

Wow 431

Chapter 431 "Storage Space" _2

Plans don't always have to succeed; Bai E could accept all possible outcomes of a plan.

As for whether the plan was risky and what the success rate truly was... wasn't he currently doing everything possible to perfect it?

Confronted with Bai E's anticipatory gaze, Yue Ying let out a soft sigh, "It's too risky."

She had never actually fought against human spiritual energy masters, but she felt that not even dozens of second-stage spiritual energy users could get close to her.

In the high-dimensional space that even she feared, there were countless risks... not just from specific demons themselves.

So, the idea of hundreds of second-stage spiritual energy users launching a surprise attack in high-dimensional space—the enemy's main battleground—sounded like a complete fantasy.

"Then we can only wait for a more perfect opportunity?" Bai E's brows furrowed slightly.

A few hundred spiritual energy users were the number he could hope for in the short term; more force would require him to become the ruler of the entire city.

Or would that still be insufficient? Should he wait until he ruled the entire planet to mobilize all of humanity's spiritual energy users?

Must one always wait for perfection before acting? On the road to perfection, can one be contented, turning a blind eye to all the tragedies?

No!

It was precisely because no one had tried that someone needed to.

Bai E wasn't quite ready to give up, "There's not even a small chance?"

Yue Ying shook her head and repeated, "No one has tried."

The same description, once negative, the next firm.

No one had ever organized a large-scale, proactive assault of spiritual energy users into high-dimensional space, nor had anyone deliberately entered a specific demon's territory in high-dimensional space and returned successfully to describe its landscape.

Everything was unknown.

Only those who had a shallow understanding of the world dared to boldly explore everything.

The unbridled souls of the newly born scrutinized everything and attempted to rebel against it all.

"You can try; that's your freedom."

Should that day ever come, she likely wouldn't stand idly by; she might even help him contact her own people.

How can their sprite presence be absent from the first counterattack launched by intelligent beings?

But before that...

Yue Ying's tone was flat, trying her best not to let the human warrior in front of her realize the surging passion within her, "First, you need to master the High-Dimensional Walking technique."

Bai E had only broken through to the second stage of spiritual energy last night; it was impossible for him to have had time to unlock this skill which was only available at the second stage through self-realization or learning.

"I will," he said.

The mission reward included it; he didn't even need to spend experience to unlock it.

That meant he saved thousands of points of experience that he would've otherwise needed to learn the skill.

As he spoke, Bai E immediately used the technique, his body flickering into nothingness and rematerializing several meters away.

[Spiritual Energy (Stage 2) Trick—High-Dimensional Walking: From now on, you can infuse your spiritual energy entirely into your flesh, allowing your body to temporarily enter high-dimensional space and merge with your spiritual body. You will inherit all the characteristics of the spiritual body in high-dimensional space, gaining greater control over your spiritual body's movements, and bringing back any effects your actions in high-dimensional space have on the material world when your physical body returns to it. (Note: The longer you "walk" in high-dimensional space and the greater the "distance" you traverse, the more susceptible your spirit will become to penetration.)]

Materializing in the material world over short distances using high-dimensional space was precisely the application of transferring the physical body into the spiritual body and then returning.

Being able to use this skill was one of the key features of mastering High-Dimensional Walking.

Yue Ying pressed her lips tightly together, finding it absurd, despite having accepted that nothing should surprise her regarding this warrior, "..."

Chuckle!

"What about spiritual energy storage then?" There were many skills to learn upon reaching the second stage.

High-Dimensional Walking was an essential "reality" to master, a necessary ability to understand another aspect of the world.

Spiritual energy storage, on the other hand, was a convenient necessity for spiritual energy users as members of humanity.

"I still don't know how to do this," Bai E said with enthusiasm.

The tasks that needed to be done were still far ahead, but the fresh ability that could be touched right now always brought joy.

"Hmm~"

That's okay.

Last night, he had just broken through, so it was not like he had mastered all the techniques of the second stage without a teacher; that would really make people doubt the reality of the world.

Yue Ying let out a sigh of relief, and her tone became a bit more lively, "The so-called Spiritual Energy storage is based on your Spiritual Body 'fixing' a space around your body."

The nature of high-dimensional space is energetic and subjective.

In that magical place, a thought with a certain energy foundation could shape reality out of thin air.

Upon reaching the second stage, Spiritual Energy practitioners can use their thoughts to mold their own reality.

Fixing the 'space' around the Spiritual Body into a real spatial property that could adapt to and store objects from the material world was the application of this creation.

The size of the space, the types of objects it could hold, and so on, all had to be determined by the creator's own will and level.

Some powerful Spiritual Energy practitioners had storage spaces that could reach hundreds of cubic meters, and could even hold living persons for short periods; while others could only store small, simple-structured, and singular substance dead objects in a very small space.

In the 'world' observed by the pure Spiritual Body, Yue Ying's will conveyed through the slight vibrations of Spiritual Energy directly allowed Bai E to learn and understand.

"...The size of the area you can affect is the size of your storage space. As your level of Spiritual Energy increases in the future, you might be able to slightly expand this space, but the 'space' you are initially able to delineate often reflects your natural talent."

[You are learning skills related to Spiritual Energy...]

[Triggered a tutoring task—Spiritual Energy Storage.]

[Tutoring task—Spiritual Energy Storage: In the world of Spiritual Energy, anything is possible, and you can even shape reality in this world. Task requirement: Follow Yue Ying's guide to complete the creation of your storage space. Task completion reward: Spiritual Energy +5/5, Storage Space Quality +1.]

"You can use Spiritual Energy to analyze and deconstruct my storage space to assist you in this process. The techniques of the second stage are quite challenging, so don't be disappointed if you don't make much progress tonight."

"Oh~"

Spiritual Energy tentacles touched the tangible "cube" that the other party intentionally displayed, and the thick barrier separated reality from illusion, protecting everything within to exist undisturbed.

So elves wear underwear too...

[You are spending combat experience to analyze and deconstruct the target's constructed storage space...]

[Current deconstruction progress: 1%]

...

[Current deconstruction progress: 11%]

...

Time was as tranquil as water, quietly flowing by.

As long as one is willing to spend experience, no learning task is too difficult.

If insight is not enough, experience makes up for it.

Enough experience became a solid understanding and merged into Bai E's instincts, so the knack for shaping the barrier arose effortlessly in his mind.

The power of Spiritual Energy began to trace out lines of light, and those invisible pathways converged to form transparent "wall bodies" that refracted the scenery and were built around the Spiritual Body as the center.

The attributes of reality were imparted in a moment, and the barrier separating illusion from material divided space into two mutually exclusive areas.

[Current deconstruction progress: 100%, you have thoroughly completed the analysis of the target space and successfully established your own storage space.]

With a gentle swipe of the fingertips through the air, Bai E could feel his degree of control over this space.

In the process of establishing the space, countless authorities concerning "reality" were naturally granted, so that the space he controlled was as complete and self-consistent as a real material world, with logic that was complete and precise yet immutable.

[You have successfully established your own storage space. Reward: Spiritual Energy +5/5, Storage Space Quality +1, has been issued.]

The moment the reward was given, the entire space trembled slightly...

Chapter 432 Side Quest - Slay the Overlord!

If the storage space I had before followed the laws of reality perfectly, able to hold anything that the "real world" could accept, then the storage space that the mission reward had directly upgraded by one tier now had an even more mystical meaning.

It no longer assigned a fixed attribute to everything; it allowed the imagination some freedom to sketch within it to a certain extent.

High-dimensional space seemed to be a completion of the material world, representing the extremes of subjectivity and energy.

Together, they were the true manifestation of the universe's appearance.

And now, in this space within the high-dimensional realm that Bai E had demarcated for himself, this kind of "reality" was also displayed.

It allowed for imagination, for freedom, for the mere existence of the soul, allowing all things to exercise their subjective traits.

So even the laws weren't so rigid anymore...

[Psychic Storage Space: Your world contains both material and energetic characteristics, permitting the existence of all fixed and variable attributes. As the pioneer of this space, you can freely define the rules

of this world in a certain domain, and no matter what your definition is, the world will develop according to that standard as the laws of physics prescribed. (Life needs a bit of imagination, doesn't it?)]

"..."

Is it pretending to be serious?

Bai E's Spiritual Body stroked his own chin, then his eyes brightened, a trace of playfulness arising.

Any law can be established freely and be perfectly self-consistent, right?

Let's see your limits!

"Let the π of this world be 3..."

Annoying non-repeating infinite decimals, let's see who can show off by reciting pi now?

"God" defined the world he created, yet the void of space only slightly vibrated at some unfathomable level, and to outsiders... even to the spiritual bodies within it, no change was perceptible.

Yue Ying felt it was simply too big...

"So huge..." The gracefully shaped Spiritual Body was like a swift fish roaming through the water, the mermaid's slender figure beautifully weaving through the space, all within the scope cast by the defined area.

In the high-dimensional space, some influence on the senses made Yue Ying's perception of space uncertain; she could only use her purely subjective feelings to define the capacity of the storage space created by Bai E—it was at least bigger than hers and possibly much bigger.

But considering it was his... well, that was to be expected.

"It's getting late..." Awareness returned to the physical world, and the sky was already casting a soft white glow. Yue Ying gracefully stood up, back facing Bai E, "Goodbye."

"Goodbye..."

Early morning, assembly.

Having become a regular Mech Pilot, Bai E and other pilots could now normally pilot the Mechs themselves for training, and the little bit of energy consumed during training was negligible compared to the value a regular Mech Pilot could create in combat.

The instructor brought the Mech Pilot who had not shown up until now, also piloting a standard Mecha, standing in front of a few other towering Mechas.

The voice was transmitted to the ears of each warrior who had already been chosen as official Mech Pilots through the cockpit's loudspeaker, "Congratulations on becoming official Mech Pilots of our armored battalion. But don't get cocky, this is just the first step on the path of a Mech Pilot. Being selected is not the end. The military camp has spent the most resources on you, and you must also achieve greater victories on the battlefield for the camp. I can now reveal some information to you—"

"The Military Department has been planning the second total attack on the Bug Race's hive, and before that, our armored battalion must ensure that it provides a decisive force capable of turning the tide of battle at the last moment!"

"During the last strike on the Bug hive, I believe all of you present here were there. That giant bug that appeared at the last moment is our final barrier to conquering the hive. And you are the absolute candidates to behead that 'Overlord'!"

[Secondary Mission Triggered—Slay the Overlord.]

[Secondary Mission—Slay the Overlord: The Overlord giant bug represents the strongest force currently exhibited by the hive. If you can defeat this powerful beast, then you truly hold the hope of destroying the Bug hive. As part of the armored forces capable of manipulating mankind's mightiest weapons of war, this difficult task is your bounden duty. Mission requirement: Slay the hive "Overlord" 0/1 during the second comprehensive war against the hive. Mission completion reward: General experience 10,000 points, title—Scourge of the Bug Race.]

"" The unexpected hint triggered by the mission made Bai E, sitting inside the cockpit, pause for a moment.

A reward... a title?

This was an unprecedented type of reward, and judging by the equivalent experience rewards, it was obviously a task of extreme difficulty.

Would he need to manipulate the Mecha to kill that monster that had seemed almost invincible last time?

Gripping the mechanical lever in his hand, Bai E suddenly felt the pressure rise, as a clear mission prompt always seemed more compelling than vague conjectures and goals.

"Train hard," Bai E suddenly urged.

The birth of a Mech Soul requires continuous contact for at least 48 hours; Mechas that haven't awakened their Mech Soul yet don't know how much assistance they can provide after the awakening.

Having accessed high-level Mecha combat techniques, Bai E realized that with his current level of ability, it was difficult to perform those intricately micro-managed advanced tactical actions while operating a Mecha alone, let alone perfectly apply them in real combat. Rose's presence was indispensable to him at this point.

One person was not enough to perfectly operate the Mecha; with two people, Rose's performance was the upper limit of their combined abilities.

"Yes," sensing the sudden solemnity in Bai E's tone, the already serious Rose became even more resolute.

The instructor's voice continued to ring out in the comm, "Now that you are all familiar with the basic tactical maneuvers, real combat training is the fastest way to improve yourselves! Starting now, you'll pair off for bouts, with the objective of crippling the opposing Mecha's ability to move. By sunset tonight, I want to see one Mecha still standing on this earth! And as a reward for the victor, the only remaining Mecha will earn the right to face me in direct combat!"

The oct-metal alloy used in making Mechas is certainly the finest metal that the technology of this era can create, but the mechanical structures that make up a Mecha are not as sturdy as the alloy itself. When considering only the mobility of the Mecha, damaging and repairing is not so difficult.

Controlling the power of weapons in such a manner that one avoids causing extensive damage to the frame is not an easy task either.

But...

"This is a training method I've never heard of before..." a Mech Pilot with broad experience from a previous reserve class murmured in a daze.

His comrade stroked his chin, pondering, "Maybe it's because the war is coming, and there's no time for gradual training?"

...

Inside the cockpit, the instructor watched the representative of the Mechanical Court hanging beside him carefully, "Your Honor... do you think this is acceptable?"

Chapter 433 Massacre!

The elder of the Mechanical Court hummed, still quietly observing the outside world through the porthole.

Beyond the transparent glass porthole, towering mechas stood firmly upon the earth.

Two mechas, their blue and white liveries facing each other, allowed their mech pilots to see one another through the portholes of their cockpits, positioned at the same height.

"Let's smash them to pieces today!"

An old-guard mech pilot from the previous batch of reserves came forward with a fierce smile on his lips.

The top brass must have gone mad to allow artificial humans to lay their hands on the city's greatest technological creation, perhaps it was the disgusting strife among the factions that made their superiors hold their noses and compromise, but as proud natural humans, they should make the higher-ups see the folly of their decision.

To prevent more mistakes in the future, and to keep their honorable group of mech pilots from being tainted by impure elements, they had to demonstrate the absolute superiority of natural humans in this field!

Moreover, in the selection the day before, their artificial human opponent had the audacity to speak up and steal their thunder!

According to the normal sequence, the first group to complete the selection and become official mech pilots should have been theirs!

Artificial humans... should only crawl on the ground and look up.

"Begin!" The instructor's command came through the loudspeaker, short and precise, and with a "buzz" of activation, almost all the mechas charged at their opponents simultaneously.

The bulky mechas were sluggish in their movements; nearly all of them tried to strike their opponents like slow-motion human actions.

Although the instructor taught them to fight with the mecha as if it were their own body when unfamiliar with its performance, the built-in power units in many parts of the mecha allow it to perform movements that are difficult for the human body, thus providing more room for improvisation.

Many mech pilots tacitly chose to unleash their boundless imagination, making the entire sparring session look like a chaotic dance of demons.

After all, strictly speaking, this was everyone's first real contact with a mecha, and whether the moves they tried in simulators could be executed as flawlessly in reality remained to be seen.

The instructor also endorsed this experimentation, appearing unconcerned by the initial chaos.

In fact, setting aside a whole day was meant for them to "play;" the overall performance of the mecha was to be gradually mastered in relentless exploration and trial.

Only one group's battle stood out as precise and efficient.

The moment the battle began, one of the mechas instantly activated and charged at its opponent, executing a classic combat move—a gleaming alloy sword reflected blinding sunlight in its hand.

Simple, but deadly.

As the sole highlight in the chaos, it naturally caught the instructor's attention.

"Not bad in basics."

The monotonous killing movements were simple and sharp, just the kind of directness and decisiveness soldiers on the battlefield loved.

While it was accepted for these newly promoted official mech pilots to explore and experiment during training, the practiced standard techniques were still pleasing to the eye.

Only... it was fleeting.

"Buzz!"

"Whoosh!"

"Boom!"

The blue and white livery flashed by, and the mecha that had been poised to attack found itself behind its charging opponent.

The mecha that had fallen to the ground did not lose all mobility; initially, they thought they had tripped over their own feet and so tried to get up leveraging the strength of their limbs, only to hear the piercing alarm accompanying the flashing fault light inside the cockpit.

The mecha's self-check system provided the answer—damage to the transmission of the right leg, damage to the third and fourth internal power sources of the right leg.

"..."

The loss of some functionality in the mecha's right leg did not stop the overall movement to stand up, it just appeared somewhat uncoordinated.

However, the mecha that swept behind would not just watch its opponent crawl out from a disadvantage; the newly drawn alloy sword, cutting through the soft white light of the morning, effortlessly thrust once again into the gaps of the mecha's joints.

The octal alloy that comprised the entire mecha was undoubtedly stalwart, but just as the human body has weaknesses like joints and cartilage, to ensure the dexterity equivalent to a human body, the vital areas that provide space for movement could not be protected with heavy armor.

These areas should have been protected by the mech pilot's skills, however, if the pilot wasn't consciously guarding these critical junctions, and the opponent was intent on targeting them, then defeat could occur in the blink of an eye.

"Crack!"

The bursting sound of mechanical cables was particularly grating this morning, as the sharp alloy saber caught on the opponent's mecha head once again in a turn.

Two mechas stood back to back, but one mecha had its saber reversed, jamming into the opponent's neck, with its left hand grasping the opponent's head to prevent any escape.

"Zzt!"

The saber forcefully sliced through, sending cables flying.

Of course, a mecha's head was not as crucial as a human head; whether it was the cockpit or the power source, those were located within the main torso of the mecha's large frame. The head was more about fitting human self-recognition of "human form" and accommodating some weapon systems.

Loss of the head meant losing control over many weapons, but it didn't mean the complete loss of combat capability.

This was undoubtedly a humiliation!

A brief exchange was not enough for the mech pilot to recognize the gap in strength between them. The flames of anger had just begun to cling to his eyes when the piercing alarm that resounded in the cockpit, like cold water, interrupted them.

— — Weapon system damaged!

— — Power system damaged!

— Left arm transmission damaged!

— Power transmission damaged!

...

A dense mass of red flashes on the three-dimensional structural diagram representing the mecha's overall condition blinded both pilots, as the opponent didn't cease attacking despite the "beheading."

A single alloy saber with its limited power couldn't completely incapacitate a mecha, so the opponent launched an attack reminiscent of a violent storm with a series of relentless hits.

These vibrations weren't particularly significant, but each one signaled another red damaged area lighting up on the mecha.

Like a butcher carving up an ox, a once fully-capable mecha was reduced to a "wreck" after repeated offenses.

Watching what seemed to be a one-sided slaughter, the stunned instructor finally blurted out in haste, "That's enough, the repairs will cost a fortune!"

Is it normal for a functioning mecha to be so completely damaged? This is going to have the Logistics Department cursing, isn't it?

"Oh~" Bai E responded lightly, standing up and picking up his saber.

Turning off the voice system, he turned to look at Rose, "Feel anything yet?"

Rose's cheeks were flushed with excitement as she nodded vigorously, "Yeah!"

That's the way! Only real combat like this can speed up her progress!

She couldn't see her proficiency progress bar, but she knew that she was quickly catching up to Bai E's pace!

Rose's gaze turned toward the other two pairs still locked in one-on-one combat, her eyes ablaze with fervor.

Boys! Are you ready?

As they were eagerly engaging with their own mechas in battle, an unexpected intruder suddenly joined in.

This caused dissatisfaction among the original opponents—

"What are you doing? You've brought the fight over to us?"

"Move aside, don't interrupt our training."

Bai E activated the team voice chat, greeting them with a laugh, "It's boring with too few people, let us join in."

Chapter 434 Instructor is too strong!

"This won't do," said a visitor from the Mechanical Court, who had been quietly observing, his voice calm.

"Indeed, it won't," the instructor agreed, nodding, "Isn't this disrupting everyone else's training?"

"Let the rest join in. Otherwise, the training won't be effective."

The Mech Pilots he favored were on a completely different level compared to the other regular Mech Pilots; continuing with one-on-one fights or even free-for-alls would not help them improve.

Only a just group beating could show their true limits!

"Oh~" the instructor grunted, surprised that the senior was concerned not with the feelings of all the students, but...

No matter then.

The instructor knew that the cooperation between the artificial Mech Pilots was very tacit, and their past performance had been quite good, but he had not expected them to be this formidable... It seemed, probably, that they had surpassed his own level?

No wonder the esteemed visitor from the Mechanical Court paid them such close attention after having rejected them before.

"Cough cough!"

The Mech Pilot who was interrupted by Bai E fell silent, and suddenly heard the instructor's order coming through the cockpit's speaker, "All students, heed my command. Your only task is to take down W0721! I repeat, take down W0721! All remaining students, join forces to take down W0721!"

"..."

Only then did the four remaining Mechas, engrossed in playing with their respective opponents, notice the "wrecked Mecha" lying in the distance.

The noise of swallowing saliva seemed especially clear in the quiet cockpit after the instructor finished his order, "Oh dear."

"It's already been smashed to pieces?"

As their gaze shifted back to the Mecha that had unexpectedly intervened in their game, the determination in the Mech Pilots' eyes within the cockpit solidified.

They admitted that there was a certain objective disparity in their skills, but for the instructor to have them four against one, was he not underestimating them too much...

"Wuuu, I'm trash!"

"Stop, stop, if it breaks, what if we can't fix it by tomorrow?"

"Can't beat it... simply can't beat it..."

Even the righteous four-against-one was no match for the Mecha operated by two artificial humans.

The collisions between Mechas did not seem too perilous, unlike the human body where offense often outweighs defense; on a Mecha, defense generally exceeds offense.

The restraint by other teammates meant that the offensive of the artificial Mech Pilots could not be as relentless as in a one-on-one confrontation.

However, the intensity of their operation never waned, and to their horror, they realized that as the battle progressed, the offensive might of this opponent, akin to a great demon, became increasingly fierce.

Once reaching a certain base limit, the Mecha's movements became a bit smoother and more efficient, the required control intensity escalated in a step-wise fashion.

This meant that the opponent was growing rapidly in the midst of battle!

Of course, a certain amount of pressure can provide motivation, but an overwhelming disparity can only lead to complete despair.

"I give up!"

The defeated Mechas did not stand up again, and seeing the significant gap, they gave up resistance.

Thus, the blue-and-white Mecha rose from among their four and turned its back, walking towards the Mecha of instructor Xie, who had been observing the battle from a distance.

Partial performance damage to the Mechas did not hinder their ability to enjoy the scene. The pilots lying in the cockpits settled into comfortable positions and awaited what promised to be quite a spectacle.

"They're really going to fight the instructor?"

"I think they're getting too cocky..."

...

"Holy shit! That's awesome! They can actually fight the instructor!"

...

"Holy shit! The instructor is incredible! He can actually last so long against the two of them!"

...

"Tsk! The instructor is still the one!"

...

The battle between the two mechas lasted for almost an hour, and in the end, it concluded with one mecha limping and with a broken arm, securing the final victory.

The charred cockpit, spewing sparks, suddenly opened, and from within emerged two young figures. The instructor's voice came out from the intact speaker, "Everyone is dismissed, free to act on their own... those willing to wait, stay here for the repair team to come."

No one expected that a common training session would end up scrapping all seven mechas dispatched for the exercise.

["Lucky Strike" energy +11.]

"Thank you, Instructor Xie."

After a casual greeting, Bai E and Rose leapt out of the cockpit and headed for the grass off to the side.

With the freedom to act on their own, of course they had to check out Black Street.

Witnessing the retreating backs of the two synthetic soldiers, the only standing, heavily damaged mecha seemed to finally reach its limit and collapsed with a thunderous crash.

Inside the cockpit, the instructor, with a face full of shame, apologized profusely to the esteemed member of the Mechanical Court beside him, "I'm sorry, Sir, I've let you down."

If it weren't for his inability to keep up with the combat instruction output frequency, this fight with the students wouldn't have been so challenging.

The grey-lipped representative from the Mechanical Court merely moved his lips and finally patted the instructor on the shoulder, "Train more in the future."

It looked like he hesitated for a moment before adding, "But you're probably reaching your limit already."

Without undergoing perfect mechanical augmentation, one cannot control a mecha perfectly.

...

"I'm sorry for holding you back," Rose said apologetically. She had thought they would be able to defeat the instructor directly in their first training session, but the instructor proved to have some tricks up his sleeve, worthy of his role.

Bai E shook his head with a sigh, "The main reason is the instructor's prowess."

Through his engagements with other mech pilots, Bai E had formed an understanding of his own strength. With the enhancement of his various abilities, he felt there were hardly any rivals left for him in mecha control. Yet he hadn't anticipated that simply facing an armored camp instructor would be so difficult.

Although Rose's not keeping up with him contributed to their difficulty, even if it were two of him controlling the mecha together, they likely couldn't quickly and easily defeat the instructor.

It was said that the real mecha experts were in the Mechanical Court. If an armored camp instructor was this tough to beat, just how formidable were the senior mech pilots in the Mechanical Court?

It seemed that the advanced tactical maneuvers they were given to attempt that day were indeed just the basics of the basics. The strength of the Mechanical Court's senior mech pilots would be much more terrifying!

This world still had depths yet to be explored!

If one wanted to rise from nothing, how could they possibly rule over all without being peerless in martial prowess?

However, increasing one's strength wasn't an overnight feat. Turning his mood lighter, Bai E strode forward, "Let's go! I'll take you to Black Street to have a look."

After dealing with the hidden threats on Nova the night before, he had left her in Black Street and wondered whether she could lay low quietly without him there.

With her strength, if she acted recklessly, or even just whimsically, no one in Black Street at the moment could subdue her—it was always a worrying, unstable factor.

"Yeah!" replied Rose cheerfully. Her voice was light with excitement in his ears.

She rarely had the chance to leave the camp and had been quite intrigued by Black Street as mentioned by Bai E.

Chapter 435 confrontations

"Bai, Bai, Bai..."

Listening to the incantation-like muttering by his ear, even the composed Gilder couldn't help but feel a headache coming on.

"The master won't abandon you," said the Mousefolk at Gilder's side, glancing carefully at the delicate girl who resembled a porcelain doll and, hearing her unremitting muttering, couldn't help but whisper soothingly.

The master would never let down any "companion" related to him; this belief was the Mousefolk's creed up to this day.

That's why...

He and his sister had said their final goodbyes.

The lady from the Arbitration Place did not provide an exact time for action, so to prevent an unexpected departure one day, the Mousefolk only wanted to see his sister for the last time before... calmly facing death.

From this moment on, every day would be his last.

So even listening to the continuous "curses" of the intriguing character seemed quite interesting.

Perhaps the reassurance was effective, as the white-haired sister, who had been fussing like a child, suddenly fell silent.

Her eyes, clear as crystal, suddenly looked in a certain direction, steady and focused, whether contemplating or simply daydreaming...

The Mousefolk looked curiously in the direction of her gaze, but could only see a wall.

It couldn't be that she was staring blankly at a wall, right?

"Shh~"

Nova suddenly stood up, her small face stern.

Her level of Spiritual Energy was top-notch even among second-tier practitioners, especially after Bai E surgically removed the tracker from her body, which had suppressed part of her Spiritual Energy. With it now fully unleashed, she was more adept with her Spiritual Energy than ever before.

A skilled Spiritual Energy practitioner would never neglect observation of their surroundings, let alone Nova, whose level was high enough to constantly spread her Spiritual Energy around her to sense changes in the environment.

Therefore, an "anomaly" that suddenly intruded into her spread field of Spiritual Energy was enough to draw attention.

Anything that completely resisted her Spiritual Energy sensing was either a master or an enemy!

Or more likely an enemy's master!

This was Bai's territory, and in his absence, it was her duty to protect it!

After a blur of motion, an afterimage flitted past Gilder and the rest.

"Captain!" The acting captain and the boy called out sharply and swiftly gave chase.

Before they could discern what was happening outside, the sound of bodies colliding resounded.

"Bang, bang, bang, bang!"

Between the two swiftly intertwining figures, each exchange was full of immense physical strength. Nova's close combat skills had always been strong; it was just that she happened to meet Bai E before.

And now, encountering Rose was like a needle meeting wheat awn.

The collision of pure physical force more vividly showcased the wild power of the human body, a direct visual impact that mechanical warfare, firearms, or even Spiritual Energy could not provide.

Xu Ruoguang, who was leading a patrol not far away, heard the commotion and quickly brought his team over.

Upon swiftly noticing the figure of the master watching the fight with serenity, he gestured to stop his men, who were about to step forward and intervene.

With the master there, nobody could turn the sky upside down.

Watching the battle between two NPCs who were obviously masters, Xu Ruoguang's eyes shone with longing.

Unlike other players who felt detached from the NPCs' strength... no player took the power of NPCs seriously, focusing only on other players who entered the game at the same time.

After all, no matter how strong an NPC is, isn't that just a string of code?

Even in-game plot kills were countless. High-level NPCs were there to be watched; more importantly, what help or quest rewards they could offer to the player.

Strength... it was just a backdrop to make those things logically consistent.

But he was different.

Among the NPCs, the master... controlled the real world!

"Boom!"

Even though they knew they were being watched, the two, as if real fire had been ignited, had no intention of sparing their opponent.

Following a brief visible charging motion, a medium-sized figure suddenly appeared on the scene and stood between the two combatants at the peak of their explosion.

Under the fierce clash of powers, even the air trembled, yet that figure remained unmoved, as if completely unaffected.

Bai E smiled and pulled the two together, shaking his somewhat sore arms before saying, "We're on the same side, getting to know each other will do."

"Yes." Seeing Bai E, Nova smiled shyly and obediently.

The moment she made a move against the "intruder," she had already seen Bai E.

Bai also possessed Spiritual Energy, and his level of Spiritual Energy was not low; even within his own realm of Spiritual Energy emission, she couldn't detect him immediately.

Knowing the person was brought by Bai, she had already planned to back off, but after initiating the attack, she had to consider whether the other party was willing to cease fighting.

Clearly, Rose, who was suddenly attacked, reacted very swiftly.

Without any warning, she naturally didn't hold back against the assailant. And what if she saw it was Nova? What then?

All she knew was that the day before, Bai E had left Nova aside. Maybe Nova had harbored thoughts of betrayal after receiving some information about Bai E in Blackwater City. Otherwise, why would she suddenly attack her, and with such a ferocious move?

Dare to betray? Then killing is the answer!

Without communication, when one party does not hold back, the other must respond with their full strength.

In their last fight, Nova's only opponent was Bai E, where Spiritual Energy could still be of some use.

But now, facing Rose, the illusionary Spiritual Energy was as inconsequential as a gentle breeze on a mountain or moonlight on a river.

Only the small part of Spiritual Energy that enhanced her basic attributes could truly exert a bit of the power of Spiritual Energy.

The combat situation was intense.

If not for Bai E's intervention, the outcome would likely have been mutually assured destruction.

Standing in front of Bai E, glancing at Nova close by, excitement was the dominant expression in Rose's eyes, with just a hint of wariness.

This was the second opponent she had faced who could exert such pressure on her in close combat.

Good!

"Continue patrolling," Bai E motioned to Xu Ruoguang, who was leading the team watching the show from not too far away.

Nova's presence shouldn't be exposed to too many people. The "Doctor" from Grey Iron City, having learned of Nova's disappearance, might take unforeseen actions.

They needed to stay vigilant until the opponent made an appearance.

And moreover... with so many people witnessing, it seemed that exposure had inevitably occurred?

'My fault...'

He had not expected Nova to have such a strong sense of guarding her territory.

Interested in assessing the strength of the two, he hadn't interrupted immediately.

"Let's go inside."

...

In a dark corner, a figure clad in a black leather jacket reported back in a calm tone, devoid of any ripples.

"Doctor, confirmed, it's the prime subject!"

Chapter 436 Unexpected News

"Should we capture her and bring her back?" the black-clad guard asked with an icy tone.

They had been in the vicinity of Blackwater City for more than a day, but in search of Primary Number Zero, they had spread their forces to various gatherings on the city's outskirts to gather intelligence, all for this very moment.

"No rush," the doctor deliberated briefly, then raised a hand to signal a halt.

Perhaps he could cover the sky with one hand in Grey Iron City, but in Blackwater City, it was impossible to wield the same level of authority.

The locals' regard for his stature was uncertain, let alone for someone who was merely pursuing a "defector" whose factuality was still in debate.

Even if the people of Blackwater City recognized his significance, whether they would obediently find and return the desired target was even more doubtful.

All these uncertainties made it preferable to conduct covert inquiries rather than rely on the people of Blackwater City for assistance.

Primary Number Zero was inherently uncontrollable, a trait determined by her natural characteristics.

As long as she was here, she was bound to leave traces.

Now that Primary Number Zero's presence here was confirmed, everything else was no concern.

Since Primary Number Zero couldn't be destroyed, it was better to first observe the core reasons behind her defection and identify the forces currently sheltering her.

Even if it did come down to drawing on the city's power, with more intelligence at his disposal, he would have greater leverage during negotiations.

"Continue monitoring the area where Primary Number Zero has appeared."

"Yes!" The black leather-clad guard responded with vigor.

The doctor, also dressed in a black leather trench coat, adjusted his black gloves, put on sunglasses and a hat, and strode toward the area reported to have sightings of Primary Number Zero.

To be able to "subdue" Primary Number Zero, even if only temporarily or to gain her trust, one must possess some abilities.

'Let me see, what kind of person is capable of taking away Primary Number Zero?'

...

With tonight's cautionary events, Bai E decided not to make Nova a regular member of Black Street's defense force like Xu Ruoguang.

He didn't even plan to assign her any formal duties. Until the complications surrounding her were fully resolved, Bai E intended to position her as Black Street's final line of defense, only to be deployed in situations no one else could handle.

Or perhaps... to serve as a mentor in Spiritual Energy for the players?

He had a unique advantage over other natives in that he truly understood the player community.

The stronger the players guided by him, the better, and if their level of Spiritual Energy could quickly reach the second stage, they would be the ideal candidates for exploring higher-dimensional spaces.

But clearly, Gong Yan and Gu Lan, who ranked amongst the top players, were still a significant distance from reaching the second stage of Spiritual Energy; depending on them was not a viable option for now.

And with just him teaching, he could impact a limited number of players. Mobilizing more formidable natives to provide opportunities for progression to the players was another matter he needed to consider.

Of course, this was contingent on first resolving the crisis with Nova.

Furthermore, he must remain vigilant... The title "Children of the Demon" attributed to players wasn't unfounded. The reasons behind those who transformed into formidable demons through contact with players remained unclear.

Bai E wouldn't abandon his approach out of fear. Even if there were cases of transformation into demonic elect through contact with players, it didn't justify completely severing communication with them.

After all... he hadn't experienced it personally.

Was it an absolute exception, or were there subtleties or characteristics he hadn't yet detected?

That remained to be verified.

He always had to try. Events occurring close by were easier to observe and control.

Bai E's visit to Black Street this time was specifically to settle Nova's presence.

Having made a decision and arranged everything properly, Bai E headed straight back to camp.

Even when idle, high-level physical training always brought steady attribute improvement; in this era, one needed to race against the torrent of time, not wasting a single minute or second.

...

"Captain!"

However, upon returning to the camp, Bai E was immediately greeted by the already waiting You.

"Minister Eric has something to discuss with you, but it seems... it's not very urgent," You informed with a calm tone, merely delivering the message.

This kind of thing had happened before during the previous rest period; Bai E could choose to attend or not, usually being invited to observe whatever new discoveries were made.

It was good if Bai E could learn something or contribute some creative ideas, but not going was of no consequence to either party.

When there was serious business, Bai E naturally declined; now that he had some free time, he could afford to maintain the relationship.

"Hmm... I'll head over now."

"Good, the vehicle is waiting for you in the west area."

The regular mech pilot squad had returned from morning training, but Bai E's figure was nowhere to be seen.

As the time for afternoon training approached, Bai E usually made it back around this time.

You, familiar with Bai E's habits and informed of this information, had already made arrangements and anticipated Bai E's response.

After interacting with Bai E for so long, she had grown into the role of a considerate little secretary.

Only Rose stood beside You, watching Bai E's retreating figure and clicking her tongue, "Tsk~ really busy."

"Mm~" You responded softly, her eyes slightly lost in thought as she watched that upright figure, "The captain is indeed very tired..."

Every minute... Every second.

...

The vehicle slowly drove through the city; the Scientific Research Institute, although not in the city center, still belonged to the inner city.

Bai E watched the streets passing by on both sides of the road, everything seemingly no different from his previous life... only the occasional black crevices in the buildings revealed the real depth of this metropolis.

The underground city, extending deep into unknown depths, was even more a core part of this city.

The outside world was far too dangerous, and the cost of expanding the city walls wasn't justified by the benefits, so digging downwards naturally became the only option for the ever-expanding urban population.

Perhaps even the city's absolute ruler didn't know how deep the lowest parts of the city had reached.

In every crack passed on the surface, it seemed as though countless unknown eyes were observing everything above ground...

"Knock, knock, knock~"

Gently knocking, Bai E stepped in on his own accord.

The staff in the machine room showed no reaction to Bai E's arrival, and Minister Eric, who was chairing the meeting, just glanced over with a light smile, continuing his speech—

"Regarding the special message that was transmitted from the internet root server, what are everyone's thoughts?"

No sooner had he finished speaking than a researcher abruptly stood up, "A purely virtual world that exists outside of the network? I think it's impossible!"

Chapter 437 Plans to Set Out Again

No sooner had the voice fallen than another researcher spoke up in agreement, "Yes! A world completely independent of the electronic network, what does it rely on to operate?"

Since it's a pure virtual world without the support of computing power provided by the electronic network, how are the various rules within it supposed to function like a tree without roots, or duckweed in the wind?

According to the message from the server center, this suddenly appearing virtual world was detected by the server center's personnel because it was "stealing" the server's computing power resources.

But prior to this, what "thing" was it relying on to ensure the operation of this "world"?

Another researcher stood up, voicing a different opinion, "But the urgent matter is not to discuss the possibility of this affair's existence, but rather that the server center sent this message hoping for our support. We should be figuring out how to deal with this 'suddenly discovered' virtual world, not proving its existence... especially since it already exists and has appeared before us."

"No! It's not before our eyes." A researcher corrected the mistake in the statement, "It's 'a message' sent from the server center. We are precisely in the process of confirming the accuracy of this message, otherwise how can we request resources to address this sudden request? I believe none of us want to

see a repeat of the last incident when an 'unknown force' cut off and replaced our communication signal!"

The reference was indeed to the last operation when Bai E and other special squads joined forces to capture the sand worm.

Behind every successful or failed operation, reasons must be sought and experiences summed up.

This was part of their duties in the Information Department; no one would shirk it.

To claim ignorance the first time failure occurred could be acceptable, but a similar incident recurring would be an inescapable responsibility of theirs.

"So until more messages are received and the truth of this message confirmed, any action would be an irresponsible decision!"

Minister Eric furrowed his brows tightly; he had a guess in his mind but was reluctant to voice it at this moment.

After all, it pertained to the electronic demon, and even though the demon had been thoroughly eradicated by them, "Its" existence was not something every ordinary researcher was entitled to know.

Just as he was about to use his authority as minister to forcefully stop the dispute, a loud noise suddenly erupted from the doorway.

"Bang!"

The tightly closed door was suddenly pushed open with great force amidst the noisy debate, and a tall, thin man wearing a black coat, whom Bai E somewhat remembered, strode into the research room.

"Who are you?"

"This is not a place for random people to enter. Get out!" A researcher near the door, annoyed at having his proposal rejected by others, let out his temper on the newcomer.

"Shut up!" Eric's eyes brightened at the sight of the visitor, he immediately stopped the reckless rebuke of his subordinate researcher, and then turned to the man greeted him with excitement, "Lord Pansen."

Yes... Pansen.

Bai E also found the face from his memory — indeed, it was Pansen, the Spiritual Energy user who had assisted them in covert operations during their raid on the server ruins!

At the last moment of destroying the electronic demon, this powerful Spiritual Energy user had briefly connected to the terrifying and complex mental maelstrom of the electronic demon, and when they returned to camp, his life and death were uncertain. Now seeing him again...

He seemed to have gained a few more curiously distinct traits.

Even though the other's gaze was not on him, Bai E felt as if countless "eyes" in every direction around him were tightly monitoring his every move, inescapable.

... And he seemed even thinner than before.

Bai E's gaze quietly observed the hem of the other's coat, not showing much surprise.

The sudden arrival of Pansen had his reasons—

"The message you all heard is true."

His calm words were full of convincing meaning.

The power of Spiritual Energy surged within.

Feeling the gentle breeze-like nourishing power of the Spiritual Energy proverbs, Bai made no move to resist.

Thus, they took the other party's words as absolute truth, not without reason.

Feeling the feedback from the Spiritual Energy, Pansen knew no one doubted his words, a hint of satisfaction flashing in the depths of his silent eyes.

Last time, what seemed like a reckless act of rashly interfacing with the psychic tumult of a digital devil yielded him a rich reward.

This is the opportunity of those with Spiritual Energy.

Crisis is also a blessing.

They are two sides of the same coin, often the two facets of the same event.

The risk he took with such a reckless action could have scattered his psyche in the chaotic flow of the spiritual world, but if he could ensure that his Spiritual Energy remained unyielding, then his soul, once tempered, would only grow stronger.

Fortunately, he was the latter.

When an opportunity presented itself, not a single person with Spiritual Energy could control their impulse to explore the unknown.

And luckily, he returned.

He also became one of the very few in the city with the three-stage Spiritual Energy.

An understanding of Spiritual Energy realms utterly incomprehensible to ordinary people gave him the power to completely control the life and death of ordinary people, not to mention mere verbal bewitchment.

Like Minister Eric, he was unwilling to divulge details about it.

There are many things that are better off unknown to the common person for the sake of the world.

Once they know, they have thoughts.

In a world where having thoughts could either attract demons or trigger "changes," knowing too much is also a risk.

Better to brute-force their acceptance with the use of Spiritual Energy.

The exchanged glances between Minister Eric and Pansen were brief, their mutual understanding unspoken.

Where could the Digital World have been before the digital devil was exterminated? Where else could it be?

Beyond the digital devils that were wiped out, they desired nothing else.

Now that the digital devils have dissipated, the Digital World, without the "power" to sustain it, can only actively or passively "seek" an energy source.

The problem is—

"How should we deal with it?"

"See if we can capture it!" The researcher, who had just questioned its authenticity, suddenly lit up with excitement, the unknown always being the most captivating, "The mysteries of the Digital World might just be unraveled!"

"We could use this Digital World to discover more about the applications of the internet."

"That's what I mean," Pansen whispered as he approached Minister Eric.

This was also his reason for coming.

The "legacy" of the digital devils, for someone like him who had advanced to the three-stage Spiritual Energy because of them, held an especially fatal attraction.

"Then we go again!" Eric's eyes hardened with resolve as he made the decision.

Turning his head to Bai E, "And it just so happens that Captain Bai is here..."

Chapter 438 Restriction of identity

As a comrade who had gone on a mission together and performed outstandingly, Bai E's performance undoubtedly secured full trust from Minister Eric.

Moreover, this trust became even more persuasive as Bai E's position within the military camp advanced.

From initially an ordinary member who even needed to use backdoor connections to join the special operations team, he became the captain of a special squad and even possessed the highest coordination authority in times of emergency, which undoubtedly proved his vision.

Faced once again with matters related to those ruins, even if Bai E was not here, Minister Eric would most likely find a way to contact him.

Following the minister's gaze, Pansen, who had just been promoted to a third-level Spiritual Energy user, also looked over.

He too had a certain impression of this comrade who had performed superbly in special operations multiple times.

However, faced with the other's eager gaze, Bai E could not agree immediately, "I need to go back and apply."

Apart from the special squad's organization, he also held the position of a regular Mecha Pilot in the armored battalion.

Unlike how he could directly receive "graduation" qualifications from the instructor after showing certain results in shooting or physical training, his performance in today's training and sparring with the instructor was slightly inferior, obviously not satisfying enough to "graduate."

For a soldier, participating in daily designated training is an unquestionable duty.

After becoming a regular Mech Pilot, operating the mecha for daily training became his primary task, even tasks from the special squad had to be deferred.

To actively apply for a special mission was likely not an easy matter.

"Is that so..." Eric mused for a moment.

Having listened to Bai E's explanation, he knew he couldn't insist.

The information department didn't have much say within the Military Department, and the few favors they could call in wouldn't likely be spent on matters of little importance.

He truly wanted the comparatively "well-understood" Bai E to collaborate with him on the operation, but if the cost was too great, then Bai E wasn't irreplaceable to that extent.

"Okay, I understand," Eric nodded and then turned to look at Pansen.

"So, Lord Pansen, do you also intend to join us?"

Pansen shifted his gaze from Bai E, who, in his eyes, had been a minor character, and who, even now as a "captain," was still too insignificant for a third-level Spiritual Energy user.

The other was improving, but he was advancing faster.

A mere ant, nothing to concern himself with.

When Minister Eric turned the question back to him, he simply nodded indifferently, "Of course."

"When are you available? Shall we coordinate our schedules?"

"Probably about a week..." Pansen contemplated briefly before making a decision.

He had just been promoted to third-level, and his foundation was still unstable.

The world of Spiritual Energy was fraught with peril, and staying in the city always left one under the "protection" of "elders." Venturing too far from the city posed certain risks for someone who had just broken through.

In the past, he might have risked his life for a chance at a "future," but now as a third-level Spiritual Energy user, he was almost standing at the apex of the city's food chain. Advancing to the fourth level was elusive, and from then on, he had to prioritize stability, waiting until he became familiar with his newfound power before venturing out.

These detailed internal ramifications, though, did not need to be shared with outsiders.

"Good, then we'll make preparations and you can contact us anytime you're available," Minister Eric decided.

Whatever important matters Lord Pansen had to attend to, they couldn't just leave at a moment's notice.

The research into virtual world subjects had not been completely fruitless in recent years, but could only be described as nearly abandoned.

How could one rely on the network when it wasn't functional, let alone build upon a virtual digital world founded on it?

Even though the interconnected network had been restarted recently, they had yet to research related aspects.

In this brief preparation period, they needed to consult a considerable amount of literature to start relearning and mastering relevant knowledge to ensure that when they reached the site, they could make as accurate judgments as possible based on their observations.

All of these things required preparation.

"Alright!"

'About a week or so?' Bai E stood aside quietly, noting this time frame in his heart.

He certainly wanted to go and see for himself.

Having the highest authority of the Root Server, he saw everything related to this domain as intimately connected to himself.

Furthermore, a "legacy" or rather "trouble" possibly left by an electronic demon definitely warranted his personal inspection.

It was even possible that a solution would require his presence, the one with the highest authority. Bai E was not willing to entrust his fate to others.

But if Minister Eric and his team were to depart now, then naturally he would have no hope of following, and in a short amount of time, he likely wouldn't have any legitimate excuse to organize or go alone to the distant Root Server ruins.

But if there was an extension of time, then he might find an opportunity to maneuver—

Or rather, a chance to demonstrate his abilities.

As long as he could perform to the "graduation" standard, regaining the relative freedom of the special squad shouldn't be a problem.

Seeing that the others had roughly concluded their discussions, and the talk about the "virtual world" was drawing to an end, Bai E turned to take his leave.

There was still time to devise a strategy for the impending excursion to the Root Server ruins, yet an evident trouble loomed close at hand.

Because he had faced the Spiritual Energy incantations of a higher-level Spiritual Energy user without daring to draw special attention, Bai E had chosen to fully accept them, so much so that now his mind was etched with the constant reminder of the reality of the "virtual world."

And the more he tried to "focus" with his will, the more ingrained the impression became.

Yet Bai E was not an ordinary person entirely lacking Spiritual Energy; with a second-level proficiency, he could easily discern this influence from an external force at the level of Spiritual Energy.

It was as if he was looking into a mirror and saw a big, ripe white pimple on his face—so obvious, and seemingly removable.

Spiritual Energy was urging Bai E to deal with this, and doubtlessly... Yue Ying was the best teacher to resolve this issue.

...

"You've come into contact with a third-level Spiritual Energy user?" Yue Ying's eyes narrowed slightly upon hearing Bai E's truthful report.

His young face displayed a serious contemplation that seemed... all the more alluring.

Chapter 439 Backing!

It was clear that a third-class spiritual energy user was an absolute powerhouse, even in her eyes.

Facing the spirit probe of such a person, one needed to guard against not just the dangers presented at the moment.

If any signs of resistance occurred shortly after the event, the active spiritual energy would still faithfully feed back the results to its master's will.

If one didn't want to attract additional attention from the other party, the process of eliminating the influence of this spiritual energy maxim must be done with extreme caution.

"You need to come into contact with a rarely used spiritual energy trick..."

Spiritual energy recall.

[You are learning spiritual energy related skills...]

[Trigger teaching task—Spiritual Energy Recall.]

[Teaching Task—Spiritual Energy Recall: Powerful spiritual energy users can trace the source of memories, wander above time, and directly alter the "past" memories to achieve a certain self-shaping effect they desire. Task completion reward: Spiritual Energy +5/5.]

"This trick can't change much. Normally, spiritual energy users who can control this trick are not easily 'brainwashed' by others. However, if 'brainwashed' due to a significant difference in strength, by the time one has the power to resist, one can no longer distinguish between 'reality' and the 'illusion' imposed by others. It is only in situations like yours that it might be useful."

"Hmm~"

The influence of others' spiritual energy felt like an evil tentacle that was affecting his will at all times, and Bai E could feel it, becoming increasingly accustomed to it.

This growing sense of calm made him uneasy, and the idea of driving it out was also gradually deepening and paradoxically becoming more resigned.

[You are spending combat experience to follow the target's guidance and trace back through the river of memory...]

[Warning: Remember the difference between "the past" and "the present"; what is changed is merely the memory, not the "fact".]

[Current tracing completion: 1%]

...

[Current tracing completion: 50%]

...

[Current tracing completion: 100%]

Yue Ying was undoubtedly the worst and the best teacher Bai E had encountered so far.

An ordinary person would probably not learn much under her guidance, but Bai E could grow the most from her.

Having precisely located the target point, Bai E focused his mind, and the nature of his spiritual energy allowed him to disregard time and space, launching an attack from the present into the past of his memories.

The attack was not a forceful one.

As the current Bai E gently filtered out the influence of the spiritual energy user Pansen from his memories with his spiritual energy, this "war" that wandered through memories finally came to an end.

The "cognition" that had been influenced by the spiritual energy maxim finally returned to his original self.

[You have just engaged in a battle of spiritual energy within memory, and your understanding in this area has greatly improved. Mystery +0.5.]

"Thank you, Teacher." Bai E said respectfully.

As the two spent more time together, this private relationship needed a definite identity for acknowledgment.

Thus, Master was the natural outcome.

The Elf Race does not easily accept this title, but once recognized, it's considered an inviolable promise.

However, at this moment, Yue Ying's face did not show much pride.

Usually, at times like this, Bai E loved to see the expression on the face of the elf miss—a mixture of feigned indifference and uncontrollable joy—but today, only a thoughtful frown was present.

"What's wrong, Teacher?"

Yue Ying's gaze was intense as she glanced at Bai E in front of her.

It wasn't certain if it was an illusion, after all, anything was possible in the world of Spiritual Energy.

But in that brief moment guiding Bai E to trace back his memories, at the far end of the seemingly frail artificial human warrior's memory stream, she saw a vast expanse of... nothingness.

His past... had it been thoroughly and completely modified?

This sudden thought sent Yue Ying into a chill as if she had fallen into an ice cellar, to achieve such an extensive modification... the power of the other party was unimaginable.

Or... was it just a limitation of Spiritual Energy's detection on the delicate soul of an artificial human warrior?

She had never encountered such a situation before, after all, there had never been an artificial human who had grown to the level of using Spiritual Energy to trace memories before.

Hopefully... it was just a temporary fluctuation of Spiritual Energy.

Yue Ying's crystal-clear pink lips gently exhaled a misty breath, moving the situation to a direction she was more willing to accept.

"It's alright..." Yue Ying rose to her feet, her black robe smoothly cascading down her body's curves, "I know you have many secrets that cannot be revealed, especially to those human officers in this military camp. But you only need to know..."

As the petite figure turned and walked away, she put her hood back on with both hands, her voice simultaneously transmitting through the air into Bai E's ears, "it doesn't matter, I am here. Not to mention their human affairs are currently none of my concern, even if our races discuss cooperation in the future, you... belong to me. Be bold and go do it!"

She was never a reckless person, but neither was she overly cautious.

The talent shown by Bai E made her willing to contact him, and long-term observation finally made her willing to break the Elves' natural prejudice against humans, seeing him as an existence on the same level of life.

"...Yes!" Bai E watched the small figure leave and gradually disappear into the darkness, his eyes flickering slightly.

This was the first time Yue Ying had made her stance clear.

Inside that seemingly delicate and exquisite body was the dominance that a peerless warrior should have.

Even supervisors like Carlos and Hamilton couldn't offer him such absolute protection.

This was the truly reliable support.

But it was also the support of last resort.

When needing to rely on an Elf's shelter, it generally meant that Bai E had lost his footing among humans.

But nonetheless, this was a source of confidence.

When speaking of third-tier Spiritual Energy users, Yue Ying's expression didn't show much fluctuation, indicating that human third-tier Spiritual Energy users might not necessarily have a say in front of her based solely on strength.

This kind of unparalleled military force was the most reliable backing in this world.

With her assurance, when the time came to make certain choices, he would have more options.

He would eventually break the rules.

If not now, then in the near future.

...

The next morning.

"Assemble!"

The refurbished Mechas stood on the ground like brand-new machines.

The instructor's gaze sternly swept over the numbers sprayed on each Mecha, lingering particularly on the right shoulder of the last blue and white Mecha.

A harsh voice came coldly from the speakers in the cockpit of each Mecha, "You have three more days!"

"As the first batch of Mech Pilots from our Mech Armor Camp that can be presented with pride, in the small-scale raid planned three days from now, you must demonstrate absolute dominance!"

"The raid is a joint operation, but only you can be the most dazzling! Tear apart those bugs' lines, make them retract their heads back into their lairs, trembling with fear!"

"Remember! Your performance will not only set an example for those who follow, but it will also be one of the important criteria for the Military Department to determine when to launch another assault on the bug nests."

"Of course!" the instructor's tone shifted, warming up slightly, "For the group that performs the best, I will join with higher-ups and do my utmost to satisfy any one of their requests!"

Chapter 440 Steel Order

"Train hard, every one of you!" After his shout of anger, Bai E heard the instructor's gentle voice in the private channel, "Continue, Bai E..."

In this sparring session between the instructor and the trainees, the instructor felt that he was the one under the most pressure.

But it was precisely because of this that he reaped substantial benefits!

A mech pilot who doesn't want to go to the Mechanical Court isn't a good armored battalion instructor!

Begin training!

...

At dawn on Black Street, from the distant mist, a ragged silhouette gradually emerged.

Upon closer approach, it became clear that it was likely another refugee from the wilderness coming into the city.

Xu Ruoguang, with his hands crossed over his chest holding a sword, silently watched the approaching figure with the Black Street Guard behind him.

The expertise in assessing people he had cultivated through interactions with various spying agents who approached Black Street for different purposes was now proving its worth.

[...No flaws detected.]

It should just be a real refugee.

Unlucky to be alone, but lucky enough to have reached the city's radius.

Luckier still to have come to Black Street.

Having assessed the target's identity, Xu Ruoguang strode forward. The refugee, who had cautiously stopped upon seeing a figure in a uniform trying to intercept him, merely observed the guards' lower halves with a pair of dim eyes.

"We are the security force of this settlement, maintaining Order," Xu Ruoguang began, introducing himself before softly asking, "Where are you from?"

Looking up at the other, Xu Ruoguang was quite amazed at the refugee's height.

It wasn't obvious from afar, but only in close contact could he sense this real difference.

He had chosen a body type like in "reality," not particularly tall but also not short, meeting the average male height requirement, yet this refugee stood a head and more above him, and was broad-shouldered, with just pale, cracked lips and a somewhat weak breath.

It must have been a long time since he had enough nutrition, which fit with his refugee status.

Xu Ruoguang had no suspicions, noting the other's silent, wary, and timid gaze. He simply smiled warmly and extended his right hand without disdain, "Welcome to Black Street; you can start a new life here."

"..." The refugee's lips trembled slightly, his face showing visible astonishment and joy, "Thank... thank you."

A sneer echoed in the doctor's heart, who was feigning his demeanor.

Being in someone else's territory, he had not dared to venture in alone to gather information, and thus had little detailed knowledge of the settlement. He had to think of other methods.

He had thought it would be difficult to infiltrate, but he didn't expect to succeed in penetrating the enemy's ranks with such ease.

'As a Guardian of a power, to be so careless, failure!'

"Come, follow me; I'll have them arrange a place for you to stay. It's not big, but at least it's a place to shelter from the wind and rain," Xu Ruoguang said as he turned to lead the way, instructing the guards behind him, "Continue patrolling."

Following Xu Ruoguang, the doctor swept an icy gaze over every visible aspect before him.

A settlement beyond the city, lacking heavily armed forces, yet flourishing.

Not a single idle loafer to be seen, something that would be unthinkable elsewhere.

But organs without a hard shell, no matter how wonderful, are easily shattered upon touch.

The tastier it is, the more deadly it becomes.

'Failure!'

...

'Failure!'

All was a failure!

There were no mighty arms of one's own, no walls or turrets of steel torrents, not even a glimpse of the attempt to establish such mechanisms. How could the entire settlement lay completely defenseless, laid bare to the eyes of a newcomer like himself? What a grave oversight was this?

Was it merely an ordinary community, laboring for a livelihood?

With only a few decades in a lifetime, how could one afford to waste so much time on fundamental aspects?

How could such a shortsighted waste be fit to take away Number One?

It couldn't just be this!

Perhaps... one could probe a bit?

"We've arrived." Xu Ruoguang, who was walking ahead, suddenly turned around. The doctor, coming to his senses, quickly shrank his neck and cast his eyes down, once again donning a facade of timidity.

"... Yes."

Xu Ruoguang pointed to a row of grey-white cement houses, "This is the place... It's not large, but it's enough to shelter from wind and rain. Since you've joined the Black Street, we will naturally provide you with enough food and housing to sustain life. But as an obligation, you also must complete the required daily workload. From now on, this is your home, but it is also the home of us all."

"... Yes."

Looking at the reticent and awkward expression of the tall man, Xu Ruoguang couldn't help but smile wryly and shake his head.

Turning his attention to the commissar of life affairs approaching from a distance, he completely dismissed this trivial matter, "That's the person in charge of managing your daily life matters. He will handle the details for you."

"... Alright."

...

Having finished his morning training, Bai E headed straight for Black Street.

The Mecha had been gloriously shattered once more, and the afternoon would evidently be spent under maintenance by logistics personnel, which no longer concerned Bai E.

"Has anything happened?" Bai E usually inquired.

Gilder, who tallied everything, flipped through his notes and earnestly replied, "There's been a slight change in personnel; we encountered several foreign refugees today, and not all together..."

"The children of demons?" Bai E raised an eyebrow.

Over time, he had learned of Kuang Xin and others' identities at birth—they had initially joined the indigenous people's recognition system as refugees.

Could the refugees appearing suddenly and unknown to each other be another batch of players who had gotten their qualification numbers?

"They shouldn't be..." Gilder shook his head.

Xu Ruoguang, who reported the matter, seemed to know that the master would ask about this and specifically cautioned that these refugees were not the children of demons, but there was no issue.

"Occasionally, large-scale natural disasters occur in the wilderness. It's normal for refugees from all corners to move closer to cities to avoid such disasters."

"Then that's good," Bai E commented, not entirely clear about too many common knowledge aspects of this world. When subordinates entrusted with responsibility made judgments, he chose to trust to a certain extent.

"Additionally..." Gilder hesitated, his expression odd, "just before you arrived, we received an order..."

"An order?" Bai E echoed with a puzzled expression, "Is there a problem?"

Gilder had never brought up the matter of orders to him before.

An order was a good thing, signifying resource exchange, signifying the creation of profit. If there was no issue, why would Gilder look so hesitant?

"It's too much..." Gilder looked perplexed, "And, they want steel."