.

The solitary control seat in the middle of the construct spoke of its occupant's grievances. Who knows how Hamilton would decide after receiving the report.

Glancing at the tablet in his hand subconsciously, Brandon wanted to see what kind of practice the artificial human soldier had undertaken in his subsequent solo explorations.

Current evaluation—Good+.

Hmm... par for the course.

The tablet computer's display showed real-time monitoring, and upon the completion of training, the meaning of "current evaluation" would change to an overall assessment of the session.

Good+...

It seems at the start when I was pairing up with him, the score was quite high, and there were many mistakes during the solo practice that dragged down the overall rating.

The simulation pod only grades based on the performance during the challenges, regardless of whether there's one or two pilots in the pod.

But a significant difference between the two has made this comprehensive "Good+" rating somewhat inaccurate. Especially the "Excellent+" performance at the beginning was so prominent that by looking only at the overall evaluation, it's impossible to accurately judge how well that kid performed during the solo practice.

Furthermore, I don't know the total duration of his training; whether it diluted the "Excellent+" training time. If the solo exploration was just a brief stint, the overall rating should still be dominated by the "Excellent+" part.

Then this "Good+" could be quite misleading...

Brandon slid his finger over the tablet, tapping into the sub-page dedicated to pod number 21.

The main page is an overview display of all pods' performance, and more detailed information is available after delving in.

Let me see how long this kid trained alone, and how he performed—

Training duration: 3 hours and 23 minutes (Average training time: 3 hours and 17 minutes)

Idle time: 37 minutes

Completion rate of current level: 82% (Average completion rate: 63%)

Average efficiency of passing levels: Tier 2.4 (Average passing efficiency: Tier 1.3)

"..."

Staring at the data, Brandon was lost in thought.

"How could this be?"

"How could this be?"

This was all real data being tallied, the so-called training time being the actual effective operational time.

How long did I partner up with him?

Was it even half an hour?

...

So he practiced by himself for nearly three hours?!

With about a six to one ratio in training time, the score that would normally be in the "excellent+" category was greatly diluted. Even if his solo performance in piloting Mecha can't be considered "good+", a "good" rating is unavoidable.

Moreover, the completion rate of this level and the average efficiency of passing... were actually far beyond the average level of this course!

The elements affecting the average level, of course, include a mix of good and bad. The previous trainee Mecha Pilots, who are now veterans, naturally performed well, and the newcomers who had just started training obviously did less well. But one must realize...

Bai E was supposed to be the bottom one among them!

He was the true rookie, attending the training for the first time!

And no one was willing to cooperate with him; he had even completed this basic Mecha piloting training course by himself!

Could this really be the work of a newcomer, who had just been exposed to Mecha operations?!

"...Eh heh."

Brandon's mouth dropped open as he realized that something significant had happened.

No wonder the commander said he needed special care.

No wonder the commander exceptionally promoted an artificial human to their natural human rank; this was a precedent never established before.

Now... all the answers were clear.

The commander had seen his innate talent in this area; that was why he made an exception to recruit him.

Even across the entire city, even within the Mechanical Court full of monsters, peak Mecha Pilots... were exceedingly rare!

Every peak Mecha Pilot could, in the name of Mecha, create miracles that are unimaginable!

This is a big win...

Brandon opened his mouth and then ran off.

Maintenance?

Maintenance, my foot!

Initially, he didn't care much about Bai E's situation; all his work was just routine.

But now...

How could he not seize the opportunity to rectify such a talent? If no one was willing to work with him, even the most talented Mecha Pilot would have nowhere to apply his skills.

Being able to perform well in basic training alone doesn't mean he can pilot a Mecha into battle alone; they must find him a perfect partner as soon as possible!

...

Walking to the cafeteria, Bai E was all smiles. He had mastered a skill at a rapid pace for the first time without any agony.

It just consumed a tremendous amount of experience... 3000 points of combat experience, gone in the blink of an eye.

[Current "Specialty—Mechanical Rhythm" experience 13/500, at 500 points "Specialty—Mechanical Rhythm (3/7 level)" can be mastered.]

[Specialty—Mechanical Rhythm (2/7 level)]: Through continuous practice, your control of Mecha has become increasingly intuitive, and the roughly human-like movements have allowed you to find the key to analogous mastery. From now on, you can transfer all the specialized abilities your physical body possesses to your Mecha's actions, making your Mecha appear as a sentient being.

(Current transfer rate: 30%)

In just over two hours, he pushed this specialty to level 2.

When piloting a Mecha in battle from now on, Bai E's own specializations such as "Long-range Weapons," "Light Firearms," and others can also be displayed with 30% of their effects.

Although it seems like a significant discount in ability, the weapons used by Mechas and those used by humans are not on the same level.

Like the Mecha's machine gun mentioned by the instructor earlier, firing 3600 rounds per minute, it is merely considered "Light Firearms" for a Mecha.

It appears the abilities are discounted, but the lethality displayed in actual combat is probably unimaginably terrifying.

Perhaps once in a Mecha, I could even tussle with that Bug Race overlord?

Just thinking about that scene sends Bai E's spirits soaring.

This is the pinnacle of human combat power!

Of course, he must not get ahead of himself.

At the very least, he needed to upgrade Mechanical Rhythm to level 7; the higher the specialty's level, the greater the transfer rate.

Can't be reckless; must be stable.

There are also specialized weapons for Mecha... Among conventional weapons, there probably aren't any bows and arrows available.

Once I demonstrate sufficient strength, I can probably make a request to the commander and have the Armament Department craft a bow and arrow specifically for my Mecha.

Then with one arrow, I'll blow the Bug Race's heads off!

Chapter 260 signboard.....Grandpa

"Why is our mascot an old man..." Kuang Xin remarked on more than one occasion.

Out of the blue, an old man showed up in the base warehouse, claiming to be one of their Dawn members, following the orders of the adults, and from then on would be stationed there to oversee the warehouse management duties.

Of course, this was a good thing. Previously, whenever they wanted to exchange or submit something, they always had to wait for the adult to return. And the adult himself often had important tasks and was frequently absent.

They even often went on "business trips," disappearing for days at a time.

This was very inconvenient.

Having someone from the organization in the base not only to perform daily duties but also to help expand their world view and learn more about the organization was a great thing... but it would have been even better if the mascot could have been a commanding big sister!

"We're lucky to have someone, so stop complaining," Dai Lian rolled his eyes. In the game, whether the NPC was good-looking or not didn't matter to him; it was just a tool.

What mattered to him was how the tool could make things more convenient for him.

And clearly, the arrival of this new tool... The new Dawn character brought several pieces of good news with it.

First, the adult had returned!

The specifics couldn't be disclosed, but the adult was back and had been back for two days. Even though they didn't know why he hadn't met with them yet, they had gotten into the habit of waiting in the base warehouse every noon.

They wondered if the adult would come today.

Second, there were new items available for exchange—

The first-floor exchange store added "Close Combat Specialization," "Throwing Specialization," and "Light Weapons Specialization":

[Throwing Specialization Instruction, price—Basic Training: 20 Faction Contribution Points.]

[Light Weapons Specialization Instruction, price—Basic Training: 20 Faction Contribution Points.]

[Close Combat Specialization Instruction, price—Basic Training: 20 Faction Contribution Points; Advanced Training: 30 Faction Contribution Points; Master Training: 50 Faction Contribution Points.]

The second-floor exchange store added "Master Training" for "Ranged Weapon Specialization" and "Close Combat Specialization":

[Ranged Weapon Specialization Instruction, price—Master Training: 100 Faction Contribution Points.]

[Close Combat Specialization Instruction, price—Master Training: 100 Faction Contribution Points.]

The refreshing feeling of occasional new updates was something that couldn't help but earn rave reviews.

Even the Faction Warehouse itself had updated with something they had never thought of before—cars!

[Empty-Tanked Car*1, rental price: (Faction Contribution Points*10, Faction Funds*50) per natural day (limit of one rental at a time per person); sale price: Faction Contribution Points*500, Faction Funds*1000 (the contribution points spent on rental can be deducted from those needed for the purchase).]

Super user-friendly!

They had inquired about the prices for these on the market, but they were way out of reach for them at the moment, given their meager means.

But now, the Faction Warehouse offered rental and sales services. Buying a car outright only cost 1000 Faction Funds, equivalent to 5000 Blackwater Coins, which was much more affordable than the inflated prices from Black Street's unscrupulous merchants.

Let alone the fact that after their last contribution of "Exorcism Essential Oil," each of them had no less than 1000 Faction Funds. All they needed was to pool together 500 Faction Contribution Points, and they could buy it outright!

Having a car versus not having one in the game was like night and day.

Not to mention all the cement still piled up in the sewer—how long would they need to carry it on their shoulders?

Now with the car, they could rent it for one day and get it all "plonked" in one go!

Bearing in mind the expansion of their area... Restricted to walking, they couldn't venture far from Black Street, or they'd stray outside of the adult's operating range, and all the ground they gained with Dawn would evaporate.

With a car, they could travel much farther afield.

Whether it was for completing missions or exploring the world of the game, it was far more convenient than using their legs.

This time the Faction update was... awesome!

And the arrival of the old man mascot brought more than that.

After he arrived, he directly settled the contribution points they had earned for constructing the warehouse up until today.

Each person received 250 contribution points! That was even more than twice the cumulative amount dispensed before!

The reason, of course, was that they had worked twice as hard during the two days the adult was absent.

They put aside other missions and focused entirely on the construction of the base warehouse!

The 20*20*3 space requirement from the mission had long been met. The space they excavated was even larger to account for internal "decorating," and the actual usable volume was definitely less than the space they dug out.

Using their limited knowledge to figure things out on their own, they used up nearly half the cement during the past few idle days, which resulted in such a large influx of contribution points.

As to why they worked so hard...

Building the base accrued contribution points, and with those points, they could exchange for instructional courses in the faction that seemed incredible to other players.

Goods are meant to be thrown out by comparison, and people are meant to despair through comparison.

Only in interaction with other players could they genuinely realize just how much of an advantage the three of them had in joining the "Dawn" organization compared to others!

The players assigned to this city were not limited to just the few of them. Many players were mixed into various factions, with most of them freewheeling solo players.

Normally, it was rare for everyone to meet; some were so integrated into the game world that even when players passed each other face to face, they might not recognize who the other person was.

Without the text display above their heads, nobody could easily distinguish who was a player and who was an NPC.

Only occasionally during quests could one tell by the way the quests were conducted...

Like recognizes like, and there are many quests that the native inhabitants wouldn't even glance at... only players would be interested.

Such as the recently encountered quest "Retrieve the lost mecha parts from the orcs."

Gong Yan and the others didn't accept the quest right away, and the other party didn't have the patience to wait indefinitely.

Therefore, a quest intended for all "bounty hunters" somehow appeared in the bustling underground market at some point.

It even became eagerly sought after.

The head of the guild issuing the quest couldn't fathom why a task, which in his experience might not attract many bounty hunters due to the laughable reward when compared to the danger of tangling with orcs, was now so popular.

Of course, his initial intention was just to dupe some unsuspecting bounty hunters unaware of the market price, to use them as cannon fodder to scout for potentially useful information.

But unexpectedly, the response overwhelmed him, with applicants breaking down his door.

Just thinking about those unruly bastards made Kuang Xin feel a surge of anger.

"Those bastards really have no respect for the rules!"

Dai Lian nodded in agreement, "Indeed... it was just a mission bracelet, and they fought over it like mad."

The guild boss Wallis, who likened himself to a crow feeding on carrion, had initially intended to lure naive bounty hunter novices with a low price to do his bidding. When he realized the overwhelming number of "bounty hunters" willing to undertake the mission, he quickly changed his strategy.

Want to do the quest?

Sure! Buy the "mission bracelet" at a high price.

Only those wearing the "mission bracelet" had the right to turn in the quest. Otherwise, even if others obtained the items he desired, their contributions would be rejected.

Of course, if someone did manage to bring him what he wanted without a "mission bracelet," he would naturally take the item and send the person packing.

A reward for the quest? Not a single cent.

After all, the rule was set, wasn't it? Without rules, there's no circle to be squared!

A single quest, not only to freeload the desired items but to also extort a hefty sum from those dim-witted bounty hunters.

Wallis didn't know why his quest attracted so many "fools," but the instinctive pursuit of profit drove him to act in his own best interest subconsciously.

And he certainly wasn't acting honorably.

On the surface, he allowed everyone to take on the quest, but only those with "mission bracelets" could ultimately submit it. He recognized only the bracelet, not the person.

In secret, however, through his underlings disguised as bounty hunters who also accepted the quest, he would "resell" the right to undertake the quest—or rather, the "mission bracelets"—at high prices.

Many clever players easily realized that this was a scheme by the organizer and detested such dishonorable local NPCs, swearing to destroy their entire families after completing the quest. But first, the quest had to be done...

After all, the reward for the quest was truly tempting—

[Jackpot Quest—Retrieve the Creation.]

[Retrieve the Creation: The technological creations of humanity have fallen into the hands of other species. It would be a significant loss for humanity if the fruits of human intellect were analyzed and their technological methods deciphered. To recapture the glory of human creation, we shall not shirk our duty!

Quest requirements: Allowed to use any means (including but not limited to trade, robbery, theft, etc.) to retrieve the target creation 0/1. Quest completion reward: Jackpot experience (currently 7200 points). Participation fee: 100 points of combat/general experience.]

This was the system quest that popped up when "bounty hunters" accepted the task issued by the guild boss Wallis.

Who cared about the pittance Wallis gave?

What everyone valued was the massive amount of experience accumulated in the jackpot!

Invest 100 points, reap millions in return.

Go for broke with a small stake for great gains, take off in one swell foop!

Lose, and you do so with grace, free of regret.

The opportunity for a massive free-for-all for just 100 experience points was also a gain.

Moreover, which gamer thought less of themselves?

They would take the chance even if it were one in ten million, especially for a jackpot quest that relied solely on personal intelligence and ability.

The mantis stalks the cicada, unaware of the oriole behind, so be it.

The guilds forming teams to develop core experts, so be it.

Every player who took on the quest believed they had a chance to come out on top in the end.

"So we must be more cautious," Gong Yan said with a smile, tucking a curl that hung by her temple, her fair wrist adorned with an iron-gray metal bracelet that reflected a subdued, matte luster in the light of the warehouse.

"Can the big guy make it today?" Kuang Xin looked on eagerly, knowing that there wasn't much time left before they set off on the mission. Some quick ones had already departed, and had it not been for the hope of turning their resources into hard cash to increase their chances of completing the mission, they too would have already left.

"I hope he can come today and teach me a few things to slay my way to victory!"

Faction contribution points could be directly credited to one's account, but to convert them into the strength taught in those courses still required the big guy himself to come.

"He should be able to make it," Gong Yan said with a gentle smile, her soft voice comforting.