

## Wow 531

### Chapter 531 Smart Machine Counterattack!\_2

While conducting maintenance on Bai E's ride, damaged mechs had already begun to return from the field, one after another.

Looking down from the high cockpit, the various maintenance drones resembled tiny ants, scurrying about in the vast hangar.

It seemed they occasionally encountered tricky issues; probing with their mechanical tentacles failed to pinpoint the crux of the problems.

Several grey-haired old masters were the ones they turned to for help.

Each had their own expertise.

Bai E curled his lips into a smile, retracted his gaze, and prepared to close his eyes to rest, intending to cultivate Spiritual Energy.

However, the moment he closed his eyes, a series of abrupt beeps sounded from inside his chest.

"Beep beep beep~"

The distinctive sound came from the communicator he had personally modified, similar to those he had given to Gilder and Kuang Xin, products exchanged with the military that he had privately altered.

Also a creation based on the internet, it possessed the same performance as the military's products, but any data transmitted would not be captured by the military's equipment.

There were only two parties that could contact this communicator—either Gilder or Kuang Xin.

And no matter who it was, they wouldn't initiate contact with him unless facing special circumstances.

What happened?

Bai E's brow furrowed slightly as he unzipped his uniform and took out the inconspicuously hidden, compact communicator.

From a player—

"Artificial intelligence retaliation, the town is lost!"

The message was brief, yet the information was concise.

Bai E had long known that AI always sought retribution.

Even for revenge, however, one had to find the real culprit.

As long as their operations were sufficiently covert and left no traces, Bai E did not believe these entities possessed the capacity for global pursuit.

The last time he and others attacked the AI fortress, hadn't there been no repercussions?

Although the troops under the command of the doctor did annihilate the first wave of AI reinforcements that very night, there was a substantial period when the first wave had retaken the fortress, yet they made no pursuit.

But clearly... this time, there was a misstep.

Either he had overestimated the stealth of their actions, or he had underestimated the AI's tracking methods.

Did he regret it? Not at all.

In the battle against the AI, it was a fight that had to happen sooner or later.

Regardless of whether it was for the development of the town, having a virtual world meant he needed the "Computing Power Resources" produced by AI.

Since the incident had already occurred, all that was left was to consider how to solve it.

"Ensure the safety of personnel during evacuation," Bai E replied immediately.

The town was their "foundation," and without his say, they probably wouldn't dare make decisions.

Bai E of course wanted to save people.

As the town was already a ruin, he didn't mind starting over from scratch.

But personnel were hard to come by.

In this era, people were both valuable and worthless.

Expendable lives were plentiful; probably every city saw countless poor die every day from various diseases, hunger, or bullying.

Yet loyal personnel who could be of use to him were incredibly important to the current Bai E.

To lose people and keep land would mean losing both; to keep people and lose land meant keeping both.

"Beep beep beep~"

The response came back quickly, but it was only two brief words—

"...Fight to the death."

Fight to the death...

Fight to the death!

They couldn't even manage a safe retreat?

Bai E quietly clenched the communicator in his hand, for the first time feeling that the situation had spiraled out of his control.

The distance was too great, and in his current state, he was powerless despite his willingness.

Unless...

Bai E's gaze shifted downwards; the dark grey platform underfoot remained silent but was exceptionally reliable.

Mechas could disregard harsh terrains; with their field movement speed far surpassing any known human vehicle and their defensive capabilities maxed out, as long as one didn't crash headlong into a Bug Race nest, one could virtually traverse the fields with impunity.

If one were to pilot a mecha... perhaps it could still be in time?

But according to the normal procedure, how should he "learn" of a group of "refugees" being attacked by intelligent machinery far outside the city? And even dispatch a mecha to rescue them?

In the eyes of the military, a group of refugees of unknown origin probably isn't as important as the materials expended and the risks undertaken for a mecha sortie.

Submitting an application would surely only lead to rejection.

Or... Act first, report later?

"..."

Just the thought of this sole possibility for carrying out the rescue made Bai E's heart pound "thump-thump."

On one side, his own foundation.

On the other, the order of the barracks.

Whether he could protect himself with his current strength, prestige, and status in the barracks, Bai E wasn't sure.

He was no longer that newly created artificial human who was always on tenterhooks, afraid of being dissected at any moment.

Perhaps it wasn't out of the question to challenge the status quo... to test how this era really regarded someone with his potential and strength.

Besides, even if he messed up...

Yue Ying's promise was his last line of defense.

"Buzz!"

"Buzz!"

The sudden movement of the intact, enormous mecha naturally startled many mech servants who were working overtime in the hangar.

It was already evening. Where would the mecha be headed at this hour?

The warehouse manager urgently connected to the voice channel inside Bai E's cockpit, "Captain Bai?"

"I've just received a notice from the instructor. We are close to deploying, and we need to carry out a mission at night to enhance our nocturnal training."

"..."

It sounded reasonable, pretty convincing.

But something seemed off...

Before the manager could figure out what was amiss, the enormous mecha continued on its way.

"The mission is urgent, I'm heading out now."

"Oh~ Take care," the manager said almost reflexively.

A regular mech pilot of the Mech Armored Corps was treated like nobility in the barracks, let alone a "legendary" one.

An ordinary mech servant could be crushed to death by these elites without so much as a peep, which was why all mech servants both respected and feared each regular pilot.

Only soldiers who were doing poorly in the armored battalion would be transferred to the position of a mech servant.

Even though the manager was the head of all the mech servants, he was essentially a mech servant nonetheless.

They had the right to refuse a mecha sortie, but generally wouldn't... nor dare to go against the will of the regular pilots.

Suddenly recalling something, the manager shouted after the retreating mecha, "Sir, you haven't equipped your weapon modules!"

Apart from the basic equipment like the alloy sword and shield, all other armaments including machine guns, missile arrays, flamethrowers, and so on, were only loaded into the mecha body before a battle when needed.

Without the weapons, relying only on the mecha's mechanical quality and a sword, the combat power it could exert would not be a tenth of its full capability, at least it would lose versatility for most combat situations.

"No need," came Bai E's voice from the communicator.

Bai E rejected outright, afraid that the military system would react and deny him even the chance to ask forgiveness later.

"Oh, then safe travels."

Watching the colossal silhouette of the Titan-class armed mecha gradually disappear into the mist of the night, the manager still smiled cheerily.

A mission at night?

That's quite unusual.

But surely the sir wouldn't dare to openly defy military regulations and move out on his own... right?

After all, there hadn't been such a precedent before... had there?

Every regular mech pilot who made it into the Mech Armored Corps was an absolute elite, handpicked for their role. They likely wouldn't be the kind of person to make such foolish, self-sabotaging moves... right?

The manager shuddered, feeling a sudden chill envelop him.

Fuck, could he really be the first unfortunate one?

The sir was an absolute elite, rumored to be the Chosen One even favored by the Mechanical Court; a little defiance of military discipline might not break him.

But what about himself?

What is he but rotten fish and shrimp?

"Quick! Contact the military affairs department!" the manager shouted, then turned and sprinted towards the central control platform, "Nevermind, I'll do it myself!"

Chapter 532 Sublimation!

[The territory you control—Li Ming Town—is under threat, triggering a time-limited event. From now on, you can issue time-limited regional quests to all players in the area through this event.]

Having just left the barracks in his Mecha, Bai E received a prompt from his panel, an event happening far away was nonetheless closely related to him.

It might be due to some "system mechanics" that he was unaware of, or perhaps because of the "connector" he had with the town that allowed him to know what was happening within his territory.

Anyhow, the opportunity to issue a time-limited regional quest presented itself once again, glaringly obvious before his eyes.

What's there to hesitate about?

To prevent the players from slacking off, a mission with benefits always encouraged them to exhibit more initiative.

[Task description auto-generation in progress...]

[Time-limited task—Defend the Town (Regional Quest): Your aggressive actions have enraged the wandering mechanical ghosts on the wasteland. Following the edicts left by the primal creator, these mechanical ghosts will relentlessly pursue any creature that has attacked them, never stopping until death. Before real reinforcements arrive, the safety of the town is in your hands!

Task requirements: Defend Li Ming Town for 1 hour, 29 minutes and 59 seconds.

Task rewards: General experience 1~400 points (individual participation reward, to be determined by the "integrity of Li Ming Town", adjustable), general experience 12,000~18,000 points (collective reward for all participants, to be determined by contribution to the battle, adjustable), item rewards (undetermined).]

[Do you want to issue the current quest?]

Set all experience rewards to the highest, and add a faction reputation reward!

[Confirm and issue!]

...

"The boss sent a reply, asking us to evacuate everyone," Kuang Xin said softly, seeking Gong Yan's opinion.

"Evacuate? With what shall we evacuate?" Gong Yan furrowed her brows, having no intention of doing so.

By relying on those old cars in the town that rattled loudly as soon as they started? Or on the legs of the civilians?

With the forces of the intelligent machines closing in, running out to the plains outside the town would only turn them into exposed targets.

In contrast, holding the town might offer a slim chance of defeating the enemy.

After managing the town for quite some time, some basic defenses and immovable heavy machine guns and such could help them fend off the enemy.

The premise was... that the scale of the approaching mechanized troops wasn't as large as the factory's intelligent machine guards that the boss fought that day.

Thinking back to the firepower of the intelligent machines that day, all the players couldn't help but shudder.

Even though they all believed in a bright future, they didn't have the boss's ability to bathe in missile fire before they had grown.

If the intelligent machines coming had that kind of strength, it would be sensible to pack up and run as soon as possible.

The pioneering benefits had ended, and they had no clue where the next set of benefits was.

Of course, they knew that among the players with them, three had become core officials of the town.

The development of a new power did indeed present opportunities, but the few available slots had already been filled by those with connections, leaving nothing for the rest. Were they supposed to stay put and wait for death?

Players were creatures without much sentiment; it was difficult to keep them around without long-term benefits.

Moreover, by nature, they were keen on exploring novelties, and unless there was a clear path to rapidly advance their strength laid out before them, everything else was nonsense.

If it weren't for the wilderness surrounding them, depriving them of any direction to escape to, many would have already fled long ago.

Gong Yan knew that these players had their ideas. The convoy filled with steel that left the town not long ago was their target for infiltration.

They had heard that this convoy would shuttle back and forth between some mysterious location and the town, and following it to leave this town, which seemed doomed to most, was the plan they had previously considered.

But now with a formidable enemy ahead, they probably no longer had the patience...

Gong Yan looked at the gathering of players who had already shown signs of disloyalty, her eyes slightly creased with concern as she asked the nearby Kuang Xin, "Has Dai not come back yet?"

"Not yet." Kuang Xin was also frowning, his two battle axes in hand itching for a fight.

The boss's remarkable battle achievements had his blood boiling, and if given the chance, he too wanted to experience that feeling.

"He's back! Dai is back!" A lookout announced from a distance.

With time, the name "Dai" had become deeply entrenched in everyone's hearts.

Dai Lian, wearing a black skin-tight suit, swiftly entered the dim light of the town, scanned the faces of all the players, and with as calm a breath as possible, he stated the facts, "I went far out to check—the intelligent machine army hasn't actually locked onto us yet."

"They seem to have only targeted a general direction. What they've sent initially are carpet-searching individuals designed for scouting suspicious targets. Those few we jointly dispatched earlier are their most basic scouting soldiers."

Dai Lian's first statement provided a momentary relief to the unstable minds of most players; no one wanted to abandon this precious land unless truly necessary.

Developing under this power was much more stimulating than their past experience in Grey Iron City.

Yet the follow-up report from Dai Lian undoubtedly cast another shadow over their hearts.

Chapter 533 Sublimation!\_2

"The most basic scout?"

"Even the most basic scout is that formidable?"

The foundational combat units of the mecha lacked the capacity to carry too many intelligence modules, and their combat choices were limited to only two modes: "close combat escape" and "long-range firepower".

When encountered at close range by humans, they would use spear-like weapons carried on their bodies and rely on their mechanical strength to forcefully push back, maintaining a certain distance before raising their machine guns and firing instantly.

As basic units, the movements of mecha scouts were certainly not agile, but with the powerful firepower of the machine guns in their hands and the immense force that machinery could exert, they still caused quite a bit of trouble for the players.

Especially since mecha were inherently made of steel, players armed only with rudimentary handmade pistols could hardly inflict damage that penetrated their defenses.

The foundational mecha scout units often required three or four players to work together to defeat them without injury or with only minor injuries, and if they encountered units that were more numerous and ferocious, wouldn't they all be screwed?

The game's death penalty was so severe, no one wanted to recklessly risk their lives.

Having only been in contact with the "Dawn" organization for a short time, they didn't yet feel that the organization within the game was worth sacrificing one of their in-game lives to protect.

Dai Lian took a glance at the players whispering among themselves; he knew their mentality.

As a player himself, when he was unfamiliar with the adults, he had the same mindset. When confronting an impossible situation, running away was the most natural choice.

He wouldn't keep these players around by lying to them, but at least... he had to let them see a glimmer of hope for victory.

"I've investigated carefully, and the mecha army's structure is divided into three echelons. The first echelon consists of scouts carrying out a carpet-like search; the second echelon is made up of the Vanguard Team that performs confirmation; the last is the actual main force of the mecha."

"The true main force of the mecha only has one group, and they do not divide their forces. Currently, they are also in a silent state of preparation. They will only be deployed when they have confirmed that we are the enemy. So, for the short term, our actual opponents are actually the Vanguard Team from the second echelon."

The mecha clearly had their unique ways of communication. Whether it was the active return of the first echelon's scout units to report back or the entire loss of scout units searching a particular area, both were sufficient to trigger their second-tier lockdown measures.

From what Dai Lian observed, there were already two Vanguard Teams from the second echelon on their way towards the town.

One in front of the other, approximately more than ten kilometers apart.

"...So, we actually do have the possibility of resistance."

There was a substantial amount of time between the discovery of mecha scout units, the attack from the Vanguard Team of the second echelon, mounting a defense, and the mecha's third echelon locking down the town and launching their final assault.

They didn't need the strength to defeat the third echelon's main mecha force, but only needed the capability to defeat the second echelon's Vanguard Team and delay until the main mecha force initiated their actual attack.

What remained to be seen was whether the adults would be strong enough.

"...If by then the adults still haven't sent help or arrived to support us on their own, even if we abandon the town and retreat, we won't lose everything in the eyes of the organization."

Most players didn't have a profound relationship with the "Dawn" organization, but Dai Lian and the others didn't want to give up the relationships they had accumulated since entering the game.

They definitely couldn't hold out until the arrival of the adults on their own; only if these dozens of players worked together did they have a chance to protect the vulnerable town.

Dai Lian's thoughts didn't escape the notice of those players.

"What's in it for us, huh? There's no mission, and if it gets destroyed, so be it."

"Exactly, if this place gets destroyed, that big shot might even come back to rebuild. Then there might be a new wave of pioneering missions. Bliss~"

"You may be afraid of losing face in front of that big shot, but we're not. I'm not going to risk my life for you guys!"

"I'm heading west; who's with me!" A brawny man raised his huge axe, leading the way with a loud call.

And so supporters gathered, "Me!"

"Me!"

"And me!"

[A time-sensitive mission has been triggered—Protect the Town (Regional Commission)...]

"..."

"I'm not going!"

"I'm not going!"

"I'm not going either!"

"To live as a person of Li Ming Town, to die as a ghost of Li Ming Town!" the burly man hoisted his great axe and turned to look in the direction of the northeast, "Brothers, let's go chop up those iron clunks!"

"..."

"..."

Watching their morale instantly boosted, Gong Yan and Dai Lian exchanged a silent look, feeling both relieved and speechless.

Relieved because the adults really packed a punch.

Speechless because the players were truly realistic.

Not wanting to waste their high spirits, Gong Yan made an immediate decision, "Attack! Meet the enemy!"

The experience rewards in the mission depended on the integrity of the town. If they actually let the Mechanoids break in, even if they managed to defend using the fortifications prepared in advance, the town would inevitably suffer losses.

The pre-set defenses could only be activated at the very last resort. If possible, they naturally had to repel the enemy outside the gates!

"Lin Lude! You take a hundred people to hold the position. Do not leave no matter what happens. If we can't hold the front, we will retreat on our own."

The players couldn't be commanded by her, but all NPCs regarded her as "Sheng Yan."

It was impossible for the town's military force to rely solely on players. Among the NPCs, there also had to be their own self-defense forces established.

Selecting two hundred robust NPC soldiers from the more than a thousand somewhat defective Grey Iron City failures was the limit of what she could do, and now... she would lead another hundred of them, after some rudimentary training, onto the real battlefield against the alien race.

"All remaining people, follow me and strike out!"

...

"Clang clang clang clang!" The machine guns brought from Grey Iron City were the most powerful individual weapons available to Li Ming Town.

However, the firepower of the machine guns that the current players of limited strength could carry to battle was ultimately limited, and when fired at the thick Mechanoid armor vehicles, they only sparked a shower of sparks.

As for other small pistols and rifles, they weren't even worth mentioning, not causing even a spark upon impact.

Dai Lian drew his bowstring, hesitating whether to take action.

His Spiritual Energy wasn't very strong, standing at 10/10 even up to this day.

The Mechanoids' Vanguard Team had not only some basic light combat units but also five heavy armored vehicles and two heavy firepower humanoid Mechanoids.

Coordinating with other players to deal with those two humanoid Mechanoids with heavy firepower had already drained all of his Spiritual Energy and some of his reserve of action power. His remaining reserve of action power could support him at most to shoot two more arrows.

Two arrows, could they penetrate five heavy armored vehicles?

Moreover, completely exhausting himself on this wave of the Vanguard Team, what would he do about the next wave of the attack? Not to mention, many players were already battered and bruised, with a few unlucky ones already waiting for three days to resurrect.

In such a direct confrontation with a large number of alien forces, Dai Lian realized just how limited an individual's power truly was.

"Damn it, I'll give it a shot!" a male player, after aimlessly shooting a rifle for a long while and finding it useless, threw away his rifle.

Instead, he picked up the iron shield of a fallen comrade and a string of grenades and charged towards one of the heavy armored vehicles.

"Da da da da!" The Mechanoid armored vehicle that noticed the player's move instantly redirected its firepower, with two machine guns spewing even hotter streams of bullets at the charging warrior.

"Cover him!" Gong Yan called out from a distance to Kuang Xin.

"Got it." Kuang Xin, with his twin axes in hand, charged forward and hurled an axe at one of the firing machine guns.

The hit machine gun immediately fell silent, but the remaining one continued to spit out its fiery tongue.

"Aaaahhhh!" The player charging with the shield could only hide his upper body behind it, attempting to dodge in an S-shaped pattern as much as possible. The few bullets that still hit the shield were extraordinarily powerful, and in the intense clash, the player had forgotten everything.

A scarlet color descended invisibly amidst the charge, and the player felt an unprecedented surge of strength coursing through his body.

[You have received the Admiration of the God of Strength. Your body transcends the fear of death and is sublimated, physical strength +1.]

Chapter 534 Desperate Insanity

With a surge in physical strength, wounds pierced by bullets healed quickly in a glow of red light as the player charged forward.

Holding up his shield, the player managed to rush all the way to the side of the steel war vehicle.

While still a distance away, the player jumped off a huge rock by the road, his robust strength propelling his body through the air and across the vast space.

"Snap!"

His flesh smashed against the war vehicle, and the conical sharp spikes on the surface of the steel vehicle instantly pierced his body with countless holes.

Gushing blood poured out, drops of blood frothed from the corners of his mouth, yet the player felt no pain, only an enthralling rush of madness.

[You have received significant piercing damage and have entered a "Critical" and "Severe Bleeding" state.]

[Health -48!]

[You are suffering from bleeding damage, Health -3.]

[...Health -3.]

[...Health -3.]

[You are on the verge of a "Severe Injury Coma" state, please disengage from combat immediately!  
Please disengage from combat immediately!]

A barrage of warnings continuously erupted from the panel, but at the moment, the player subconsciously ignored them all.

In the game, a life is nothing but a number; if it wants it, let it go.

What matters is the thrill!

"Click~"

The safety catch was released, and a string of grenades slipped into the soft, vulnerable interior of the armored vehicle through the cracks and crevices.

"Boom!"

A violent fireball erupted inside the vehicle's cabin as the ammunition used by the machine intelligence ignited in a chain reaction, and an even more spectacular blaze burst from within the armored vehicle.

The seemingly indestructible armor instantly disintegrated from the inside out, shards of steel covered in spikes exploded outward, carrying with them the player's body that had been hanging on the outside, dismembering it and propelling it in all directions.

Everyone had eliminated the light machine intelligence basic combat units, much like human infantry and tank cooperative tactics; without the infantry cover, heavy armor also had its fatal flaws.

The fiery blaze lit up the earth at night, and onlookers such as Gong Yan instinctively shielded their eyes with their hands, the orange light still illuminating the lower half of their faces.

The sweeping heat wave brushed the tips of everyone's hair, and the indigenous people following Gong Yan fell silent.

Players who were further away whispered among themselves.

"Old Bear died for the second time, didn't he?"

"Yeah..."

"There are still four vehicles left..."

"Whoever loves going can go; I'm certainly not going."

Completing the mission is to gain experience, but what's the use of experience if you're dead?

Behind Gong Yan, inspired indigenous people emerged from the shadows.

"Sheng Yan, we have always been under your care, and now that our territory is threatened, I think it's time for us to do something," one of them said.

Originally, they were just ordinary people who had been frustrated in Grey Iron City; it was under Sheng Yan that they had found a new lease on life.

Sheng Yan had given them a second life, dignity, and a future.

They felt they had to give something back.

"Be someone useful to Sheng Yan!"

This phrase was engraved in the hearts of all the indigenous members selected for the town's armed guard.

"Let's go," they murmured among themselves.

Gong Yan waved her hand in a silent, almost cold gesture, "Go."

Sacrifice was anticipated.

And it was inevitable.

The world was always cold and cruel, it's just that Sheng Yan had always protected them too well.

It was time for them to face some cold truths on their own.

Arm raised from within the shadows, a man's voice rang out firm and strong, "Brothers! For Sheng Yan! Charge!"

And so, all of them pressed on towards the four advancing heavy armored vehicles with their flesh and blood.

They knew they weren't as powerful as those strange beings that seemed out of place in this world, and they also knew that the one who had just succeeded was even among those strange folks considered strong and lucky.

But if one wasn't enough, then ten would suffice; if ten weren't enough, then a hundred.

They swarmed together, using their bodies to block all the bullets for their comrades behind them, determined to rip a piece of flesh from their target.

Simple and pure.

"Pop, pop, pop, pop!"

The sound of bullets striking shields or flesh was incessant, and those torn apart by the bullet storm let out not even a whimper before death.

Their suppressed grunts were the last sound they left in this world.

A silent charge, a silent death, only the deafening roar of the machine guns filled the air.

"..."

Witnessing all this, the players gradually fell silent as well.

Many players never cared much about the background stories in the game; they only cared about the benefits they could get to show off in front of other players or NPCs.

But when that background story, considered to be of no consequence, suddenly hit them in the face, they too couldn't help but pause for a moment to immerse themselves in it.

"For this territory, they can just throw away their lives..."

"Are the beliefs in their hearts more important than life itself?"

Ultimately, there was no answer.

Nor would anyone provide one.

"Boom!"

"Boom!"

Fireworks bloomed one after another, and the scent of charred flesh from the scattered corpses filled the air.

Gong Yan's group of a hundred indigenous warriors had lost over half their number, and even the twenty or thirty who were still standing were all injured.

"The next wave is coming soon!"

Chapter 535: Desperate Insanity\_2

Before everyone had time to tidy up the battlefield or pull themselves together, the indigenous scouts, who had been dispatched to observe follow-up situations, quickly returned to report their observations.

It seemed that the second mechanical vanguard team heading for the town had somehow received news of resistance encountered by the first vanguard team and had suddenly quickened its pace, not giving these injured defenders of the town a moment's respite.

"What should we do?" Kuang Xin, who was right beside Gong Yan, asked directly.

He only knew how to slash; apart from that, he offered no suggestions for anything else.

Sometimes emptying one's mind was actually a quite comfortable experience.

"Retreat! Fall back to the second line of defense!"

There was no hesitating.

Defending near the town at the second line of defense might result in devastating damage to the town, which had just begun to take shape, but relying solely on their current, battered combat strength, which had already endured one wave of assault without proper rest, it wouldn't matter whether it was a stronger mechanical vanguard team or just another of the same size; they would be completely annihilated.

While retreating, Gong Yan sent out her people, "Go ask if everyone has been properly arranged."

The town's area was actually quite extensive, and the area they were rebuilding was just a small part of it.

The defensive line was built right next to the current reconstruction area of the town, originally intended to defend against threats like wild beasts that might wander in from the wild.

However, the downside was that any skirmish would risk stray bullets damaging the newly established facilities.

The efforts of the community in recent days were doomed to be wasted, but ensuring that no one was harmed by the aftermath was already the most significant effort they could make.

If the town completely fell before Sheng Yan's assistance arrived... they would all be done for.

"Yes, Lord Sheng Yan," the warrior took the order and left.

The surviving soldiers at the second line of defense had completed all the preparations for combat even before Gong Yan and the others had returned, ready for the battle.

The second mechanical vanguard team didn't make the town's defenders wait too long.

"Buzz buzz buzz~"

The low rumble of machinery approached slowly, almost on the heels of Gong Yan and the others' retreat.

Due to material limitations, the mechanical troops of lower rank might not be able to use top-tier materials and cutting-edge technology like the first generation of mechanical beings could.

But at least the mechanical creations weren't noisy heaps of junk like the few in the town, which could wake up dogs ten miles around when started up.

"It looks like this vanguard team is even bigger than the previous one..."

"More than just bigger, it's much larger, right?"

"If only we could capture all that nice gear and make it usable for us," a player said, eyes full of envy at the sight of the approaching heavy armored vehicles.

"We're about to be blown to bits here, and you still have the heart to covet other people's equipment?"

"Hey~ can't I just dream a little?"

They were players!

Players had infinite possibilities!

As the murmurs dissolved into the wind, a series of fireworks suddenly burst from the ground as they entered the land of the town.

"Boom!"

"Boom!"

Trenches, landmines.

These basic traps were one of the reasons this battle line existed.

However, only the basic light combat units of the mechanical beings would be harmed; the heavily armored vehicles emerged unscathed from the flames, driving out with ease.

"Dadadadadada!"

Closing in at a sufficient distance, the heavy machine guns set up on the defense line opened fire together.

The intense recoil required two or three people to hold it down, but they still couldn't stop the endless climb of the gun's muzzle.

Without the matching mechanical devices, even ordinary humans couldn't operate heavy weaponry.

"Ding ding dang dang," sparks splashed when hitting the heavy armor and managed to tear through a couple of fragile bodies on the light armor, making the scene look quite lively.

But the mechanical counterattack was also swift.

"Whizz!"

A small rocket dragging an orange flame advanced and suddenly burrowed into the machine gun position.

"Boom!"

"Boom!"

"Boom!"

Now that the shooting had started, the machine intelligences no longer held back on their firepower.

After scanning and discerning the general positions of the biological combatants, a cluster of rockets launched a round of bombing.

"Take cover!"

The preparation on the front line was fairly complete, and as they faced the full firepower of the machine intelligence Vanguard Team, all Gong Yan managed was to shout out a final order before she had to dive under the steel plate below her to escape the threat of the rockets.

"Boom boom boom boom!"

The explosions joined together, turning the shelter where everyone hid into a fiery furnace scorching with intense heat.

"Hiss hot hot hot hot!"

The moment the explosions subsided, a soldier kicked open the steel plate of their hiding spot and rushed out, weapon in hand, charging at the Vanguard Team of the machine intelligences.

Flesh against steel.

Infantry against tanks.

The juxtaposition of high-tech and primitive combat styles appeared abruptly on the same battlefield, yet this was "Galaxy Online"!

"Sssah sssah!" A player, looking at their hand smoking as it stuck to the glowing red steel plate, had a hysterical frenzy and intoxication in their eyes.

"Awesome! Awesome!" The player's hand was inseparable from the steel plate, but that didn't stop them from dragging the heavy plate across the ground as they charged toward the machine intelligence formation.

"Come on! Come on!"

"Tear me apart! Or let me tear you apart!"

[You have received the admiration of the God of Pleasure. Your will has transcended amidst the severe sensory stimulation, Mystery +1, Spiritual Energy +10/10.]

"Sizzle sizzle sizzle sizzle!"

An indescribable twisted sound erupted on that massive steel war machine, chunks of steel contorted as if crushed by an invisible fist amidst a grating noise that could make one's teeth hurt.

However, the resilience of the steel was undoubtedly matching that mysterious force, the slightly lifted deckplate was hardly a devastating blow to the war machine.

But that was enough!

Underneath the armor lifted by the mysterious power lay the soft, vulnerable core of the steel war machine.

"Whizz whizz whizz whizz!"

Grenades trailed beautiful arcs through the air from all directions, with some landing precisely into the gaping tears.

The next moment, the war machine shattered with a roar, setting off a chain explosion whose shockwaves swept up many soldiers who had approached close by, sending them flying instantaneously.

Meanwhile, at some distance from the war machine, a soft muffled sound was lost in the intense explosions of the battlefield, barely noticed by others.

"Pfft~"

The player who had been marching forward dragging the hot steel plate stopped mid-charge, still in the bent posture of dragging the plate, but their head exploded under some unknown force.

Like a watermelon smashed by a fist, bits here... pieces there...

"John!" A player, who had been keeping an eye on his friend, roared in rage, "I'm not dead yet! How the hell did you die again!"

Looking at the headless corpse standing motionless, he cursed and then looked down at his own stomach where a huge hole had opened—

Realistic organs poured out like water; feeling no pain, he wrapped them back up messily with his muddy hands and stuffed them back in, then found a roll of bandages and blindly wrapped it around himself several times.

"Damn it, no fear!"

Although his health was rapidly depleting, how could one not be worked up in such a situation?

All the prior thoughts and personal plans were overwhelmed by the frenzy of battle on this head-on, intense battlefield.

The player who had risen again took the long spear from where John had fallen and charged once more toward the next steel war machine.

"I curse your mother!"

[You have received the admiration of the God of Immortality. Your body has transcended in the face of near-death, Strength +0.5, Health +50/50.]

"Whoosh!"

The spear, like a meteor, flashed by in the night.

It pierced right into the barrel of a machine gun.

"Bang!"

Jammed, backfired.

Blasted to pieces.

Countless dark figures swarmed to the side of the war machine amidst the chaos, overwhelming the terrifying machine that had been brandishing its power on the battlefield.

Chapter 536: Swimming Dragon!

Scattered wounds covered the ground.

Charring remains of bodies and fractured steel were everywhere, the air saturated with the smell of blood-infused motor oil and gunpowder.

Row upon row of residential buildings had collapsed, and a factory that had yet to be completed was mercilessly destroyed.

Unquenched flames could be seen everywhere, lighting up the earth against the dark night sky.

[...Countdown: 28 minutes 37 seconds.]

Gong Yan glanced at the countdown for the regional time-limited mission and then turned to look at the shadows still standing on the field.

One... two... three...

Twenty-seven...

The indigenous forces were almost completely wiped out, leaving just over twenty players holding the last stand.

However, judging by the status of these remaining few, they too were at the end of their tether.

Forget another wave of Vanguard Teams; even a few more basic reconnaissance AIs would be enough to overwhelm them.

"Snap—" The giant axe was suddenly discarded at his side, and Kuang Xin collapsed to the ground.

Even though the game doesn't cause physical fatigue that would make the players feel sore and uncomfortable, the mental stress inevitably led to exhaustion.

"I can't fight anymore." Kuang Xin panted heavily, his in-game body reacting like a real one to the player's commands, but somehow, Kuang Xin always felt it wasn't quite satisfying.

It felt like his nose was blocked, suffocating him, as if the air he breathed was being taken into someone else's lungs, causing discomfort.

The game was realistic enough, but this simulated reality was still not the real thing.

Unsatisfying...

"What do we do if another wave comes?" Dai Lian also walked over unsteadily, equally powerless.

Drained of Spiritual Energy and physical strength, even drawing his bow was a struggle, let alone firing that transcendent arrow.

After defeating two waves of AI Vanguard Teams, they had nearly exhausted all the strength of every combatant present.

In fact, the fact that they were not seriously injured made them rare among the remaining survivors.

"I don't know..." Gong Yan's gaze swept the area, "The scouts have not returned; we don't know when the AI's next attack will come."

Right now, other than waiting and praying, they had no better options.

In the distance, scattered weak flickers of light joined together, emerging from behind the ruins' corner, gradually becoming clearer.

Beneath every torch was a determined face.

"This is our home!"

"If you want to destroy our home, you'll have to step over our bodies first!"

Hiding in the underground caves previously inhabited by giant spiders, listening to the continuous loud disturbance from above, those who had been sent to hide could no longer bear the torment of waiting.

This "home" they had built with their own hands—if anyone wanted to destroy it, they were ready to fight to the death.

"Perhaps our strength is insignificant, but at least we can't always be hiding turtles."

Taking over the weapons and machine guns from the remaining players, the impaired survivors of Grey Iron City filled the new line of defense.

"We are either old and weak or physically impaired, we're all broken people, and it was the adults who gave us a chance at rebirth..."

The disabled, leaning heavily on a still-hot heavy machine gun, peered sharply through his sole remaining eye using the sight, toward the misty night.

"To die for the adults is the greatest value of our lives!"

...

[Your citizens' faith acknowledges you as the sole radiance, and your "Soul Black Hole" absorbs the dissipated forces of faith, successfully converting them into 50/50 Spiritual Energy added to your spiritual energy reserves.]

The sudden panel notification made Bai E pause for a moment, then the surge in Spiritual Energy kicked in at once.

The abundant Spiritual Energy expanded from within Bai E, and after a brief delay, it transformed into a mechanized force, covering the entire Mecha.

Under the willpower's influence, the mechanized force formed a wind-breaking barrier at the front of the Mecha, which was not designed to be aerodynamic, and the air resistance was dramatically reduced.

Spiritual Energy phase one—Enhancement of the Spiritual Heart translated into a mechanized version, boosting the Mecha's speed significantly.

"Whoosh!"

A blue and white afterimage streaked through the air, the wind revealing the untended dry yellow grass and small nocturnal creatures daring to move at night.

...

"Humming~" A deep electrical humming slowly descended.

The massive mechanical titan broke through the night's fog.

Fargreater than the previous Vanguard Teams, the colossal silhouette of the titan descended upon the shattered town like a Demon God.

The one-eyed soldier holding the machine gun instinctively raised his head from the ground, his mouth gaping as he allowed his gaze to rise unobstructed, trying to see the full extent of their adversary.

[Life signs detected, execute cleansing directive.]

The synthetic digital voice of the machine declared the final fate of all the resistors, as the stout, humanoid titan raised two missile arrays filled with rocket heads on its shoulders.

"Swoosh~ Swoosh~ Swoosh~"

One after another, the rockets ignited, and the intense white vapor scattered violently.

Death had arrived!

[...Countdown: 5 minutes 01 second.]

After taking one final look at the mission countdown, Gong Yan smiled helplessly and turned to Dai Lian and Kuang Xin at her side.

"Bye-bye~"

"Time to read~"

"See you in three days."

Voices from the players rose one after another, all of them calmly awaiting death to come.

Chapter 537: Swimming Dragon!\_2

"Boom! Boom! Boom!"

However, the tremors from beneath their feet also began to spread from the distance, becoming more frequent.

"Swoosh!"

The endless gale swept up the hair of those who had closed their eyes to await death, and in the next moment, a series of explosions erupted right in front of everyone.

"Bang! Bang! Bang! Bang!"

The flames lit up half the sky like the most scorching sun in summer, glaring so intensely that it was hard for anyone to look directly at it.

Once the light had faded slightly, all those who had their eyes dazzled by the incandescent glow could finally make out the towering blue and white figure stretching up towards the sky.

"Holy...shit!"

"Mecha... mecha mecha mecha!"

A string of players had their eyes glued to the sight, their speech no longer coherent.

What did they see?

Mecha!

"Mecha!"

"Is that a mecha?!"

"There really are mechas in this world!"

Mechas are illogical, they don't make sense in terms of cost-performance in the real world.

But this humanoid mechanical weapon is just cool! So cool it causes tingles on the scalp, so cool that every cell in the body trembles with excitement.

"Step back and protect yourselves," Bai E's voice echoed through the power of Spiritual Energy under this night sky, "Your mission is already complete."

The familiar voice caught the remaining native warriors off guard for a moment.

"Sir!"

"It's the Sir who has come!"

Everyone had hoped the Sir would not abandon them, and everyone had imagined the Sir would surely arrive when they were in despair.

But nobody had expected the Sir to make such an overwhelmingly strong and grand entrance.

Compared to the cold, black-gray war machines of the Smart Machinery, the humanoid machine driven by the Sir was obviously more stylish.

["Lucky Strike" energy charge +50.]

The war machines of the Smart Machinery were not troubled by this sudden external factor.

A string of data streams, recognizable only by the insides of the Smart Machinery, transmitted through mechanical force—this was the biggest communication means between two different Smart Machinery clans.

Under the surveillance of Heavenly Eye's Spiritual Energy, it was of course "seen" by Bai E as the data tentacles extended towards him.

However, at this moment, Bai E had no intention of beating around the bush with the opponent.

Collapsed buildings, corpses everywhere, flames spread all around...

Operating a mecha to come here, he was bound to face a series of questioning from the military upon his return.

Flee?

There was no escape.

To say he could escape with a Titan mecha, would the military of Blackwater City still have a foothold in the future?

No matter where he fled, to the ends of the earth or if he sought refuge in any city with equivalent power, he could not escape the pursuit of Blackwater City.

On the contrary, by returning proactively, there was still a glimmer of hope for the situation.

The counterattack against the Smart Machinery here must be decisive and swift!

If there was going to be a fight, then let it be a satisfying one!

Bai E picked up the alloy blade and with a turn, he struck at the dark war machine of the Smart Machinery.

The blade hummed softly, trembling at a hyper-frequency that was imperceptible to mortals.

Ever since he had established a connection with the mecha, Bai E had been able to use all of his abilities in the form of the mecha. Although the consumption of Spiritual Energy was nearly ten times higher than usual, even the same moves, when executed in mecha form, were much more powerful than in human form.

The quality of the alloy blade was certainly considerable. However, for a mecha over ten meters tall, the blade was simply considered a light weapon.

At this moment, the skill unlocked after specializing in light weapons level four—Magic Blade—augments the weapon, and the same high-frequency cutting on a battle saber enlarged countless times displays even more terrifying power.

"Zing!"

It cuts through iron like mud.

No matter how massive the vanguard war fortress of the smart machines, it's still not on par with the materials and technology used by the first generation of smart machines, and it had virtually no chance to resist the strike delivered by Bai E in his mecha form.

The entire upper third of the war fortress was instantaneously blasted away, and the terrifying existence that filled the town with despair was no match for Bai E piloting the mecha.

Soaring Dragon!

The blue and white mecha, like a streak of white lightning, weaves through the army sent by the smart machines to eradicate them.

Spiritual Energy transformed into mechanical force covers the blade, constantly fortifying the mecha with the power of Spiritual Energy phase one—Spiritual Heart Passage.

Rose's progress is indeed astonishingly rapid, but when working together with Bai E, it always seemed like he was fighting with one arm tied behind his back.

Born with the body of a machine, a mechanical mind, mechanical rhythm, and all the other abilities to enhance him, he had long possessed the true capacity to pilot a mecha alone, and he could bring out even stronger abilities than collaborating with another person whose level didn't match his own.

Handling both the big moves and the subtle nuances, no partnership between two mech pilots could match the understanding one has with oneself.

On this night, devoid of any personnel from Blackwater City mech related staff, the military's highly anticipated mecha exhibited for the first time the full potential these weapons of war were designed to deliver.

The leading massive smart machine fortress was of course not the sole strength of the smart machine army.

To be termed an army, their forces stretched for miles on this operation, with the massive fortress merely the vanguard clearing the way.

However, Bai E's mecha left only remnants of white in its wake, like the most terrifying god of death in this world. Given time to recover and now fully operational once again, the Spiritual Energy drained was almost instantly replenished by the "virtual world" through "rapid recovery," and where the alloy saber passed, only sparks and lightning flew.

The blaze from the exploded smart machines guided the grim reaper's path of action, yet they always fell behind.

The flames, lighting up the night sky.

"What's happening over there?"

Fire often represents civilization, or rather, technology.

Being so far away, neither the insects nor the beastmen could cause such a commotion.

"There are no cities over there, could it be the smart machines?"

The instructors, who set out in pursuit of Bai the moment they received news of his "desertion" in a military mecha, and the esteemed member of the Mechanical Court beside them communicated succinctly with each other.

"That direction is indeed the one reported by those who saw Captain Bai flee."

"But that's not enough to serve as evidence."

Why would someone intent on desertion reveal their true destination?

In this era, the human surveillance of the wilderness is limited; anyone with a bit of intelligence knows to mislead pursuers with a false direction before truly escaping towards their intended destination after a certain distance from the city.

"Does Captain Bai have any reason to desert?"

The rationale is crucial, as it will determine the direction of their pursuit.

Given that there was a time lag between Captain Bai's desertion and their being informed, and considering the unbelievably fast speed at which Captain Bai fled in the mecha, they lost accurate directional guidance shortly after leaving the city.

Without identifying the real reason behind Captain Bai's desertion, chasing further into the vast night and the wilderness beyond human control would be like blindly flying headlong.

"No..." the instructor squinted, unable to find a single reason.

Captain Bai had considerable autonomy within the military zone. As a rare talent valued nearly simultaneously by the military's three major factions and the Marshal, apart from some occasional mandatory military operations, he was almost entirely free from control.

Not to mention the usual training, even wearing a badge that allowed him to exit the camp at any time, if he was absent from the base for a day and a night, probably no one would notice or care, a privilege not even some junior officers could enjoy.

As for possible personal attacks or grievances...

Rose, who fought her way across the entire camp, made sure anyone who dared speak ill of Captain Bai paid a full toll in the military hospital within the camp.

Even the Gene Optimization Solution, the thing everyone in this era hankered after, Captain Bai had secured for himself through his illustrious military achievements.

Several officers who received the news spent half a day in a meeting analyzing, yet they couldn't fathom what could possibly drive such an exceptional talent to "desert" the camp.

"So... it might not be desertion," surmised the member of the Mechanical Court coldly.

He greatly admired Captain Bai, a unique mech pilot, and did not want—or rather, was reluctant—to see Blackwater City lose such an outstanding pilot.

"Perhaps... he has something he must do."

The fire in the sky shines through the transparent glass portholes, reflecting in the pupils of the two men...

Chapter 538: Charge and Kill!

[Your attack has successfully hit the target, inflicting 200 points of fatal damage!]

[You have completely killed the target, gaining 5 points of combat experience.]

During the battle, a dense flurry of notifications flowed by like a stream of water. Since the last time he had leveled a Smart Machinery Factory, the experience Bai E could gain from these basic individual smart machinery units had drastically diminished.

If possible, Bai E would actually prefer to leave these basic smart machinery forces for the players to deal with. Just in the recently concluded limited-time mission, he had once again received significant feedback from players—

[Feedback from the mission: Your Insight +1.0, Physique +1.2, Reflex +0.7, Mystique +0.3, Light Weapon Mastery Experience +148, Small Arms Mastery Experience +382, Ranged Weapon Mastery Experience +158, Heavy Weapon Mastery Experience +274.]

Compared to the last limited-time zone mission, the feedback was much less, but considering the duration of both missions, the feedback from this mission was already more than enough.

A fierce battle had brought considerable improvements to all players.

If the remaining smart machinery could also be left for the players to clear out slowly, the feedback it could bring to himself would be extremely significant.

Unfortunately, there was no time to wait.

The smart machinery came with revenge in mind, and he did not have enough time to gradually release these smart machinery for the players to gain experience.

It was still unknown how many pursuers the barracks would send after reacting, let alone how far away they were from him.

Before the pursuers from the barracks arrived, he had to completely resolve the situation here!

"Hiss!"

With one strike, Bai E split a humanoid smart machinery carrying a shoulder-mounted cannon in two. The Mecha he controlled skidded across the ground for several meters, kicking up a storm of dust that scattered in the air like a torrential rain.

The Mecha's form was still not steady when it spun and took off, evading a rocket that was aimed at its torso, and in the same movement, its alloy warblade was thrown, shooting towards the smart machinery that had launched the rocket.

The deeper Bai E advanced into the ranks of the smart machinery army, the greater the pressure he felt.

But the end was gradually nearing.

The more comprehensive monitoring system of the Mecha suddenly locked onto two distinctly colored individuals who stood out strikingly amidst the grey-black tone of the surroundings.

One was pure white, yet it shimmered with flowing colors; occasionally, when light swept over its surface, it reflected a dazzling array of colorful glows.

The other was all earthy yellow, vastly larger than any smart machinery individual Bai E had ever seen. From a distance, it looked like a small, natural hill—so massive that if this was also a first-generation

smart machinery... then it was the first time Bai E had seen a first-generation smart machinery whose form did not resemble a human.

At that moment, the pure white smart machinery held two light spears in its hands, with electric arcs surging on them. The nimble, streamlined body floated mid-air, its indifferent crystal eyes fixed on the rapidly advancing blue and white Mecha.

The powerful machinery force allowed it to easily discern that this incoming blue and white mechanical body was not one of their "kin", but merely those humans' poor imitation of their own kind.

A sequence of digital fluctuations flickered in its crystal eyes, and with a single wave of the light spear in its hand, the earthy yellow smart machinery at its feet suddenly stirred into action.

As its form changed, numerous dark cracks appeared on its shell-like back, from which fierce cannons emerged.

After a brief aim, the cannons roared, the ground shook, and mountains quivered.

...

"Damn! A first-generation smart machinery!"

"It's really Captain Bai! Did he leave the barracks in a Mecha to combat these smart machineries?"

After forming a rough guess, the instructor and the people from the Mechanical Court rushed to the scene in their Mechas, arriving just in time despite the tight schedule.

The scene they arrived at was already strewn with a trail of burning wreckage and two strikingly colored smart machineries.

"Can we join the fight?" the instructor asked, looking towards the elder from the Mechanical Court beside him.

He was just an instructor from the barracks. Although he had indeed participated in quite a few actual combats in his early years, facing a first-generation smart machinery from the smart machinery race was still a new experience for him.

No matter how much information the military had, it couldn't compare to real battle experience. Uncertain, he could only ask the elder beside him, hoping that the elder could make a decision.

"..." The elder from the Mechanical Court glanced at the instructor who asked the question, his lips moved, but ultimately he remained silent.

Whether it was his comrades from the Mechanical Court piloting the Mecha or if the Mecha itself was one of the Mechanical Court's special combat types, he had the confidence to fight a first-generation smart machinery from the smart machinery race.

If it was the person he first met, he would have spoken bluntly, but with time, he had to consider the self-esteem of this military zone instructor.

At this moment, silence was more eloquent than words.

The instructor understood the meaning in the elder's eyes and remained silent as well.

"Then we can only watch Captain Bai..."

Die?

Watching the blue and white Mecha being targeted by numerous cannon shells, and the first-generation smart machinery that floated in the air and which hadn't made a move yet—an opponent that seemed even more high-grade—no one believed that Captain Bai would be able to escape alive under such high-level adversaries.

Now all they could think about was one question—

After the smart machineries had finished, could they bring back the remains of Captain Bai and the Mecha he piloted to report the outcome?

...

"Buzz!"

The warblade suddenly tore through the cannon shells, and the blue and white frame of the Mecha closely followed behind the blade's edge.

Chapter 539: Charge and Kill!\_2

Even with a human body, Bai E had already managed to kill two mech pilots whose powers were united. Now piloting a mecha, he had no interest in prolonging the battle.

His figure flashed like lightning, and the mecha, resembling a white reaper, arrived in an instant.

The Instant Kill of a Hundred Heads, powered to its full capability, was channeled through the mecha's combat blade, which descended into the gap of the turtle-like primal AI with infinite blade shadows accompanying the strike.

"Boom, boom, boom, boom!"

The combat blade, like a hot knife through butter, sliced in instantly, with boundless power piercing through the mech and into the ground.

The mech, as hard as a turtle's shell, fell silent for a moment before suddenly cracking open.

"The Mountains and Rivers" were split in two, visible through the transparent window of the observing mecha far away.

With that strike, even the pure white AI mecha that had been "disdainfully" floating midair trembled visibly, completely unprepared for such a turn of events.

[The groundbreaking strike you unleashed instantly pierced through the target's defense armor, light weapon proficiency experience +32.]

[Your attack successfully hit the target, dealing 2000 points of slashing damage!]

"..."

"..."

"Gulp!" The instructor swallowed hard with an utterly broken expression.

What was wrong with his worldview?

What had just happened before his eyes?

An AI that looked tough and durable was cleaved into two by a base model mecha from their military district?

When did their military district's mechas obtain such a level of output power?

Or was the combat blade that Bai was holding actually a secret state-of-the-art weapon, privately passed to him by some scientist from the city's research department?

Otherwise, how could they explain the explosive scene unfolding before their eyes?

However, the course of events wouldn't halt to suit their wishes. The pale blue mech power, like a current with substance, took effect on the split halves of the turtle AI's body.

Simple physical strikes, no matter how fierce, are hardly sufficient to kill a primal AI directly.

In this world, beings of ordinary levels tend to have high offense and low defense, but at a certain point, be it AI, insects, or demons, one is harder to kill than the next.

Hard to kill, but kill you must!

[??? (AI) (Hostile) (Lord) — Use "Lucky Strike" to kill for guaranteed drop: (Steel\*10000, Combat Experience 6000 points); high probability (Knowledge: AI Creation Mastery); possible (Technology: Giant Construct Assembly)]

The loot that exploded out was obviously not as good as from the previous two AIs; perhaps this was because piloting the mecha against the enemy had significantly lowered the difficulty.

But gains that came without cost were welcomed. The blue and white mecha pulled out the combat blade and with a backhand strike, cleaved horizontally again.

The blade, powered by High-Frequency Cutting and greatly amplified by Instant Kill of a Hundred Heads, effortlessly sliced through the surface of the turtle shell.

In the mecha's cockpit, Bai E silently recited in his mind.

[Activate "Lucky Strike".]

The combat blade slashed down diagonally once again.

Unlike the previous strike that brought infinite blade shadows, this time, it was as if tens of thousands of blade shadows descended at once, striking over the whole body of the turtle AI simultaneously.

Facing a humanoid mecha of nearly the same height, the much larger turtle-shaped AI was as defenseless as a lamb awaiting slaughter.

"Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!"

The overpowering force easily broke everything down, and the high-strength connections between the parts of the huge construct held by mech power also disintegrated under the force of the final blow.

The explosion of the primal AI was earth-shattering, almost rivaling a moderate earthquake.

The pure white AI in the sky with its half-dayshape turned to leave at the instant the metal pieces exploded, leaving behind a barely visible trail of residual gas from the jet propulsion on its limbs.

The military district's mechas, lacking any flying ability, had no way to deal with such a flight unit determined to escape, and they could only watch helplessly as the target vanished into the distant horizon.

I didn't even know if there would be another chance to counterattack...

It was said that the intelligent machines wouldn't expend too many resources on an opponent that was much stronger than themselves, and I didn't know if the strength I had displayed was up to their grading standards.

These thoughts flashed through my mind as I glanced at the silent military mecha in the distance.

That was probably the force the military had sent to pursue me.

Ordinary vehicles at night naturally couldn't keep up with a mecha whose mobility was maxed out; only a mecha could chase another mecha.

The follow-up pursuit forces might also be on the way; the military was bound to pay maximum attention to the first "deserter" mecha.

Fortunately, I had no intention of resisting.

I quickly connected to the instructor mecha, which was not too far away, after opening the communication channel within the cockpit for a free search.

"Follow me," I said, then turned and headed towards Li Ming Town first.

Confess frankly and you will be treated leniently, but any concealment would have consequences.

The existence of Li Ming Town certainly couldn't be hidden from the military forces that would inevitably start an investigation, but what the true facts they uncovered would be depended on my own will.

Having dealt with the intelligent machines' counterattack, I began to consider what reasons to concoct for the military district to obtain the least severe punishment for myself.

Even if there were many people in the military district who wanted to protect me, I first had to provide them with enough excuses or reasons.

The instructor's somewhat stiff answer came over the voice channel, "Understood... Understood."

The feats I had just accomplished were so extraordinary that I now appeared as terrifying as a demon lord in their eyes.

"He wouldn't want to kill us to silence us, would he?" asked the instructor in a somewhat alarmed tone after disconnecting the voice channel.

It seemed unlikely, but the strength of the target was so great that it naturally carried a danger.

"If he wanted to kill us, he wouldn't need to go through so much trouble," said one of the Mechanical Court's elders, shaking his head, never expecting things to reach this point.

He was well aware of my performance in training and my first experience on the battlefield; neither was too surprising.

Perhaps my performance was extraordinary in the eyes of the military district, but for the Mechanical Court, it wasn't so rare; he was confident that he and his companions from the Mechanical Court could achieve the same results if they took action together.

Even if he had come chasing after me in a mecha with the military district's instructor, he was certain of victory.

After all, I had deserted in a hurry, and my mecha wasn't equipped with any weapon modules, except for a sword and a round shield.

In a one-on-one duel between mech pilots of roughly equal skill, the equipment of weapons would become an absolute factor affecting victory or defeat.

But now... having witnessed my ability to take down an original intelligent machine with just three slashes, he realized how much he had underestimated the capabilities of Captain Bai.

They had received a message before coming; Rose was still in the military camp.

The only person piloting this mecha was Captain Bai!

Mecha soul!

Only a mecha with a born mecha soul could enable Captain Bai to achieve feats that even the mech pilots of the Mechanical Court dared not imagine.

Chasing after Bai E's steps, an elder of the Mechanical Court admired the blue and white mecha, his eyes filled with fervent longing.

The mecha soul was the highest pursuit for every mech pilot in the Mechanical Court.

In the entire city, there were no more than three people capable of communicating with a mecha soul, and Bai E... would become the new star of their Mechanical Court!

He had made up his mind that no matter how unforgivable Bai E's mistake appeared in the eyes of other forces in the city, the Mechanical Court would do their utmost to protect him and incorporate him into their ranks.

As the mecha stepped over piles of intelligent machine debris, both persons following in Bai E's wake walked through the battlefield, each wave of shock in their hearts growing bigger and bigger.

All of them... All of them...

How many troops had the intelligent machines sent? Were they all wiped out by a single person... or rather, a single mecha?

As their gaze swept over the slowly leading blue and white figure ahead, endless emotions fermented in their hearts.

["Lucky Strike" Energy +6.]

## Chapter 540: Arrested

The instructor's mecha followed slowly behind, allowing Bai E, who had arrived at the town's ruins ahead of everyone else, sufficient time to go over the details that needed to be explained with all the acquaintances.

This was commonly known as "corroborating testimonies."

Bai E leapt down from the mecha's cockpit, tens of meters above the ground, to those like Kuang Xin who had been waiting for a while. He glanced back at his own blue and white mecha, and said curtly, "To cut a long story short, the mecha I drove here is in violation of the military's discipline, and the military will definitely send a commissioner to investigate my reasons for departure. Remember this, I met you all after you had deserted Grey Iron City during a field operation, because your disillusionment with Grey Iron City made you unwilling to have anything to do with any city. So after rescuing you from the grasp of mechanical intelligence, I covered your tracks and brought you to this little town's ruins."

While speaking, Bai E also took out an emergency communicator that matched the one Kuang Xin had, "This, too, was what I gave you last time. My sudden departure was because I received your distress signal. Understood?"

The story he concocted was not too far from the truth, except for whether he rescued the group from mechanical intelligence or from orcs, the rest was almost entirely true.

In such an urgent situation, it was nearly impossible to concoct an entirely new narrative for over a thousand people to adhere to in a short time; it was more appropriate to slightly modify the facts instead.

Nine true statements to win the trust of the military commissioner, with the single lie conveying the message that Bai E wanted to send.

In fact, even the claim of "rescuing this group of people from mechanical intelligence" was tailored to fit the logic of this counterattack by the mechanical intelligence.

This was the best course of action Bai E could come up with in a short time.

Feeling that words alone might not carry enough weight, Bai E went straight to the mission.

[Mission description being auto-generated...]

[Main Mission—A Warm Lie: The leader who has always sheltered you has violated the military discipline of "Blackwater City Military" due to this rescue mission. If the testimonies you provide to the military commissioner are beneficial enough for your leader, perhaps your leader can successfully avoid this crisis. The fate of the leader is in your hands, whether to divulge the whole truth or to support the leader who has always taken care of you... The choice is yours!

Mission requirement: Provide a testimony that benefits the leader 0/1.

Mission reward: General experience points 100~500 (adjustable), item reward (to be determined).]

(Note: "Auto-completion" allowed; "permissions" and "expenditures" will be deducted and locked once the mission is confirmed for release.)

[This mission will have an impact on the development of the entire world, your choice is crucial!]

[Do you wish to release the current mission?]

As Bai E stared at the auto-generated mission description, he was briefly stunned.

Main mission? Affecting the world's development direction?

"..."

Am I really that important?

Bai E had always understood that the system was merely an intermediary that helped edit information according to his wishes, without offering any subjective opinions.

But this time...

He had never thought of issuing a main mission to the players, let alone tying the entire world's development to himself alone.

The moment he saw the mission description, Bai E realized that he might never have truly understood the system.

But at the moment, there was no time to delve further.

[Release it!]

"Understood!" Before the mission prompt sounded, Kuang Xin, Dai Lian, and indeed all players and others gathered around simultaneously agreed.

And it was at the instant after they agreed that the mission prompt suddenly rang out.

With no limit on the number of participants, the main mission descended equally upon every player present, and their decisions would affect the entire world's storyline.

"Main mission?"

"A kind lie?"

"Connected to world changes?"

"Holy crap, our lord really is the main character of the world!"

"We're definitely sticking by our leader's side!"

For the players, bigger risks meant greater rewards.

Cities? Military? Official forces in the game couldn't elicit even the slightest awe in their hearts.

Moreover, personally being a key part of the main mission made them feel like they had a profound influence on the world, boosting their sense of achievement and involvement to the fullest.

As for the town's residents... it was Bai E, who had rescued them from dire straits multiple times, who was their true faith.

Cities? They hardly knew them.

As Gong Yan silently summoned all the players beside her, watching another giant mecha approach, she said softly, "You all heard what the lord said, right? We are all in this together. We've seen the lord's strength, and even among the natives, he's definitely top-tier. Even if we expose the lord's real situation

this time, with the lord's strength, he can easily carve out a blood path. It's us who would be at a loss without the lord's trust. But if we choose to help, we will be his loyal subjects! Everyone knows what to do."

Even knowing her lord's attraction to all the players, Gong Yan still wished to add an extra layer of insurance.

After scanning the crowd, Gong Yan then ordered in a firm voice, "Before the military commissioner arrives, you must inform every native in town of what the lord has said, and ensure that there are no slip-ups. The mission isn't difficult, but this time we must work together with one heart!"