

Wow 441

Chapter 441 Transactions and Expeditions

Steel is the foundation of all modern technology.

Any significant power needs a large amount of steel to ensure their infrastructure.

The wilderness outside the city is not just scattered with refugees; there are also those "oases" that, compared to the city, offer a bit more freedom and originate from Gilder.

Organizations that are unwilling to accept city governance but have some influence often break away from the city to establish their own bases.

If luck is poor, they can be wiped out by a natural disaster; if luck is good, they may even slowly evolve into something resembling a city.

Such organizations often maintain myriad connections with the existing cities.

The demand for steel is not hard to understand.

But for the demand for steel to end up on the heads of Black Street...

The steel they had was still piled up in the warehouse, not exposed, and there weren't many facilities in Black Street that utilized a lot of steel. How could the other party throw an order to such an inconspicuous force?

"The profit from the order is very substantial. If we can complete it, everyone's lives will be much better... and we'll have money too," Gilder said, staring intently at Bai E.

He could only provide basic unification and governance; the decisions on major directions needed to be made by the adults.

While establishing a steel production line might be difficult, it could be trivial for the adults. If they really could establish such a stable trade relationship, it would be a qualitative leap for Black Street.

In his current position, that was all he could concern himself with.

"..." Bai E pondered for a moment before asking softly, "Is it a one-time deal, or ongoing?"

"If possible, they hope it's ongoing. And they will purchase without limit, with the purchase price increasing in stages according to the monthly output," Gilder replied.

That meant they couldn't use the scrap from their stockpile.

If it was a one-off sale, turning resources that could not be used for the time being into resources that could genuinely improve the living standard of Black Street was indeed a nice bonus.

But to establish a long-term trading relationship, relying solely on the steel they already had would definitely not meet the other party's needs.

Do they need to establish their own steel production line?

But Black Street's small area was not up to it... Mining, refining, and even smelting iron and steel all required a vast space and would make a considerable commotion.

Doing this near the city meant either having an immensely powerful background or being part of the city's own institutions.

So, the question comes back: why did the other party believe Black Street could provide steel?

"Adult?" Gilder asked tentatively.

"First, provide them with a batch to see," Bai E decided, squinting his eyes.

Let's see if the horse can be trotted out for a walk.

Initiating a transaction to inspect the party's components, and hence making contact with a possibly powerful external force, might not be a bad direction for development.

Moreover, establishing their own steel manufacturing plant is something that must be done.

Perhaps after gaining control of Blackwater City, these resources could naturally come their way. But is Blackwater City controlled because they wanted to acquire those resources?

No! It was because they had that strength and accumulation that Blackwater City could be governed by them.

If the other party is truly reliable, then... the small town ruins they saw last time might genuinely be brought up on the development agenda.

"Yes! Adult!" Gilder said, invigorated.

There was hope!

Worthy of the adult!

["Lucky Strike" energy +5.]

...

"Doctor, they agree to the trade."

"Really now?"

The doctor, who had found an opportunity to slip away from Black Street, slightly narrowed his eyes upon hearing the report from his subordinate.

'As expected, this settlement is not as simple as it seems on the surface.'

In this era, being able to supply steel bypassing the city sovereign authorities implies a sky-high background or, at the very least, their own absolute armed forces.

Black Street is just a front; their main force lies elsewhere!

This is how it should be!

An entity that could abduct the initial number shouldn't be so superficial.

"For the first transaction, give them a taste of sweetness," the doctor decided.

Do they really think that those so-called "warlords" independent on the wilderness are just freemen?

Many of them are still covertly supported by the city's sovereign institutions, just to deal with some matters that are improper for the city to handle openly.

He currently used the guise of a warlord he supported in Grey Iron City.

"Yes!" The expressionless adjutant responded instantly like a cold, unfeeling machine.

Glancing at the doctor's chiseled profile, the adjutant dared not say more.

Facing an unknown power rooted in Blackwater City, he didn't think it necessary to waste so much effort.

No matter how strong a force was, as long as it relied on a city, it was ultimately inferior to the city.

Having a force on par with the city, one could simply overwhelm them with a show of strength. Was it really necessary to go to such lengths just to retrieve a "Number One"?

The only explanation might lie in the doctor's special affection for "Number One".

It was the doctor's choice.

The adjutant bowed his head and hid the contemplative look in his eyes.

...

"The trade went smoothly, and it seems like the other party didn't have any special intentions," Gilder reported excitedly when he met Bai E again on the third day.

Steel was the core resource in this world, and the price offered was substantial; with the money in hand, they could purchase much of the equipment and resources needed to develop Black Street.

"Hmm..." Bai E nodded slightly.

The location of the warehouse wasn't exposed; he simply piled the steel at the edge of the Black Forest and had Black Street move it back.

The first transaction was problem-free, so it was natural to try to develop a long-term relationship.

He had resources but needed to liquidate them; a stable and trustworthy channel wasn't easy to come by.

The other party needed resources, core reserves at that; it was a mutually beneficial arrangement.

"Their subsequent orders..."

"We can give them another part after a while, but after that... we'll have to wait for news."

Even with so much in hand, one couldn't make continuous deliveries.

They had traded 2,000 units of steel on the first transaction, and there were a total of 8,000 units lost from the previous drop.

They could offer another 2,000 units for the next delivery, but after that, they'd have to consider setting up a steel production facility; the remaining 4,000 units needed to be reserved for unexpected needs.

Developing a power meant considering many more aspects than when one was alone.

"Understood! My lord!"

"There's another matter. For the next few days, or even longer, I probably won't come here. The affairs of Black Street... you'll manage."

According to the instructor's words, they would need to carry out their strike mission the next day.

This was their first proactive strike against the Bug Race since they became officially commissioned Mech Pilots, and the outcome of the battle would directly determine the new Mech Pilots' value in the eyes of the Military Department's leaders, as well as his own personal plans.

If he could perform as well in battle as the instructor had said, he might be able to ask to continue fulfilling the duties of his special squad and thus follow Minister Eric's itinerary to touch upon what might be the "legacy" left by the electronic demons.

Moreover, owning the highest authority to the server mainframes, he should have a better chance than anyone else.

"Got it, my lord."

...

The gentle morning sunlight bathed the earth.

The warm sun of winter spread a soft but not blinding glow; the cooperative allied forces began to slowly move out of the military camp.

"Hum~ Hum~"

The towering Mechas landed at the end of the troop, taking large steps to follow from afar.

From the vantage point high in the Mecha, even the main battle tanks seemed like slightly larger, adorable toys.

It was also the first time Bai E truly understood the complete configuration required when a Mecha regiment was deployed—not just the Mecha itself but also something called the "Mecha Servant" configuration, where a type of armored vehicle with almost no offensive capabilities followed in its wake.

These Mecha Servants, in theory, also belonged to the Mech Armor Camp and were often manned by synthetics or natural humans with no background or expertise, who would also need to learn some Mecha repair skills to perform rapid field repairs on slightly damaged Mechas to maintain combat effectiveness.

As for the armed vehicles they drove, they carried the ammunition replenishment needed for Mechas during combat.

Although Mechas were large in stature, their actual carrying space was limited; without timely replenishment, they would quickly lose their firepower and have to resort to primitive combat blades.

Behind each combat Mecha, at least five armored vehicles were equipped to follow.

The Mecha Servants' supply vehicles, together with the Mecha itself, formed a complete combat unit.

The voice of the commanding officer inside the command vehicle transmitted through the speakers of each Mecha's cockpit, "Although this sortie's main goal is to hone your skills, our allied forces also have strategic objectives that must be met—recently, our scouts found signs of their expansion to the west of the Bug Race's hive."

The Bug Race was a kind of invasive species from outer space, their mode of invasion not limited to mere physical consumption.

Along with the smaller worker bug variants spreading Spore Colonies for a biochemical transformation of the natural environment, this was their more fundamental form of invasion of a planet.

The city's defenses against the Bug Race's hives were not only to prevent their various forms of infiltration into the city but also to stop them from expanding their influence in the natural world, thereby gaining more biomass and increasing their strength.

"The detected Bug Race species include the common Bomb Bugs, Worker Bugs, Bee Bugs, and a few Mantis Bugs, as well as visible activity of Sand Bugs. The trace of that mysterious 'Overlord' can't be ascertained; we have equal difficulty accurately detecting their underground movement, so we can't be sure how many enemies we will eventually face. The Bug Race's expansionary intentions are clear, and the protection forces sent are numerous; we may be facing a difficult battle situation. You are the last

pillar of this joint force, and I hope you can perform as excellently as your instructors have said. Captain Bai, do you have any questions?"

Chapter 442 Clash!

Bai E, who performed exceptionally well in training, undoubtedly became the absolute core of this small-scale mech pilot squad. Naturally, he also carried a heavy responsibility.

Facing the inquiries from the higher-ups, Bai E responded in a deep voice, "No problem, sir!"

The troops rumbled forward, causing the ground to tremble.

Drones flew high in the sky, circling and somewhat replacing the global satellite functionality long gone from this era, bringing the troops environmental intelligence from beyond their immediate vicinity.

Occasionally, as they swept past the mechas, it seemed as if one could reach out and grab these tiny things, which by comparison, were like mosquitoes.

The towering, ten-meter-tall mechas provided Bai E with a clear view far into the distance, as the ground extended endlessly beyond the transparent glass windows.

As the warm white sun in the sky gradually made its way westward, the horizon within sight began to reveal some indistinctly visible fierce alien creatures.

Seemingly sensing the commotion coming from afar, those little things paused for a moment before quickly changing their previous trajectory of movement.

The densely packed black bodies, like a living carpet, rapidly shifted over the ground, sending chills down the spine of the onlooker.

However, the mid-level officers inside the command vehicle, who saw this scene through the drone footage, all breathed an invisible sigh of relief.

Over time, having dealt extensively with the Bug Race, humanity's understanding of these creatures had gradually deepened—

Unless caught by surprise or forced to, the Bug Race never engaged in combat away from their hive nodes network. Aside from the mysterious "Overseer" and the "Brain Bugs" deep within the hives, the range and the number of bugs that the mantis-like node creatures could influence were strictly limited.

Thus, the experienced frontline officers could often roughly estimate the number of "node creatures" controlling them by observing the scale of the worker and bee bugs.

It was only a moment later in the monitor of the command vehicle that a portion of the cannon bugs, stationed and ready for orders, turned their gaze towards the screen.

These bugs, carrying the massive bio-cannon tubes on their backs, instantly allocated their tasks through a network linking all wills, and after a brief aiming, the bio-cannons, contracting through muscle power, shot out a kind of smaller, more precise spore mine.

"Zzzzzzz~"

Instantly, the monitor erupted in static noise, and the image consecutively blurred significantly.

"Pop, pop, pop, pop!"

A certain distance from the sea of bugs, human remote-controlled drones began to crash one after another.

Indeed, human small-scale drones could carry some minor weapons for remote aerial support, just like the drone swarm that controlled the battlefield during the initial recruit trials.

However, on the frontline, the small-scale drones, with neither impressive flight speed nor agility, were of little practical use against the Bug Race army equipped with long-range units like the cannon bugs. Furthermore, the limited size of these drones meant the weapons they could carry were naturally less powerful.

Deploying them on the frontlines was not cost-effective compared to the expense of producing these aircraft, so they were generally only used as simple reconnaissance drones for observing the battle situation and gathering information, rarely participating directly in combat.

Nevertheless, the short-lived visual information provided by the crashing drones was still enough for human officers to make combat arrangements.

"Advance the front line, suppress with firepower!"

"Advance the tank battalion, and synchronize with the first, third, and seventh infantry regiments!"

"Cover the advance of the front line, artillery battalion to fire three rounds!"

Orders from different levels and units were rapidly relayed to each fundamental combat unit, and the engines of the tanks that had been moving slowly roared to life, accelerating fiercely.

In the rear of the marching troops, the V3 rocket trucks carrying large-scale lethal weapons began to "look up" slowly as their missiles rose on the launching rails.

"Sss~"

"Sss~"

"Sss~"

Billows of white smoke cleared, and a volley of snow-white missiles, propelled by their thrusters, streaked toward the sky above the Bug Race's swarm, which was aware of the human army's approach but had yet to disperse completely.

The trajectory of the missiles, as seen through the large mecha windows, seemed slow but was actually urgent. It looked as if one could easily pilot the mecha to evade them, passing over the grayish-yellow earth and the interwoven blue-and-white sky before landing far away on the slimy ground covered in viscous fluids.

"Boom! Boom! Boom!"

Clusters of small mushroom clouds rose in an instant, green and brown bodily fluids mixed with severed limbs and joints shooting outward from the force of the explosions.

"Buzz~"

The V3 rocket launcher's thrusters once again set up the next snow-white rocket, preparing for another round of bombardment.

Positioned at the rear, Bai E's high vantage point in the mecha allowed him to take in everything at once, an entirely different combat perspective from before, enabling him to focus his attention more comprehensively.

Humans were not without long-range weapon support; what they had encountered as infantry charging into the fray last time was the aftermath of human missile bombardments.

The sheer number of bugs was a terrifying despair, yet brave warriors never knew the meaning of retreat.

"Spread out! Spread out!"

The Bug Race's artillery bugs began to counterattack.

Human's rocket launchers needed time to reload and refuel.

The artillery bugs also needed their organic responses and bodily functions to adjust.

Swiveling their cannon muzzles, the artillery bugs hunkered down, and their biological cannons on their backs began to condense different attacks—

Bio-Plasma Cannons and spore bombs.

One targeted armor, the other targeted infantry.

The bugs didn't need to diversify into too many types, as the same bugs could evolve different utilities depending on the situation they needed to face.

"Target... position..."

Familiar battlefield commands flowed through Bai E's mind, but the overly rapid response and firing speed left him no chance to voice a warning.

He could respond when facing it himself, issue a warning through wireless voice communication for his teammates to react, but, clearly, everything was too late.

However, the Military Department didn't know about Bai E's abilities and didn't need his reminders.

Having dealt with the bug race for years, they had their own countermeasures for all known Bug Race tactics—

Sheer resistance.

Light blue crystal bombs traced their remnants in the field of vision, with spore bombs bursting into clouds of green toxic mist.

The tanks, their energy storage devices destroyed amidst the electrical tumult, burst into fierce flames and exploded instantly on the spot.

Soldiers screamed in agony under the assault of invisible bio-pests, striving to cover the last meter toward the direction of the bug swarm.

"Target... position..."

Watching everything silently, Bai E's heart suddenly raced as a deeper, more resonant voice echoed from far behind the Bug Race swarm, accompanied by a nearly palpable murderous intent.

Bai E's gaze sharpened as he looked toward the distant horizon, a vast expanse of land that was nearly imperceptible.

The mecha formation he was in was situated at the very rear of the entire allied forces. The artillery bugs' attacks couldn't reach this far.

So... what was it!?

Chapter 443 Terror Bombardment

"Rose, be ready," Bai E whispered, his eyes also locked on the entire battlefield. Rose, who was monitoring the situation as well, reacted immediately.

"Got it."

She didn't know what she, who had not received battle orders and was at the very end of the march, might encounter, but she knew Bai E was never wrong. That was enough for her.

Under Bai E's gaze, the "ground" rose slowly in Rose's view.

...The ground, of course, wouldn't move; the only things moving were the bugs.

The grey-brown swell that everyone had thought was part of the terrain and looked like a small hill from a distance began to move. It was only then, from their various monitoring channels, that everyone could see the true form of the target—

A monstrous beast as big as a small hill was revealed, possessing a pair of biological cannons even more ferocious and terrifying than those of the Gun Bugs, and it was evidently double-barreled.

Its position was even farther away than the Gun Bug horde, but its size, visually, was still several times larger than that of the Gun Bugs.

Like a mountain, the giant bug "struggled" to lift the massive biological cannons on its back, aiming them in the direction of the human army...

Information capturing on the battlefield couldn't be interrupted. The armies of unmanned surveillance drones brought down by the Gun Bugs were replenished by new drones, and the observation screens that had lost signal automatically connected to the newly risen drones.

The changes occurring at the farthest reaches of the battlefield naturally fell into the view of the officers in the command vehicle in real-time.

"It's huge..."

"What is that thing?"

"Is it the Dominator?" An officer slammed his hand on the tactical table beside him, suddenly rising in excitement.

"It doesn't look like it..."

"Another new type of bug..."

The Dominator behemoth previously encountered was entirely red, starkly different from the grey-brown behemoth in front of them.

Moreover, as the giant bug gradually rose, the differences in its overall structure were completely revealed—

Its body was flat like some kind of ground dragon and was covered by vicious bone spurs formed of chitin bone armor, looking incredibly thick and heavy.

The biological cannons it carried on its back were nearly half the size of its massive body. The behemoth's head, now resembling that of a lizard with backward-pointing horns, was bowed low to the ground, as if struggling to support the unbearable weight of the cannons on its back.

The contraction of the biological cannons was clearly observed by all officers through the camera feeds of the drones.

Seeing this, the supreme commander of the allied army's expression turned solemn as he gave a heavy command, "All units, prepare for the impact!"

They knew nothing about this new type of bug, but there was a recognized fact in their understanding of the Bug Race: the most dangerous ones aren't necessarily the biggest, but the biggest ones are always powerful.

No matter what type of bug it was, its sheer size meant it was another unknown strategic weapon that humanity had yet to understand.

Humans might have been progressing, but the bugs had never stopped evolving...

As the new type of bug was amassing its attack, a brief moment of despondency flashed through the minds of many officers as they awaited the unknown assault.

Then, two black orbs suddenly burst from the pair of biological cannons.

Primal muscle power gave these orbs an extraordinary velocity that even exceeded what rocket boosters could provide, leaving only a grey-black afterimage in all observation tools as the two orbs shot out almost simultaneously.

The target was...

Themselves!

The speed of the orbs made them hard to track, but Bai E, who had received pre-emptive information through the Bug Race network, knew they were coming right for him... or rather, for the area he was in.

"Scatter!" Bai E's voice had already spread through the Mecha squad's comms, echoing out almost the moment the giant bug appeared and while its attack was still brewing.

...

However, everything happened in the blink of an eye.

The team member's reception and analysis of Bai E's commands occurred almost simultaneously with the launch of the spherical "shells."

Teammates who did not fully trust Bai E did not act immediately to escape to the periphery, and even those who did react found their mecha, with its not-so-agile armor, could not achieve the dexterity of the human body.

"Pfft!"

Like a water balloon filled to the brim suddenly bursting, a liquid like water exploded from the lower leg of a mecha in an instant.

The trajectories of the two spherical "shells," not arriving in sync, were almost indistinguishable.

But they were close.

With the "water balloon" bursting, a liquid like water instantly coated everything within a large area with a layer of highly adhesive oil.

Following closely behind, the latter spherical "shell" also struck precisely the area coated with the oily film.

"Snap!"

The mecha's lower leg, manufactured from the top-grade material currently used by humans, octonium alloy, was instantly penetrated, and the "seed" with terrifying penetrative power burst out of its casing in an instant.

The rapidly swelling seed exploded violently inside the mecha, and its internally compressed shell, unimaginable in strength, burst open with a roar.

The mecha standing on the spot had its left lower leg shattered like a blown-up model, and the nearby right leg joint deformed under the sudden impact. The fragments from the blasted octonium alloy structure shot outwards in a spherical distribution without losing momentum.

"Crack crack crack crack!"

The nearby servant mechas, supply vehicles, combat vehicles, infantry, and so on were instantly shattered under this indiscriminate barrage, plunging a large swathe of the battlefield into chaos.

When fragments from the "seed" exploded landed on the oil from the burst "water balloon," another round of explosions and flames began to rise...

"Bang bang bang!"

Bai E, who had reacted in advance by rolling away and hugging the ground, heard the sparse sounds of the fragments striking the alloy bodies.

Even mecha not hit by the first wave still endured significant impact force, with sporadic warnings alerting inside the cockpit through sharp alarm sounds. Having observed the stricken battlefield through panoramic cameras, Bai E also clearly recognized the horrific destructive power of the Bug Race's new breed of insects.

"What is that!?" Rose's response was no less quick than Bai E's, except that she did not understand the existence of this new type of insect.

Bai E's eyes swiftly scanned across the screen in front of him.

The two stationary spherical "shells" were no longer difficult to observe, and since the moment of impact, everything that had unfolded was faithfully captured by the cameras—

The first terra-cotta colored "shell," shaped like a water balloon, was filled with an oily fluid teeming with certain tick-like creatures, not water.

In the liquid that burst from the oily fluid, one could see these creatures writhing and moving distinctly.

The second "shell" was a hard-shelled seed.

After striking the mecha's lower leg, it did not penetrate instantaneously, but instead penetrated after a delay when the tick-like creatures quickly covered the contact surface and dissolved the outer shell, releasing the internal pressure.

One could guess the explosion inside the mecha, which likely occurred when the tick-like creatures quickly dissolved the "seed's" outer shell, allowing the unimaginable internal pressure to burst everything apart instantly.

Just like the most traditional fragmentation grenade.

Even the most primitive form of kinetic impact can cause unimaginable terror if the intensity is sufficient.

The Bug Race, in the most primitive way, showed their "talent" in weaponry.

And then, it was humanity's turn to respond...

"All rocket vehicles, fire a volley at the newly emerged targets!"

Chapter 444 Mecha! Take off!

The commander's will was quickly executed, as the rocket truck operators, who were in the midst of launching the third round of missiles, instantly changed their command inputs. The direction of the bombardment, which was originally aimed at a large area behind the swarm, shifted in an instant, with all rocket trucks now targeting that single large entity.

The form in which the attack on the target would take effect, and the level of technology behind it, were matters for the folks at the Scientific Research Institute back in the city to worry about after the battle was over.

As a general commanding the battle, it was his duty at this moment to reasonably arrange the distribution of his forces based on the threat posed by the enemy.

Faced with a brand new, unknown beast, it was better to strike hard and fast with several rounds of bombardment rather than hesitantly probing.

After all, every other bug was within their realm of knowledge, except for this new bug whose full capabilities were still unknown.

If this new contender had capabilities similar to the "Overlord's" to control the battlefield on a massive scale, then the soldiers on the field would have to face an unimaginably severe challenge.

Even without abilities similar to the "Overlord," just the large-scale bombardment capabilities displayed by the target were already causing destruction far beyond what the scattered artillery bugs could achieve together.

Even their supposedly invincible Titan-class mechs had almost completely lost their ability to move under the enemy's assault, marking this as the first target, aside from the Overlord, that could threaten the Titan-class armed mechs.

Such output had to be dealt with first, or their lines would soon be totally crushed.

The white missile cluster fired by the rocket trucks carried everyone's hopes.

In the eyes of those, including Bai E, who could observe the overall situation, those white missiles dragging orange tails descended one after another towards the immobile giant target.

The giant bug seemed to realize what was happening, but its overly heavy body was difficult to control even by itself.

Faced with the bombardment of the missile cluster, even this beast, purely bred for war, tried to shift its posture under the guidance of survival instincts, hoping to withstand the missile attack with its thick, greyish-brown chitin armor.

"Boom, boom, boom, boom!"

The missile cluster, not controlled by a centralized system, didn't hit the target at the same time, causing a continuous series of explosions that lasted for a while, shattering the earth under the relentless bombardment, kicking up clouds of dust and debris.

Shards of broken earth scattered with the rising mushroom clouds in every direction, with only a large dark shadow occasionally visible through the dust.

As the dust slowly settled... the movement at the frontline finally came into view of those who had been focused on observing the giant bug.

"It's okay..." Bai E narrowed his eyes slightly, his gaze heavy.

It wasn't dead.

It was unscathed.

The missile cluster, capable of annihilation, seemed to hardly shake the giant bug.

"It's useless!"

"Shall we retreat?"

Inside the command vehicle, an atmosphere of despair spread.

Faced with the unknown giant bug, they didn't expect a single salvo of the missile cluster to take it down directly, but they hoped to cause significant damage, enough to give them a rough estimate of the beast's defense capabilities. But now...

Completely unharmed?

"No! It's injured too!"

As the giant bug shifted, its support leg—on the right side—visibly stumbled, unable to bear its heavy body.

"The underside of its body does not have the same level of defense as its back."

As the giant bug rose, the contrast between its back, covered in thick chitin bone armor, and its greyish-white underbelly and claw area became stark.

The back was almost untouched by the missile bombardment, while the underbelly displayed numerous areas of burnt flesh where the armor had been breached.

"Another couple of rounds should do it," an officer said, his face brightening.

All fear stemmed from insufficient firepower; if they could utterly destroy it with artillery, no enemy would be daunting.

"Two more rounds, and the frontline will be in trouble."

The dynamic on the battlefield always hung in a state of balance; allocating remote support fire to focus on one target meant not being able to exert enough pressure on the main enemy formation.

The V3 rocket truck had limited carrying capacity and needed time to reload.

With the time for two more volleys of fire, the situation on the frontline would likely worsen significantly.

Whether it was the artillery bugs' bombardment or the charge of the numerous mantis bugs leading the work bugs and bee bug swarms, without the cover of missile fire, the pressure on the mixed forces would be unimaginable.

"And we might not even succeed."

Humans did not know the capabilities of the Bug Race's new type; similarly, the new breed would collect accurate data through combat, an experience humans gained through blood and flesh in past wars with the Bug Race.

Though the giant bug had instinctual self-protective movements in the face of human artillery, it had not completely obscured its vulnerabilities.

If it returned to its initial "ambush" mode, its "weak points," the underbelly and limbs, would be hidden beneath the thick chitin carapace.

"A salvo isn't feasible."

"It's time for our lads to step up."

Chapter 445 Mecha! Take off!_2

The Mecha squadron accompanying the army existed precisely to handle such unforeseen situations.

Even though there was no preparation in the initial plan to engage the newly emerged beast in combat, when faced with a target that could not be dealt with by ordinary forces, it was time for the Titan-class armed Mechas to shine, even if it was the first time the pilots had stepped onto the battlefield...

The commander in charge of directing the Mecha squadron issued the order in a deep voice, "Mecha Combat Team One, launch! Take down that beast, victory belongs to humanity!"

[Side mission triggered—Terminate the Beast.]

[Terminate the Beast: A beast that suddenly appeared on the battlefield is wreaking havoc. Its presence is an unimaginable threat to the allied forces you belong to. Only by swiftly executing a beheading action is there a chance for your attack launched against the Bug Race expansion to be successful. Mission requirements: Behead the "Beast" 0/1 within 3 minutes. Reward for mission completion: Beast Compendium. (Countdown: 2 minutes 59 seconds)]

"Affirmative, Commander."

As the captain of the Mecha Combat Team, Bai E calmly responded and then gave out an instruction over the team's voice comms, "Everyone, spearhead an assault with me as the tip, and be sure to complete the beheading action within three minutes!"

'Adding a time limit on his own...' thought the commanding officer of the Mecha squadron, his eyes flickering unkindly.

The last thing desired on the battlefield was a soldier with their own thoughts.

A soldier only needs to fulfill their duties, not have thoughts.

There was no time limit given by the command, yet he added one on his own initiative.

Was it to show off in front of his superiors? Or was it just to assert his authority as a captain within the team?

Whichever it was, it was clearly an unpleasant starting point.

If they succeed, no extra points are given; if not...

"Received!"

"Received!"

A chorus of acknowledgments resounded through the Mecha Combat Team's voice channel.

Regardless of how the team members felt, at this moment on the battlefield, the instructions issued by their direct superior, Bai E, were their everything.

Aside from the unlucky Mecha that had its lower leg crashed by the beast, the other five Mechas launched an assault from different positions simultaneously.

Facing the towering mechas of more than a dozen meters, the bugs on the ground were like reptiles, utterly defenseless.

With every step, countless bugs were crushed into a mixture of broken armor and pus under the giant mechanical feet, with only the larger mantis-type bugs able to mount some minor resistance to these massive creatures, though to little avail.

Still, the bugs climbed frantically up the Mechas' non-smooth surfaces, attempting to attack some of the weaker spots with their sharp symbiotic weapons and their acidic secretions.

It was like a giant covered in ants; if they couldn't keep moving, even if the whole body was made of E-Alloy, they would eventually be overwhelmed by the swarm.

A Mecha's design is a highly coordinated whole; any extraneous weight could disrupt this perfect balance.

This kind of abnormal feedback had to be compensated for by the Mech Pilots using their experience and control.

Of course, there were simulators for such situations in simulated battles, but the reason why abnormal situations are difficult is that they are varied and hard to replicate precisely.

Pilots could only rely on their acute sensitivity to their Mechas to constantly make adjustments through control.

Bai E also felt a certain degree of loss of control in his suit.

Each time his footsteps landed amid the swarm, those frenzied bugs would climb onto him without hesitation, so much so that his feet were now covered with small worker and bee bugs.

Despite his constant movement, the Mecha surface, which could not be cast as a single piece for the sake of agility and necessarily needed some room to move, was full of joints and cracks allowing those bugs with their spiky barbed symbiotic weapons to cling tightly to him.

Breaking away from the main force and charging alone into the enemy line made one vulnerable to this embarrassing plight. It was not just Bai E; the other Mechas following close behind Bai E were in the same situation.

Being able to resist such interference and continue to fulfill their tactical objectives was a test of every Mech Pilot's skill level.

Though the current disturbance was not enough to lead to a Mecha's complete downfall, they clearly could not take too much baggage with them to execute the beheading of the beast.

"Speed up the advance!"

To accommodate his teammates, Bai E was not operating at full speed.

For every increase in a Mecha's speed level, the demand on piloting intensity increased geometrically.

Currently, if he wanted to speed up, he first needed his teammates to be able to keep up.

"Captain, there is a risk of losing control!"

"Captain, we are already moving at full speed."

It wasn't the Mecha's full speed, but the full speed of personal control ability.

Bai E's brows were tightly knitted as he watched the giant beast in the distance, once again ready to launch an artillery strike, his eyes filled with hesitation.

This was also his first time leading a team onto the battlefield in a Mecha, unlike when he fought alone, the situations he encountered while using a Mecha were completely different. The idea of fighting alone without his comrades... He dared not make that decision lightly.

Furthermore, the link he had been building with the Mecha since his first contact hadn't fully taken effect—

[Link remaining countdown: 20 hours 38 minutes 52 seconds.]

The 48-hour link establishment period was calculated based on the time Bai E spent operating the Mecha from within. Since his contact with the actual Mecha, his actual training time hadn't yet reached 48 hours, far from reaching a deep communicative connection with the Mecha.

He dared not recklessly take on this risk.

"Shua shua~"

Mysterious images flashed suddenly through his mind, the scenery of deep rock and soil rushing past appeared swiftly within Bai E's consciousness.

Realizing this, Bai E abruptly turned his head, looking in the general direction of the images—

The entire army's rear!

"Boom!"

"Boom!"

Almost at the very moment Bai E turned to look, several ferocious sand worms leaped out from the ground.

The logistics transport vehicles filled with supplies were instantly overturned, and soldiers carrying guns were flung high into the air.

The sand worms, their bodies covered with sharp claws, danced wildly under the sunlight...

"Meet the enemy! Meet the enemy!"

Without thinking, the voice channel was surely in chaos right now.

Although the existence of the sand worms was known and anticipated, their evil emergence at an inappropriate time at the rear of the formation instantly tightened everyone's nerves.

The elite reserve troops that were already prepared instantly launched a counter-attack, and the battlefield extended beyond the front lines, where the flesh and blood of the Bug Race clashed with the steel tide.

"Boom! Boom!"

Misfortune never came singly, as the tremors of the earth clearly transmitted from the body of the Mecha to the piloting cabin interface of Bai E.

As a weapon of war, Mechas were designed not for comfort but for the Mech Pilot to have a clear perception of the encountered environment.

As for the physical strain that this perception caused, it could only be resisted by the physical endurance of the Mech Pilot.

Fortunately, Bai E and Rose's physical fitness levels were top-notch, even within the entire camp.

The tremors of the earth didn't affect their combat status; instead, they allowed them to focus their attention on the source of the vibrations at the first instance—

In the distance, three crimson giant figures were trudging with heavy footsteps from the southeast, one after the other.

"Dominators!"

The crimson giant bugs undoubtedly brought to mind that terrifying nightmare at first glance.

But it wasn't them.

Bai E closely observed the bodies of the three giant bugs—

They were somewhat similar to the Dominators, also with six limbs, also with dark crimson giant bodies, even their chitinous armor appeared just as thick and heavy, reflecting a bloody sheen under the sunlight.

But the giant bugs that appeared this time were more ape-like in appearance, moving on all fours, and their forelimbs, which served the same function as human arms, were not like the sharp double blades of the Dominators, but rather a pair of cylindrical hammers.

The bone armor on their bodies also lacked many spikes, appearing more rounded overall.

"They look more inclined towards defense... Could they be the guards for the artillery beasts?" Bai E squinted, making his judgment.

Chapter 446 Alone into the Battle Formation

The new situation forced Bai E to make a swift decision—

It might have been that the Bug Race hive master had learned of the attack on its expansion force by humans and sent reinforcements, or it may have guessed that humans would come back to stop it and set up an ambush in advance... However, either way, it seemed more likely that, after the more defensively-oriented colossal insects arrived, killing the one that was firing would be extremely difficult.

The only thing that gave Bai E some confidence was perhaps the drop rate hint panel—

[??? (Bug Race) (Elite)—Kill with "Lucky Strike" to drop: Guaranteed (Bug Tribe Essence Extract*2000, Battle Experience 6000 points); High Probability (Knowledge: High Pressure Filling); Possible (Knowledge: High-Intensity Material Synthesis)]

Lacking enough energy to use his Lucky Strike didn't prevent Bai E from making an approximate judgment of the situation based on the information from the panel.

Whether it was the experience in the drop items, or the items themselves, it meant that the giant beast only seemed huge but was far from the "Overlord" level in actuality.

No matter how large it was or how much destructive power it could unleash, it was just an elite monster.

The enemy's destructive ability might be strong, but perhaps that was all there was to it.

The only trouble was that it was under the protection of the Bug Race army.

"Captain..."

"Should we support the rear?"

"..."

Voices of teammates came one after another through the voice channel.

Before they even officially engaged the Bug Race giant, the four other mech pilots had already felt the pressure from the oncoming tide of insects.

Not to mention that now three more colossi were rapidly approaching, aiming to join the battlefield.

For them, already nervous about piloting a mecha onto the battlefield for the first time, some remained silent but in the open mic channel, the clear sound of swallowing saliva could be heard.

Morale was low.

The consecutive surprises left them wavering, and the uncertainty of their own strength compared to their enemies made them especially confused about the situation.

Fortunately, the order from the commanding officer at the rear came just in time, "Block the four new unknown colossi as much as possible, we will clear the field and provide support as soon as possible."

"Roger that," Bai E responded instantly.

Then, turning to his teammates, he said, "Full speed ahead, we must kill the artillery beast before the three red giants arrive. The main force at the rear is under attack; we are the only hope to turn the tide!"

As his voice fell, Bai E hesitated no longer.

Descriptions in the mission were not aimless most of the time. If their mecha squad's killing action couldn't succeed quickly, perhaps the entire operation against the Bug Race expansion would be unlikely to succeed.

Whether they could rapidly take down that fiercely firepowered monster was absolutely the crux of the battle.

"Hiss! Hiss!"

Sounds of jet propulsion came from the various valves of the mechanical transmission, and Rose, almost sharing the same determination as Bai E, simultaneously increased her operation intensity in an instant.

An endless stream of commands were issued without pause, and the mechas operated by the two of them instantly broke away from the group, shooting out like an arrow.

They bolted forward!

The chasm between them and the sea of bugs seemed to narrow down to just one step away.

"What are you doing?" the roar of the superior commander came through the earpiece.

"Decapitation," Bai E's calm voice remained steady, even as his hands raced, almost dancing into a blur.

"Who gave you permission to act on your own?!"

The military was not like those special combat units in the cities that esteemed individual valor.

Only with the precise and seamless cooperation between comrades could they defeat one enemy after another that had to be vanquished.

To achieve that, first and foremost... there could only be one brain.

Even if this brain did not make the best decisions at times, as long as they were united, they could often create miracles.

A soldier with an excess of self-awareness was never liked by any commander.

Not to mention, against the Bugs, who could claim they were capable of lone combat without the support of their teammates?

To go into battle alone was nothing but a death sentence.

"This is the only possible way to win this battle."

"Tsss!"

The piercing noise in the earpiece made the mech commander yank off his headset in a fury, "Damn it!"

He had long heard that among the regular mech pilots there were talents even admired by the big shots of Mechanical Court, and he was pleased to lead such individuals into battle.

But upon first contact, these pilots' performance had been utterly disappointing.

"What's wrong?" the total commander, with eyes marked by deep wrinkles of authority, looked over and asked in a low voice.

It was he who had made the assessment of the battle situation.

The decision to have the mecha squad act conservatively was made with the thought that even if they failed to act, they could still retreat safely.

An operation intended as a mere training exercise for mech pilots turned into an encounter with up to two types and four unknown Bug Race colossi, far exceeding the Military Department's expectations. Even if they had to retreat in failure, there would be no fault to speak of.

On the contrary, losing too much fighting power for a doomed war would be irresponsible to the entire city.

As for the expanded territory of the Bug Race?

He believed that humanity would ultimately be the victor!

Facing the inquiry of the total commander, the mech commander, still not over his irritation, replied emphatically, "He disregarded military orders, acting on his own initiative!"

After a pause, he added, "I've taken over the command of the other mecha personnel, instructing them to hold their ground temporarily."

Chapter 447 Alone into the Battle Formation_2

"Does he have confidence?"

If they could win, the commander-in-chief did not want to return with a defeat.

"..."

Silence.

The question was whether the mech pilot who made the decision on his own had confidence, and at this moment, anyone who dared to guarantee that would have to bear the bet themselves.

No one dared to make the guarantee.

The commander-in-chief narrowed his eyes, and his gray stubble beard also showed a hint of hesitation.

Trust?

Or to play it safe?

Bai E?

This name, he was well aware of.

Born of artificial humans but achieving a leap no artificial human had before, Bai E became an existence with equal opportunities as natural humans.

Not only did he have Carlos's full confidence, but even Hamilton, who regarded artificial humans as dirt, spoke highly of him.

It seemed even the neutral faction Dewa also held goodwill towards him.

In many actions he had previously participated in, he performed brilliantly, accomplishing in a short time what other warriors could not imagine in a lifetime, thus directly exchanging his military merits for a precious vial of Gene Optimization Solution.

Geniuses certainly have their moments of arrogance, and the regrets they cause are often far greater than those of mediocrities.

But trusting in those shining geniuses can also create incredibly dazzling miracles.

"Order the mech combat team..." the commander-in-chief spoke slowly, "full-speed support! I believe in our soldiers, they will not let down their homeland."

The mech commander was slightly startled, then responded vigorously, "Yes, sir!"

...

"Hiss~"

Waves of heat from the Flamethrower surged violently from both arms, the core's high temperature burning the stubborn bugs that clung to the gaps, preventing detachment from the mech, causing them to fall like raindrops from its legs.

The mech flipped through the air, and the charred bug corpses littered the ground.

This was the bug race's last line of defense, and of course, Bai E could not allow his mech to carry these encumbrances for a decapitating strike.

One step forward, and he would be facing the artillery beast, and farther away, three red giants were still striding over.

Their movements were slow, but their steps were large.

[...Countdown: 2 minutes 17 seconds.]

Glancing at the timer on the dashboard, Bai E knew that the true combat time he had left was far less than this.

"Zing!"

The war blade unsheathed, and the metal war blade made from Octium alloy reflected a sharp gleam in the sunlight.

A nearby common artillery bug turned its barrel, aiming the single-barreled biological cannon at the massive entity just a stone's throw away, with worm-like projectiles writhing eagerly inside.

"Putt!"

A flash of the blade, and the bug was bisected.

The shoulder-mounted rotary machine gun began to spin, a torrent of flames unleashing a fierce metal storm. The endless tide of worker bugs and bee bugs composed of the bug race was ripped apart by the blue and white painted mech, as the metallic war machine lightly descended from the sky...

A combat mech was far more than just the poor armaments used in training, as countless weapons of mass destruction armed this towering Titan-class mech to the teeth.

A forward roll, and the long sword in hand already swept towards the lower limb of the beast trying to dodge.

"Puff!"

The war blade slashed through, and the limb gushed blood.

[The basic Titan-class armed mech you are piloting used a proficient weapon attack to hit the target, "Specialty — Mechanical Rhythm" experience +1.]

[You caused 50 points of slashing damage to the target!]

[Current "Specialty — Mechanical Rhythm" experience 218/2000, when it reaches 2000 points you can master "Specialty — Mechanical Rhythm (5/7 level)".]

[Based on the effect of your attack, you gain the following information—]

[??? (Bug Race): Health 2350 (+5/S)/3000; Defensive Power: 500 (100); Attack Power (Type: Bludgeoning) 600~???; Traits: Giant Beast Template, Trait: Thickened Armor, Trait: Symbiotic Weapon—Shatter Cannon, Trait: Organ Absorption; Mobility: 10%...]

...

The colossal beast had already suffered considerable injuries; the unified barrage from the military's V3 rocket vehicles wasn't as futile as it appeared on the surface.

But beneath the colossus, Bai E saw numerous shriveled bodies of worker bugs and bee bugs.

Whether from analyzing the wounds or recalling from memory, Bai E could confirm that it was neither his doing... nor the masterpiece of the missile volleys launched by the V3 rocket vehicles.

It could only have been the beast itself... that trait known as "Organ Absorption," which had absorbed the biomass from the smaller bugs nearby, converting it into the materials needed to restore its own health points.

Unfortunately, the enemy's health was continuously recovering; fortunately... this was an opponent that could be defeated.

The drop rate panel could only show the approximate level of the opponent; it still took actual combat information for Bai E to analyze how to defeat the opponent.

The beast's defensive power astonishingly showed two levels of defense, one at 100, the other at 500.

This clearly indicated that there was a significant difference between the defense of the back and lower limbs, providing a special hint and coinciding with everyone's observations of the colossal beast.

"Pfft!"

Facing Bai E who had rushed toward it, the beast did not just wait to be defeated.

Only upon getting close did Bai E realize that on each of the beast's arm-like appendages, located closest to the head, there was a gun-like biological structure.

And at that moment, the biological gun muzzles aimed at the mecha piloted by Bai E and Rose, violently spraying out two puddles of earthy yellow pus.

"Hiss~"

The sound of corrosion immediately arose from the right thigh of the mecha; even though Bai E reacted instantly, the mecha's massive size still made it difficult to completely dodge.

"Beep~ Beep~ Beep~"

A not-so-sharp alarm sounded in the cockpit, reminding them of the potency of the corrosive acid, which clearly wasn't as terrifying as the beast's other method of attack — the Shatter Cannon. Up against the most advanced material that humanity could currently produce — Octonary Alloy — it could only achieve a certain degree of erosion.

Tiny worms surged in the sticky fluid, attempting to burrow deeper into the mecha.

It was a minor degree but persistent.

"Don't mind the acid."

Bai E glanced at the information displayed on the mecha control panel and immediately made a decision.

It wasn't that the mecha was completely immune, but in the short span of a few minutes, the acid wouldn't affect the mecha enough to interfere with its movements.

And these few minutes were critical to deciding the outcome of the war.

"Buzz~"

The combat blade whirred, slicing through the air.

Bai E aimed at one of the beast's lower limbs that was already injured, where the flesh was charred black, clearly damaged in the previous bombardment.

However, as the combat blade swept across, it was slightly off target.

The white lower limbs were also the beast's weak points, but the unaffected parts of the chitin armor still possessed the defensive power it was supposed to have.

Even though it couldn't fully block the combat blade's strike, it still mitigated some of the damage.

[Your attack has caused 30 points of slashing damage to the target!]

"Off target?" Rose asked subconsciously, somewhat surprised.

In her mind, Bai E never made mistakes at crucial moments.

"Yes." Bai E frowned tightly, finding the reason—

No matter how much the mecha resembled the human body, it was ultimately not a human body.

Controlling a weapon through an external object was never as direct as using one's own body.

The hand that controlled the mecha to grasp the combat blade always had a strange sense of detachment, and there was an elusive feeling regarding the precision of control over the angle, direction, and force of the blade.

It was sufficient to bully his mech pilot teammates, who were equally inexperienced, in everyday practice, but on a real battlefield where every millimeter mattered, the control was utterly unreliable.

One important reason for this was the conversion rate of mechanical rhythm; however, Bai E's own Level 2 Light Firearms Specialization also limited his current performance.

With a flash in his eyes, Bai E mentally allocated his points—

[Payment: 1412 combat experience points.]

[You have learned "Level 4 Light Firearms Specialization," and concurrently received 2 latent points.]

[Light Firearms Specialization (Level 4): Attack speed +12%, Armor Penetration +4%, Perception Break (Special) +2%.]

[Detection of character's current "Level 4 Light Firearms Specialization," skill tree unlocked: Magic Blade, Lightfoot Dance.]

[Current unlock requirements: General/Combat experience *1000 (cost doubles for each additional skill of the same level unlocked), Latent Points *2 (fixed).]

Chapter 448 kills!

"Can we really trust him?"

The Bug Race's artillery bugs had no time to target the human reconnaissance drones, and the officers inside the command vehicle were finally able to observe the entire battlefield situation through the drone's provided vision. Consequently, everything unfolding in the Bug Race's rear was easily witnessed by all.

The sea of bugs composed of worker bugs, bee bugs, and mantis bugs seemed to be the largest in scale, but as humanity's old adversary, humans knew them inside out. Faced with the well-prepared combined human army, they posed no threat at all.

Elite bug breeds like the sand bugs and artillery bugs could indeed cause considerable trouble for the human military, but as long as they were known and prepared for in advance, they were nothing more than temporary chaos and increased casualties.

These predestined battlefields failed to attract the attention of the senior officers, only the battles between mechas and the Bug Race's behemoths were the core that could truly determine the outcome of this expedition.

Thus, even the slightest action was magnified without limit at this moment.

The mech pilot named Bai E, renowned for his disregard of military discipline, was the first to rush his mecha into the last ranks of the bug tide.

Although one had to admit that the pilot's movements through the sea of bugs were swift and graceful, all his actions exuded a natural fluidity, his first strike against the behemoth evidently didn't achieve the effect everyone expected.

A single slash landed on an unharmed part of the behemoth.

Apart from a bloodstain that was barely visible unless the view was magnified many times, there was no accomplishment to speak of.

Even when facing the behemoth's fierce counterattack, he failed to evade completely, resulting in the mecha's armor being corroded by acid.

Humanity's proudest Beryllium alloy couldn't withstand the Bug Race's acid, a point that could only be addressed with the Scientific Research Institute afterwards. But allowing the mecha to be corroded by acid was, in any case, a shortcoming of the mech pilot's limited abilities.

"I think it's mostly a waste..."

"How can we trust someone who acts so recklessly!"

"Maybe we should call the others back and retreat..." someone suggested cautiously, watching the supreme commander's face.

He would rather do nothing than make a mistake.

Retreating in the face of an unbeatable unknown force, and only returning to fight after finding a countermeasure in the Tactical Department or Scientific Research Institute, was the most prudent strategy against the Bug Race in this dangerous world.

The supreme commander pressed his hands against the table in front of him, his eyes intensely focused on the behemoth battlefield shown on the dozen screens combined, he clenched his teeth, "Wait a bit longer!"

...

The Blade of Magic was an enchantment, and Blade of Agility was a further enhancement of the strengths of light weapons—speed.

The mecha's size and the limited Mechanical Rhythm inherently meant that mechas couldn't move with the same agility as the human body; to keep increasing speed was a waste of effort.

In contrast, choosing the Blade of Magic to apply a special coating on the weapon could more effectively and directly enhance its damage capability.

In critical moments, all decisions are made in the blink of an eye.

Bai E did not hesitate and immediately allocated points again.

[Payment: 2 Aptitude Points, 1000 Combat Experience.]

[Skill Acquired—Blade of Magic.]

[Blade of Magic: Coats the surface of the weapon in your hand with a special attribute layer {Slash Attack + (20 + extra Spiritual Energy)}. Consumption: 10 + (extra) Spiritual Energy (100 Action Power Reserve)/min.]

[Detected that character currently possesses Spiritual Power Enchantment, skill "Blade of Magic" will add extra attribute effects to the weapon coating.]

The character's owned skills or abilities once again produced synergistic effects, and this special discovery brought a slight joy to Bai E's heart.

But the battle was not over, and ending it quickly was the priority at that moment.

[Activating skill—Blade of Magic!]

[Notice: The character currently does not wield any "light weapon."]

[Correction: The character is currently piloting an "enhanced armament," continuing to release the skill will require payment of 10.3 times (current) extra Spiritual Energy. (Note: "Ability Amplification" module not detected, skill—Blade of Magic cannot be activated.)]

"..."

All for naught.

Then continue!

If there's no backup from a specialized skill, then rely on the strength of the specialty itself.

With combat experience now stored in excess of ten thousand, if not used to rapidly enhance one's combat capabilities when necessary, then when?

[Payment: 5500 Combat Experience.]

[Acquired "Level 6 Light Weapon Proficiency," and received 2 Aptitude Points.]

[Light Weapon Proficiency (Level 6): Attack Speed +18%, Armor Penetration +6%, Detection Break (Special) +6%.]

[Current Light Weapon Mastery Experience 0/5500, at 5500 points "Level 7 Light Weapon Proficiency" can be mastered. (Note: Level 7 mastery unlocks the subsidiary skill tree (Tier 2).)]

[Notice: Your proficiency level has reached the limit of the human body, and you cannot make more progress until your abilities exceed these bodily limits. To continue improving proficiency levels, your Perception and Reflex attributes must be elevated beyond 15 points.]

The rapid climb in level brought about a pure change in proficiency strength.

Even if only half of the proficiency could be inherited by the mecha, the improvement brought to weapon handling was far superior to before.

"Continue," Bai E uttered sharply, and Rose, as the main mech pilot, understood perfectly.

Chapter 449 kills!_2

Perhaps Bai E was just testing the precise defensive capabilities of the target, or maybe he was testing the strength of the weapon itself. Whatever he was doing, Bai E always had his reasons.

Fighting alongside Bai E, she knew she only needed to know one thing—follow the lead, fight, and win!

The sky was azure blue, and the mecha painted in shades of blue and white leaped across the reddish-brown earth.

The war saber cleaved through the air, its silver-gray blade like a throat-slitting razor, effortlessly breaching the beast's defenses.

The increase in attack speed led to an overall boost in agility. The low probability of armor penetration and detection occasionally had their moments of effectiveness, allowing Bai E to pinpoint the beast's most lethal points more accurately.

[Your skilful attack with the basic Titan-class armed mecha hits the target, "Expertise—Mechanical Rhythm" experience +1.]

[Trigger "Armor Penetration," ignoring defense! You deal 150 points of slashing damage to the target!]

[...experience +2.]

[Trigger "Detection," absolute damage! You deal 250 points of slashing damage to the target!]

...

"..."

"Much smoother than before... What happened?"

Any movement of the giant mecha was easily observable in detail, even by "outsider" officers unfamiliar with mecha operation, who could discern the difference in the once uncontrollable mecha from before and after.

After the first two strikes failed to make an impact, the mecha seemed to awaken in an instant, using the sharp war saber to lightly circle the slow-moving beast, marking its accomplishments with the blade in every spot the beast couldn't respond to or cover.

"It really might be possible..." Some officers were visibly exhilarated.

The frontline battlefield was intense—although understood, victory was difficult due to the disparity in troop strength.

The situation on the enemy's rear battlefield, where they fought alone, was surprisingly favorable.

"But it's about to go out of control..." The mecha commander frowned slightly, displeased with the mech pilot's reckless desire for glory.

In their hurry to quickly kill the opponent, they were overzealous.

...

"Tss~"

The reddish-brown earth was slick with slimy mucus, and the giant mecha, trying to dodge the beast's spray of acid, ducked low and seemed to lose its balance and fall.

The single leg trying to find its footing slid straight out, and the mecha had to use the arm on the same side for support.

During the hand-and-foot-sliding maneuver, the other arm held the war saber. Seizing the fleeting opportunity, the pilot raised the blade and plunged it down.

"Puchi!"

The war saber stabbed upward from below into the belly of the beast, and merely through the screens, the watching officers could almost feel the piercing pain of the blade drilling into bone.

[...experience +5.]

[Trigger "Detection," hit a vital part inside the body! You deal 500 points of slashing damage to the target!]

After stabbing into the beast, the slight resistance caused by the war saber slowed the mecha's sliding inertia just enough for the pilot inside to regain control of the mecha's center of gravity.

"Puchi~"

The war saber is withdrawn, and the mecha retracts back from its prone position.

What appeared to be a loss of control was actually a well-planned risky move.

...

"Good!"

The supreme commander clenched his fists, his expression excited.

"But the bugs' reinforcements are almost here."

One couldn't limit their gaze to the protagonist of this battle alone. Those three crimson figures, moving slowly and from a distance, were rapidly approaching the core battlefield with their large strides.

The nearest was only a few steps away.

The capabilities of these completely new and unknown giant bugs remained a mystery.

Even if they were nowhere near the master, their size alone suggested they were not going to be easy adversaries to deal with.

...

"Captain! I'm here!"

Constantly monitoring the entire battle, Bai E of course did not overlook the pair of heavy hammers from the crimson behemoth attacking from behind.

However, before he could clash with them using his war saber, the voice of a team member came through his earpiece.

["Lucky Strike" energy charge +4.]

Li Wei William never respected this artificial human captain. For a feeble artificial human to luckily enter their Mech Armor Camp was already like an enormous stroke of fortune... oh right, they don't have ancestral graves, so they should be even more grateful and humble.

But unexpectedly, this artificial human stood out step by step during training, to the point where he became the captain among their official mech pilots!

Even if this captain was only temporary when the Mech Armor Camp didn't have a full lineup, that still meant he stood above all the natural-born mech pilots.

What use was it to spar with instructors in training? What use was it to be admired by the dignitaries of the Mechanical Court? When it came to the battlefield...

When it came to the battlefield... they were spirited and willing to take on the responsibility of a dire situation.

If the Mech Armor Camp's captain was so brave, how could the other mech pilots fall behind?

And how could they let their captain face the insectoid invasion alone!

"Kill!"

The mecha, its lower limbs crawling with small bugs, suddenly leapt into the air, intercepting a crimson beast that was about to raise its twin hammers.

The massive weight of the mecha crashed onto the beast, both tumbling away in a roll.

"Hiss~" The flamethrower spat out scorching flames, and the shoulder-mounted mini-missile launcher instantly fired a 4*5 missile matrix around the body, raising a cloud of fire.

The strength of the mecha lay precisely here; even when out of control, those weapon modules attached to the mecha could still show their fierce form.

Setting aside close-combat capabilities, as long as a mech pilot could grasp the basic operating skills of a mecha, whether a seasoned ace or a beginner, the role they could play on the battlefield was more or less the same. Such was the confidence that mechas brought to humanity.

"Captain, you deal with the target, leave these three to us!"

Another blue-white figure flashed past Bai E, taking the initiative to rush towards the direction of the other two crimson beasts that hadn't fully arrived yet.

["Lucky Strike" energy charge +4.]

"..."

The moment he took the initiative to charge, Bai E had already not pinned his hopes on these teammates.

But at this moment, even they had taken up the responsibilities they should. Naturally, Bai E couldn't let down the time they had fought for with their bodies.

"Buzz~"

The battle blade flicked lightly, the mecha's pair of faint blue crystalline diamond-shaped "eyes" focused intently on his only opponent.

Eyes with some analytical ability were a synthesis of various information collection capabilities; the beast's life signals had weakened to the extreme compared to the beginning, almost completely consistent with the information collected on his own panel.

[Life Value: 780/3000...]

Though the beast's life recovery ability, provided by those small bugs, was always replenishing its health, the slow rate couldn't keep up with the damage Bai E could inflict.

Besides having terrifying long-range bombardment abilities and resistance to external attacks, when faced up close by a Titan-class armed mecha of the same level, the beast's ability to resist was seriously limited.

Moreover, its extremely slow reaction time also meant it couldn't perfectly protect its weak points. When faced with an equally damaging and agile opponent of the same level, it was like a lamb to the slaughter.

Energy wasn't enough to use Lucky Strike.

The last few hundred points of health, one last effort!

Having glanced at the panel for the last time, Bai E quickly outputted commands. After a brief passage through the electrical circuits, the mecha lifted the battle blade leisurely, the engine roaring...

"Swoosh!"

A twirling slash was followed by stuffing a Cluster Heat Bomb into the riddled body of the giant beast.

A beast with a titan template wouldn't easily perish until its limbs were massively destroyed. With only a sliver of health left, it struggled against the blade attack, refusing to fall—thus, the limitations of cold weapons were ended with a thermal weapon.

"Boom!"

The bomb detonated inside the body, even the outer skin bulging dramatically from the intense explosion, emitting a scorching red glow.

It's last unwilling drop of blood dried up at this moment, and the body of the beast slowly fell.

[You dealt 1 point of fatal damage to the target!]

[You have thoroughly killed the target, gaining 200 battle experience points.]

"Bang!"

The body of the beast completely collapsed behind the blue-white figure, standing tall with the blade.

["Lucky Strike" energy charge +50.]

Rose gently pushed the lever, the mecha turning its back.

The crimson beast, raising its chest claws high, bore down viciously towards the mecha lying on the ground, unable to escape...

Chapter 450 Beast Compendium

The crimson giant beast from afar revealed no clues, only in close combat was it possible to spot the inconspicuous pair of claws that usually rested by its skull.

These claws were indestructible, capable of easily piercing even a mecha structure forged from octalloy.

The grating sound of metal warping and snapping rose sharply as the pair of mech pilots lying on the ground tried in vain to use their arms to fend off the creature's attacks with all their might.

The strength of the crimson behemoth was far greater than the maximum power that could be summoned by the arms of a basic mecha.

Hidden beneath layer upon layer of iron armor were the fragile electrical circuits and core components within the mecha.

Sparks flew in an instant, and a crimson alert flashed within the cockpit, warning of imminent danger.

Sensing the end was near, one pilot broadcast his final warning, "Be careful, everyone! The strength of these bugs is terrifying!"

"Boom!"

The fear and confusion from possible imminent destruction had barely begun to form when the feedback from the mecha's arms suddenly lightened.

Immediately after, a loud noise assaulted the ears, accompanied by a violent tremor that shook the entire ground.

"Can you still move?"

A blue-and-white mecha appeared before them, not knowing when it had arrived, and through its clear viewport, the reddened eyes of its two pilots were visible, relief flooding in as they realized they had narrowly escaped death.

"Captain..."

One pilot, slightly calmer now, remembered the captain's query, "I can move... but..."

"That's enough," Bai E interrupted, "Get yourself back, leave the rest to me."

Bai E was pleasantly surprised that the severely damaged mecha could still move; he hadn't expected a mecha with so many systems destroyed to keep up with the fierce pace of battle.

With a turn and a slash, Bai E targeted the crimson giant insect that had been knocked down by a flying kick but had gotten back up.

"Clang!" His reliable combat blade struck the chitin armor covering the beast, producing a sound like metal on metal.

It was only when facing the crimson behemoth head-on that Bai E could closely observe its features—all over its body was a red armor, so dark in places it was almost black, with a heavy carapace that left no trace of weakness exposed, not even at the joints designed for movement, where the bone armor was also extraordinary.

The information from the panel confirmed this—

[Your attack hit, but failed to penetrate the target's armor.]

[Based on the effect of your attack, you obtained the following information—]

[??? (Bug Race): Health ???/???; Defensive Power: 800; Attack Power (Type: Blunt) 600~600; Traits: Beast Template, Full Chitin Armor, Symbiotic Weapon—Rending Claws, Guardian Instinct; Mobility: 80%...]

High attack and defense, but slow movement, a pure war behemoth.

An 800-point defensive power nearly exceeded the limits of any means Bai E could currently employ, with mecha weapons unlikely to break through to such an extent.

An indestructible opponent.

And there were three of them!

The mecha controlled by Bai E faced off against the creature briefly, and during that brief exchange, both sides realized their opponent was not to be taken lightly.

While Bai E struggled to penetrate its defenses, the mecha, imbued with a degree of technical striking skill under his control, was not something the behemoth could simply overpower with brute force.

"Retreat..."

At that moment, a sonorous and indescribable voice suddenly resounded in his mind.

This familiar voice sent a shiver through Bai E, instantly reminding him of the shadow of some invincible giant beast.

Sure enough, following that command, the three crimson giants gave a final glance at the corpse of a gray-brown behemoth lying not far away, as if confirming that the target they were meant to guard was truly dead, and then turned and ran...

Their legs moved alternately, swaying from side to side, a comical sight.

Yet faced with this action, the few mecha that still had combat capability had no way to stop them.

Or rather, even if they could, no one wanted to.

Indestructible!

That was the stark reality everyone came to understand through the brief exchange.

"Let them go!" not until this moment did the command from the rear command vehicle finally arrive, delayed in the cockpits of Bai E's team members, "Get back and support the main battlefield, end the battle quickly."

The appearance of the new behemoths signaled endless variables, and the commander of the sizable mixed military forces felt uneasy, hoping to quickly achieve the strategic objective and then retreat as soon as possible.

"Yes!"

His team members responded instantly before relaying to Bai E, who had already cut off communication.

"I know," Bai E replied softly, gazing in the direction where the three crimson guardian behemoths had departed.

He vaguely felt as if he could see another familiar crimson figure—the Domineer.

Was that peerless beast also nearby?

Had it received news and come to aid but was unwilling to risk itself?

Or had it anticipated this all along and lay in ambush here but for some reason didn't act until the end?

Unknown.

The objectives of the Bug Race were not simple; while they refused communication, the creatures that had entangled with humanity for many years also possessed considerable intelligence.

It just wasn't clear... what exactly did they want?

"Shing!"

With his sword sheathed, Bai E turned and headed towards the rear line of the bugs.

Cold weapons could still be of use against single foes, but against the numerous swarm of bugs, hot weapons were more brisk and efficient.