

Wow 821

Chapter 821: The Lurker!_2

The warriors representing their cities in the competition were all revealed to have been transformed from insects. Now, he didn't even dare to imagine how many people in his own city had turned into insects in disguise.

The Imperial Capital didn't keep everyone waiting long. Their biotechnology was equally advanced, and the autopsy reports on the corpses were quickly finalized.

The vice marshal of the Imperial Capital Military District, with a heavy expression, conveyed the report through the extensive sound system, ensuring it reached the ears of every participant from all allied cities—

"The report results indicate that these ten warriors from Eternal Night City indeed match the genetic profile network of the Bug Race. Although there are some differences compared to the genetic profiles of all Bug Race types currently known to us, the discrepancies fall within the range of variations expected from different species. Among these, the captain of the Eternal Night City team possesses a higher genetic tier, while the other nine warriors, from the perspective of the Bug Race, appear to be his subordinates. They... are undoubtedly insects."

As the vice marshal of the Imperial Capital Military District delivered this conclusion with a stony expression, the faces of the entire Eternal Night City diplomatic team turned pallid and lifeless in an instant.

"Traitors!"

"Could they also have been controlled by insects? Turncoats?"

"I always felt something was off about them. How could humans be so cruel to their own kind? So, they weren't human at all, but insects!"

Hearing the tumultuous chatter around them, the diplomatic team from Eternal Night City collapsed into their chairs, murmuring, "We... didn't know either."

How could perfectly good humans turn into insects?

The vice marshal of the Imperial Capital Military District cast an apologetic look at the members of the Eternal Night City diplomatic team, nodding slightly. "Although it's possible you have also been deceived, for the safety of everyone, you will need to be placed under temporary surveillance. I hope you understand."

With that, the vice marshal coldly waved his hand. "Take them away."

Immediately, Imperial Capital soldiers, already on standby, escorted the dazed and unresisting Eternal Night City diplomatic team away.

The vice marshal, presiding over everything, then turned to address the representatives from the other cities still waiting for answers. "Due to the unforeseen events in the exhibition match, the match is now terminated. Please stay calm. Imperial Capital and the four Supreme Council cities will address this matter promptly and propose an appropriate solution. This will serve as the first challenge we face as an alliance. Please await further updates."

After speaking, the vice marshal paid no mind to the grumblings echoing across the thousands of city factions. He turned to Bai E and said, "Mr. Bai, I must trouble you to come with us. Certain matters... are unsuitable for public discussion in this setting."

"Understood." Bai E complied with a nod.

The vice marshal then looked toward other Supreme Council members and said, "I'd also ask the representatives from Tech City and Thousand Facet City to join us."

"Sure."

"No problem."

...

Half an hour later, representatives from the five Supreme Council cities gathered in a small conference room within the Imperial Capital.

Imperial Capital's research department had worked in record time, providing as detailed an experimental report as possible on the newly discovered humanoid Bug Race. The results of this report were presented in a straightforward manner for the five city representatives in attendance.

"The new type of insect has been tentatively named the 'Lurker.'

"Their method of transforming into humans is akin to parasitism. The parasite insect gradually replaces the original human host while inheriting their appearance and traits. They cannot change their appearance at will, and the roles they assume in society remain relatively fixed. Thus, there's no need to worry about these insects morphing into every familiar person around us. This is a significant discovery."

"These insects operate with a 'parent entity,' and among the deceased warriors from Eternal Night City, their captain was identified as the parent entity. Its origin is unknown, but it possesses superior strength. The subsidiary entities within the other warriors were implanted by the parent entity. However, the death of the parent entity does not result in the simultaneous death of its subsidiaries."

"This type of insect exhibits considerable intelligence. Whether parent or subsidiary entity, once they successfully replace a human host, they can seamlessly adapt to the host's prior lifestyle, making them nearly indistinguishable to outsiders."

"Currently, there are only two methods to identify these insects: kill them... or examine their spinal fluid."

"Directly killing them is obviously unrealistic. Only the examination of their spinal fluid provides a definitive method to distinguish them."

"The parasitism process in these insects begins in the spine, progressively replacing and controlling the entire body. During their latent phase, other detection methods may result in false negatives. Only by extracting and analyzing spinal fluid can we truly distinguish them from normal humans."

At the conclusion of the briefing, the vice marshal of the Imperial Capital Military District turned to Bai E, sitting on his left, and said gravely, "Now, could we trouble you, Mr. Bai, to reveal how you identified these insects? Honestly, conducting mandatory spinal fluid tests across an entire city is an enormous resource drain, even for the Imperial Capital, not to mention the absolute control over residents required to enforce such measures. I highly doubt that all of the thousand allied cities are capable of resolving this issue with ease. If you have a more efficient method, I sincerely hope you can share it for the survival of humanity."

Bai E shook his head and replied in a low tone, "The public setting earlier was too sensitive; casual disclosure might inadvertently alert the insects, leading to unpredictable consequences. But in this private setting, I have no intention of withholding information. Truth be told, my ability to sense these insects stems from my personal experience gained during prolonged confrontations with the Bug Race. It's an instinct honed over time, a skill I cannot impart even to the warriors of my own city. Thus, I'm afraid I can't offer much assistance when it comes to identifying the insects hidden among humans."

"What is your range of detection?" the representative from Tech City, seated beside Bai E, asked. "If it's reasonably efficient, I believe utilizing you as a kind of human radar to assist cities unable to bear the testing burden could serve as a supplementary solution."

"I have no objections. That's exactly what I was planning to suggest," Bai E said, turning toward the vice marshal of the Imperial Capital Military District. "I propose creating a prioritized list of cities based on resource availability and governance capacity, along with categorizing them by their proximity to Blackwater City. After I return to handle any immediate issues in my own city, I can systematically begin clearing potential threats in other cities. As for my detection range... it's around 10 kilometers. For a large city, my reach isn't extensive, so spinal fluid tests must still proceed concurrently. Relying solely on me will be far too slow."

"That's a reasonable approach. Our research team is already working to accelerate the development of spinal fluid testing kits, ensuring even the most under-resourced cities can quickly produce machines to scan their populations. Next..." The vice marshal nodded solemnly, then fixed an uneasy gaze on Bai E. "On behalf of the Imperial Capital, I have one more immodest request..."

"What immodest request!" interrupted the War God, who had remained silent until now. He glanced at Bai E with a playful smirk and said nonchalantly, "They want you, our human radar, to sweep through the Imperial Capital as well. Saves resources where we can, eh? Besides, you're already here—won't take much of your time."

Bai E responded with a radiant smile. "Of course."

Chapter 822: Purge Eternal Night City

"What about Eternal Night City... how should we handle it?" The representative from Tech City raised a question.

It remains uncertain whether other cities harbor specialized mutated zerg like the "潜伏者," but it is confirmed that Eternal Night City does have them.

The cities representing the battle may only be the tip of the iceberg. Who knows how many zerg disguised as humans are still hidden within their borders?

As the first city confirmed to host these creatures, the newborn alliance must completely eradicate the zerg threat within Eternal Night City to instill confidence in all cities across the alliance in their fight against the Bug Race!

"Temporarily keep control over them; we can't allow information to leak within their city." The deputy marshal of the Imperial Capital Military District said gravely, "Bai E's sensory precision is limited. When the zerg and humans mix together, he can't accurately distinguish every target. We'll need to dispatch a reliable Vanguard team to swiftly apprehend every suspect once Bai E identifies them. Following that, each target can be further verified individually. Achieving this requires support from Eternal Night City's diplomatic team. I'll personally approach them and explain the stakes."

As the leader spearheading this alliance, the Imperial Capital demonstrated clear strategic thinking and decisive execution.

While gathering intelligence on thousands of cities, they not only prepared the urgent lists required by Bai E but also advanced the selection of the Vanguard squads and companion patrol plans for Bai E in parallel.

The newborn alliance brimmed with vitality; every participant was giving their all for humanity's greatest hope.

Three days later, after thoroughly patrolling the Imperial Capital, Bai E made his initial conclusion, "Nothing."

The Imperial Capital's defense was unparalleled, and even the nearest zerg hives hadn't dared to approach. The absence of infiltrated zerg was well within everyone's expectations.

Still, upon hearing the news, the deputy marshal of the Imperial Capital Military District breathed a deep sigh of relief, "Good to hear there aren't any."

If zerg had infiltrated the Imperial Capital, he would truly struggle to imagine where humanity's hope could lie.

"Then it's time to move out." The blond man said eagerly.

The Vanguard team tasked with the decapitation mission targeting Eternal Night City's zerg mutations was under his command.

With both the Imperial Capital's War God and Blackwater City's Bai E as the dual pillars of security, this first strike against the unique zerg mutations promised perfection.

The diplomats of Eternal Night City, detained for three days, were also released, as they were critical players in this special operation.

The Vanguard team decided to disguise themselves as an envoy group from the Imperial Capital to visit Eternal Night City. This signified the importance placed on Eternal Night City's potential inclusion in the Human Alliance's Supreme Council as one of its five governing members.

And this initial layer of deception was to be carried out with the cooperation of Eternal Night City's diplomatic team.

The priority of this mission surpassed everything, even preempting the return of individuals to their respective alliance cities!

"You all should return first, inform the residents within the city about the outcome of the tournament, and ask them... are they prepared to engage with other cities in the surrounding regions?"

Having led people to victory in the competition, it was now their turn to integrate resources from all regional cities.

Everything, absolutely everything, was done for the ultimate goal.

"Understood, sir!" The diplomatic team and storm warriors responded in unison.

With this, Bai E could confidently join the Vanguard team from the Imperial Capital as they set off for Eternal Night City.

The Vanguard team numbered over a hundred and, together with Eternal Night City's diplomatic envoy, formed an imposing convoy heading north from the Imperial Capital.

The convoy steadily headed north, and the temperature gradually dropped.

The arrival of extraterrestrial species had permanently altered the planet's climate, with the environment around the polar regions becoming increasingly inhospitable for human life.

Yet humanity's adaptability to its environment far exceeded imagination. Even in regions near the polar zones, there were several cities where humans had taken root. Among them, Eternal Night City, situated directly within the polar circle, was the most environmentally challenging.

It was precisely this harsh environment that forged their incredibly resilient, cold-resistant physiques.

Even without the invasion of "潜伏者" mutated zerg, the warriors of this city boasted strength that ranked among the finest within the Human Alliance.

Yet, perhaps due to resource constraints, this city found itself in a far worse position in its struggles against the Bug Race than Blackwater City ever had.

Through idle chatter with Eternal Night City's diplomats along the route, Bai E and others speculated that the city's defensive strategy of retreating and fortifying against the Bug Race might have inadvertently provided an opening for the zerg mutations to replace and disguise themselves as humans.

But regardless of the reason, this complex issue now fell upon their shoulders to solve.

While still some distance away from Eternal Night City, Bai E sensed a surge of malevolent energy erupting into the skies.

The slimy, shadowy imagery assaulted Bai E's mind repeatedly—zerg energies were already restlessly stirring deep within the earth on the horizon.

"We're getting close..." Bai E's gaze grew profound.

Compared to wandering orcs, dormant AI constructs, and demons lurking in higher-dimensional spaces, these zerg lingering in the real world remained humanity's greatest nemesis!

"We're about to enter the city..." Eternal Night City's diplomat said awkwardly, "To conserve energy usage, many areas within the city aren't furnished with lighting. I hope the esteemed gentlemen can kindly bear with it."

Chapter 823: Purge Eternal Night City_2

"No problem, I understand." The blond man laughed heartily. "We've long been aware of the situation in your city. Once this crisis is over, whether you choose to relocate or continue living here, the Alliance will provide you with resources and protection. The choice is entirely yours."

The tires rolled over the eternal permafrost, crossing vast plains. Guided by the beacons at the city gates, the convoy, with headlights lit, drove into the city.

In fact, even before entering the city, Bai E had already furrowed his brow, an expression of seriousness on his face.

In the vehicle, Ares, who had been closely observing Bai E, leaned closer, avoiding others as he whispered, "What did you notice?"

"A lot..." Bai E answered softly, his tone heavy.

The dense, intricate images came flooding in. Even before truly setting foot in the city, he could already feel waves of cold-blooded and malevolent energy emanating toward them.

"Be extra cautious."

"Understood." Ares nodded, turned, and issued orders, "The target city may already have turned into a bug nest. Everyone, remain highly vigilant about every Eternal Night City resident you come into contact with. When carrying out any action, ensure groups of at least two and maintain visual contact at all times. No one is allowed to act alone."

"Yes, sir!"

The convoy slowly drove through the steel gates of the city.

Unlike any other city, Eternal Night City had dramatically scaled back its defensive perimeter, pinning its hopes on holding out in a defensive battle. Its outer walls appeared to be entirely forged from steel. Even the gates for entry and exit were made of heavy metal alloys, opening and closing at a painstakingly slow pace.

Having received prior notice of the diplomatic mission's arrival, the upper echelons of Eternal Night City were evidently ecstatic about the updates relayed by the mission as they approached the city.

At the very first announcement of the alliance proposal from the Imperial Capital, Eternal Night City had unanimously approved the idea of forming an alliance.

Years of holding out against the Bug Race in this remote, forsaken corner had left them feeling like they were teetering on the edge of a cliff, ready to plummet into an abyss at any moment.

Given their dire straits, no situation could possibly be worse than their current predicament.

But the possibility of joining the Imperial Capital's ally network—with the hope of the capital sending forces to eliminate the bug nests, or even just allocating a sliver of additional resources—was a tremendously joyful prospect for the city as a whole.

Yet, the top brass of Eternal Night City, who had merely been clinging to this "clutching-at-straws" hope, never expected to hear such an unbelievable piece of news following the competition—

Their warriors had performed outstandingly in the competition, not only seizing command of the regional cities but also securing for Eternal Night City one of the five seats in the Supreme Council of the Alliance.

To gain a thorough understanding of every city joining the Supreme Council, the Imperial Capital had even sent a dedicated diplomatic mission to evaluate Eternal Night City and prioritize aid based on its circumstances.

Upon hearing this, Eternal Night City's leadership practically emptied the city to welcome the approaching "diplomatic mission" from the Imperial Capital.

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The convoy slowly advanced along the steel boulevard. To create additional barriers for the bugs, a freezing ring of icy river encircled the steel city walls.

A broad steel bridge was the only passage across the frigid waters.

Far off on the steel bridge, in the unlit shadows, countless figures appeared to be standing silently, secretly observing the so-called "diplomatic mission" from the Imperial Capital.

To Ares, the prying gazes felt almost tangible. The blond man snorted coldly, sending a profound wave of vital energy rippling outward.

To normal humans, this surge of vitality might not seem like much.

But to the bugs, creatures driven by insatiable lust for flesh and blood, this vibrant life force was nothing less than a direct provocation.

For Bai E, the endless malevolent shadows surged toward them from all directions, as if ready to devour the fragile convoy in one fell swoop.

The terrifying desire to consume wove itself into a heavy, all-encompassing net, smothering the air.

And yet, in reality, all seemed harmonious and peaceful.

At the far end of the bridge, countless bright lights illuminated the scene as Eternal Night City's higher officials stood under the glow, appearing as if bathed in sunlight.

The moment the convoy arrived and its passengers disembarked, these officials hurried forward in unison to greet them.

"Welcome, honored guests from the Imperial Capital, to Eternal Night City to oversee our efforts!"

The Eternal Night City diplomatic corps, warned to avoid any slip-ups, advanced with complex emotions to meet their counterparts from the capital.

Having witnessed the recent events involving those warriors, the diplomat now viewed everyone in Eternal Night City with deep mistrust.

The mere thought of traveling alongside those warriors made the diplomat shudder.

'This is terrifying!'

'Who knows how many of these people... are bugs?' Their gaze swept across the figures coming to greet them before forcing a professional smile. "The Imperial Capital takes the plight of Eternal Night City very seriously. This delegation includes top-tier experts from various fields. We are committed to resolving your current crises at their core and securing long-term development for your city."

"Clap clap clap!" Applause erupted.

"The warriors who earned such recognition for Eternal Night City are still in the Imperial Capital, conducting exhibition matches to demonstrate their prowess to all cities in the Alliance after securing the Supreme Council seat."

"Clap clap clap!"

"However, given the long and exhausting journey, we hope arrangements can be made for the delegation to rest promptly."

"Of course, no problem! Eternal Night City's Logistics Minister waved a hand, saying, "Taking care of each esteemed delegate from the Imperial Capital is our utmost duty!"

Regardless of what schemes might be lurking among the bug-infiltrators hidden in the crowd, the officials of Eternal Night City outwardly maintained utmost deference.

After enduring so much hardship, they clung to this stroke of seemingly providential fortune with humility.

Finally settling down and gaining a brief reprieve within the city, the Vanguard Squad began preparations for their next steps. Bai E and Ares summoned the Eternal Night City diplomat responsible for coordination.

"No matter the method, you must bring the influential figures of your leadership here to meet us one by one. We must first confirm their identities before making our next move. Understood?"

"Understood!" The diplomat nodded earnestly. "I guarantee the task will be completed!"

"Good. Go."

Despite the seemingly traitorous nature of his actions, the diplomat, recognizing their importance for the city's future, fabricated irresistible pretexts to bring Eternal Night City's top leaders, one by one, under the roof where the Imperial Capital's delegation rested.

"I've heard you wish to discuss something with me in private? May I ask what it's about?" The City Lord of Eternal Night City approached Bai E and his companions with visible unease.

In these troubled times, humans rarely turned against each other.

Furthermore, given Ares and his team's unmistakable identity as Imperial Capital envoys, it never crossed the City Lord's mind that the diplomat's summons were purely a lie.

When the City Lord arrived, Ares looked toward Bai E with anticipation. "Is it this one?"

Bai E carefully sensed for a moment, then gently shook his head. "No."

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"How about this one?"

"No."

...

"And this one?"

"Take them down!"

...

Due to the vast informational disparity, Bai E's extraordinary senses allowed them to sweep through nearly all of Eternal Night City's leadership in record time.

Facing the detained high-ranking officials of Eternal Night City, the blond man beamed at them as he began his introduction. "I am Ares, also called 'War God.' Call me whatever you like. For now, I must inform you of a matter concerning the very survival of Eternal Night City!"

Chapter 824 check

When the high-ranking officials of Eternal Night City heard that their city had been invaded by the Bugs, their first reaction was disbelief.

They had been entangled in conflict with the Bug Race for so many years—how could they possibly fail to recognize them?

So War God Ares directly dragged out a person, forcibly restrained earlier, who had been disguised as a human by the Bugs and showed them in front of everyone, instantly causing a wave of exclamations.

"You know him, right?" Ares kicked the human to the ground before everyone, sneering coldly as he asked.

The number of host bodies for the infiltrators was clearly not many. Among the high-ranking officials in Eternal Night City captured by Bai E and others, those disguised by the Bugs were merely secondary infiltrators, with low combat capabilities.

It was impossible for the high-ranking officials of Eternal Night City not to recognize their colleagues.
"Haus!"

"What happened to you?"

"How did you get captured? Did you do something disloyal to His Excellency from the Empire?"

"My lord, there must be some misunderstanding here!"

Restrained and unable to resist, Haus struggled desperately while begging his former colleagues for help, "They've gone mad! They're not from the Empire! They just want to take our city! The diplomatic team was ambushed on their way back and betrayed us! Don't trust them! Don't believe them! Ack—"

Before he could finish his meaningless attempts to sow discord, Ares swung his blade, beheading him with a single strike.

As the man's head hit the ground and rolled a few times,

what appeared to be an ordinary human head mutated into the grotesque form of an octopus-like creature.

Nothing could be more convincing than what unfolded right before their eyes.

Seeing the monstrous head roll to nearly their feet, the nearest high-ranking official of Eternal Night City recoiled in terror, "What... what is that?"

Ares continued to sneer coldly. "Didn't you know him? You've been colleagues for so long. How could you not know what he is?"

"We knew Haus! Not this monster!"

"When did this happen?! How could Haus turn into a monster? I've watched him grow up!"

One of the more perceptive officials immediately realized the gravity of the situation. "Are you saying that many of us have already been replaced by the Bugs?"

As soon as these words were spoken, the high-ranking officials instinctively distanced themselves from their previously close colleagues.

The wary glances in the room carried the unspoken suspicion: had the trusted coworker sitting next to them already become a puppet of the Bugs without anyone knowing?

"There's no need for anyone here to engage in mutual suspicion." The deputy leader of the Imperial Vanguard Squad stepped forward and stated, "Those of you present have already been screened by Lord Bai E. Eight monsters in total have been identified and restrained. To prove the authenticity of our claims, you may eliminate them yourselves and examine their insides to see if they are still the humans you once knew."

After all, for humans, creatures driven by emotion, having to harm a familiar face was the greatest psychological barrier of all.

If this barrier couldn't be overcome, then the people of Eternal Night City wouldn't stand a chance against the infiltrators, who had turned their entire city into a sieve.

With that, the deputy leader waved toward his subordinates and ordered, "Bring them all up!"

"Yes, sir!"

The seven other people brought forward, all parasitized by infiltrators, immediately recognized their colleagues and began to plead desperately.

"Save us! Please, save us!"

"They're not from the Empire! It's all lies! They're deceiving you!"

"Don't believe their nonsense! We're all normal people!"

A member of the Imperial scientific team approached Bai E and Ares, whispering to them, "During the earlier moments, I conducted individual interviews with each of the secondary infiltrators, and I discovered something very intriguing..."

Ares's eyes gleamed with interest as he asked, "What did you find?"

"They... don't actually believe they're Bugs. They genuinely think of themselves as humans, deep down. However, some of them did mention sensing a 'great will' watching over them from the shadows. They feel that regardless of whether they have ever met this great will, as long as it issues an order, they cannot resist it. Based on my analysis, it must be the host infiltrator. As long as no orders are given by the host infiltrator, these secondary infiltrators genuinely seem to continue living as their replaced humans did."

"Is it possible to track the host infiltrator directly through its connection with these secondaries?"

The researcher gave an embarrassed smile. "Uh... no. Their connection is strictly one-way. The host infiltrator has absolute control and surveillance over its secondaries, but the secondaries cannot trace the host's location. However, it's likely they need to remain within a certain 'communication' range."

Ares quickly identified a potential risk. "Does that mean, by the time we captured these secondary infiltrators, the hidden host already knew of our presence and intentions?"

"That... is uncertain." The researcher shook his head. "We're still unable to determine the level of monitoring the host exerts over the secondaries. That's why I must remind you, my lord... If we're going to act, we need to increase our pace."

Chapter 825 check_2

None of them knew what kind of actions the mother organism would plan upon obtaining this information?

Would it command other covert infestations within the city to encircle and annihilate their Vanguard Squad?

Or would it use its cunning to incite other humans in the city to kill these outsiders who had restricted the freedom of Eternal Night City's officials?

Or perhaps, upon realizing its conspiracy had been exposed, would it launch a devastating full-scale attack on Eternal Night City using the Bug Race hive outside the walls?

Even though Bai E and the others had employed every isolating measure they could think of to prevent the monitoring mother organism—potentially lurking in the shadows—from discovering the events here, they could not guarantee secrecy in their actions.

No one knew the ultimate outcome.

Which is why they had to act quickly.

"Clap, clap, clap~" Ares clapped his hands. This War God from the capital swept his sharp gaze across the Eternal Night City officials, who still hesitated, torn as they faced their former colleagues. "Time is up. The mother organism of these bugs already knows of our arrival. You must make your decision now! Trust us. Begin organizing the entirety of the city's population for Bai E's inspection, and assist us in subduing the identified targets. Or... refuse to believe. In that case, we will act on our own terms, but the consequences... cannot be guaranteed. The choice is yours."

The capital desired alliance, craved a unified league of cities working toward a common goal.

An unruly ally and an ally heavily weakened by losses held the same value to them.

"Understood... Lord Bai E." The city lord of Eternal Night City ultimately accepted the heavy burden placed upon him.

He begrudgingly raised the high-tech combat blade handed to him by a Vanguard Squad soldier, resting it hesitantly against the neck of a fellow high-ranking official with whom he had once held amicable relations.

"Long Qilu Si, my apologies. If it turns out we have misplaced our faith and judged wrongly, they will risk their lives without hesitation to retaliate! And I... Would follow close behind. I would trade my life for yours, one life for another!" With that declaration, the city lord of Eternal Night City lifted the blade high and, closing his eyes tightly, swung it down with unrelenting force.

"Slice!"

The sharp blade easily severed the head.

A gory spray of crimson blood erupted in an instant.

Yet, after the decapitated head rolled twice across the ground, the city lord—unwilling to open his eyes to observe—suddenly widened them in horror. "This..."

"It's true..."

"Long Qilu Si was infected too!"

"They were right..."

If one case was by chance, a second could no longer be dismissed as coincidence!

These figures from the capital had spoken the truth; indeed, some personnel of his city had already become vessels for the Bug Race, and those individuals from the capital possessed legitimate detection methods.

"Let me take over!"

A rugged, one-eyed military officer suddenly stood up and snatched the combat blade from the city lord's hands.

"They hesitate to dirty their own hands, but I do not! I'll see for myself whether these people—all of them—have truly been replaced by bugs!"

"Slice!"

"Slice!"

The covert agents of the Bug Race, restrained by the Vanguard Squad, put up no resistance under the onslaught of the combat blade. One head after another fell, revealing their true, grotesque forms as parasites.

The smell of blood quickly permeated the room where the secret meeting was taking place.

"It's the bugs!"

"They really are bugs!"

"Have they been lurking in our city for this long?"

"We are fortunate the capital officials uncovered the bugs' plot; otherwise, the fate that would have befallen our city... is unimaginable!"

"But how... How did the capital officials detect them?"

Seeing the lingering doubts in their hearts, Ares patiently explained every conceivable point of skepticism. "What we've said earlier is not a lie. The five warriors who represented your Eternal Night City in the recent Supreme Council selections did indeed secure one of the five seats for your city. But... they achieved this victory using the methods of the Bug Race. That is how we locked onto them. So, regarding the seat on the Supreme Council, once this matter is resolved, we will discuss its reassignment in the presence of witnesses from other cities."

"Naturally, naturally!"

"So, Lord Ares, what should we do next?" The city lord of Eternal Night City was not one to procrastinate. Recognizing the severity of the situation, he looked directly at the War God Ares. "You have my command. Our full cooperation is yours!"

"As mentioned before, organize everyone into orderly lines to undergo inspection, assist us in subduing any individuals causing disturbances, and execute those who have been identified as targets. If we mistakenly identify anyone, you may terminate the operation at any time. Do I make myself clear?"

"Crystal clear!" The city lord of Eternal Night City nodded vigorously. "We'll proceed immediately!"

When a city resolves to accomplish something, the efficiency is astounding.

And in the case of Eternal Night City—a place perpetually under the shadow of imminent demise—the governing body's near-total influence over its population was one of the cornerstones of its continued survival.

Following the city lord's order, a line of residents formed in front of Bai E for inspection, stretching farther than the eye could see.

To accelerate the process, Bai E instructed the residents to group themselves into teams of ten.

If none of the ten displayed the aura of the Bug Race, then all were cleared. Should even the faintest trace manifest, further individual inspections would be conducted within the group without delaying the city-wide operation.

Observing Bai E standing alone without any equipment, the officials managing Eternal Night City's order couldn't help but be dumbfounded.

"Could the lord determine who is human or bug with just a glance?"

"What else did you expect?" A soldier from the capital's Vanguard Squad cast a sidelong glance his way. "Conventional detection methods are slow, resource-intensive, and exorbitantly costly—even for our capital city. Within the entire Human Alliance, only Bai E possesses this unique ability. For him to personally come here is a testament to how much our capital values your Eternal Night City."

Listening attentively, the Eternal Night City officials filtered out the idle remarks, focusing on the crucial details with incredulous expressions. "This Bai E... is a city lord?"

A city lord... There couldn't possibly be more than one, could there?

The thought of a city lord from the capital traveling all this way for their safety filled them with awe!

One of the Vanguard Squad soldiers glanced at them again, unimpressed. "What are you thinking? Our capital's city lord is a figure of supreme status. Even if they possessed such ability, they wouldn't have

the time to visit your city. Bai E is the city lord of Blackwater City, one of the five members of our Supreme Council!"

"Ah... It turns out he's the city lord of Blackwater City." Several Eternal Night City officials nodded in understanding, exchanging glances and silently recording this favor in their hearts.

Bai E's inspection required no technological assistance; his eyes were his scale.

It resembled a seamless flow of the entire city's residents passing through a metaphorical "gate," ensuring remarkable efficiency.

Occasionally, groups of ten would need to separate for detailed individual evaluation.

And with each new target identified, the person would be privately escorted away for further treatment.

No one knew where these individuals were taken.

Fortunately, the instances of private intervention were not frequent, and even as rumors spread among the residents awaiting inspection, the high-pressure environment maintained perfect order.

However, hidden amidst the dense lines of people toward the back stood figures beginning to take advantage of the chaotic scene.

When they realized the lack of watchful eyes in their surroundings, they slinked into the dark shadows and fled.

The sheer number of city residents made it impossible to deploy sufficient personnel to maintain order, let alone illuminate many parts of Eternal Night City. Such opportunities for stealth and evasion were only too easy to exploit.

'Hurry, hurry, hurry!'

Bai E glanced over the crowd before him, an unexplained sense of urgency gripping his heart as though something ominous was brewing in secret.

Chapter 826: Both internal and external troubles at

"It seems we haven't detected any traces of bugs for a long time." A soldier from the Vanguard Squad maintaining order nearby asked in confusion, "Could it be that there are only this few bugs?"

"No." Bai E stood up and looked around at the darkness.

Within a ten-kilometer radius, there was no trace of bugs anymore.

Earlier, there were still traces of bugs mingling among the crowd—those were likely dormant sub-bodies of the Bug Race's undercover agents, whose wills hadn't yet been activated.

Now, those undercover sub-bodies seem to have been summoned away by their mothers with absolute orders.

This, however, makes identification easier for humans.

With no bugs remaining, it means that the residents within the ten-kilometer radius are all "safe."

No need for tedious checks; they all pass.

"Have everyone remain stationary in linear formation. I will quickly sweep through all the residents undergoing checks. If there's no issue, they can enter the safe zone and wait until this matter is resolved."

This contraction movement of the undercover agents unexpectedly made it much easier for Eternal Night City to distinguish its residents within the city.

Originally, countless people had to queue for individual bridges to undergo checks. Now, Bai E could proactively use quick and wide-range scans to confirm the safe zones.

Harnessing his Spiritual Energy, Bai E's figure floated into the sky, aiming at the enormous line of residents. In an instant, his figure shot out like lightning.

The Bug Race assassin's perception precisely covered every inch of land within a ten-kilometer radius; no evil trace could escape his senses.

'None...'

'None...'

Bai E muttered inwardly, shooting forward like an arrow.

War God Ares leapt among the crowd, hopping along below Bai E as he chased him.

Whenever he jumped to the highest point in the air, he shouted at the top of his lungs, "Wait for me! If you encounter a swarm of undercover agents, even you won't have it easy!"

Before long, Bai E slowed his forward momentum.

The residents along the Ring Road had all been scanned, and no anomalies were found.

This meant that the mind-controlling mothers, upon realizing that Bai E—a true nemesis—had arrived at Eternal Night City, had withdrawn all their claws and fangs.

"How's it looking?" War God Ares caught up to Bai E, who had landed, and asked, his face calm and unruffled, "All safe?"

"Yes." Bai E nodded, turning his gaze toward the city's central district within the Ring Road.

Like Blackwater City, Eternal Night City had also built part of its urban structure underground.

Or rather, any city in this post-apocalyptic era that dared not expand outward could only develop downward.

However, Eternal Night City's situation was much worse. The city's population was far smaller than Blackwater City's, so its underground excavation was not as deep.

But within this not-so-deep central zone, numerous undercover mother sub-bodies and potentially bewitched, kidnapped ordinary humans were all gathered.

"It's time for an assault." Bai E's gaze deepened, staring toward the direction of the city center.

As he moved slightly closer, he could feel the terrifying will surging toward him like a tidal wave.

All the undercover agents within the city had gathered together. The shock from this large-scale assembly of elite bugs was extraordinarily powerful and overwhelming.

Several high-ranking officials of Eternal Night City, following the two from a distance in helicopters, also stopped nearby. Braving the gusts from the helicopter's rotors, they strode over quickly, "My lord, how is it?"

Bai E pointed toward a patch of darkness ahead, "The rest are there. However, we cannot rule out the possibility that some bewitched residents might exist. I still suggest you send people to conduct another round of persuasion."

As they spoke, one of Eternal Night City's high-ranking officials suddenly received a report from his subordinates.

After listening to the report for a few seconds, the official's face instantly turned grave as he stepped forward and solemnly said to the others, "We've just received the latest news. The bug hive outside the city... is moving. Apparently, it's an all-out assault. Our surveillance team spotted the ruler heading toward the city!"

The situation was critical and urgent!

The sudden development caused the faces of everyone present to darken like water.

Even though this was something they had all considered beforehand, now that it was truly unfolding before them, they couldn't help but feel caught off guard.

Countless undercover bugs inside the city were lying in wait, ready to strike, while outside, the entire hive was going all out.

Under the weight of both internal and external threats, every high-ranking official of Eternal Night City present turned pale.

They knew their own situation—the mere act of dealing with a single bug hive on its own already left them struggling.

Not to mention that after learning the Bug Race's conspiracy from these imperial emissaries, they now realized that their supposedly "even-matched" confrontations in the past had been nothing but the Bug Race deceiving them.

The external pressure hanging by a thread had only served to create opportunities for another type of bug infiltration.

Now, with the bugs inside aware that their conspiracy had been exposed, it was only natural for the hive outside, which had held back from launching a full-scale assault, to finally attack Eternal Night City.

Amid lofty ambitions to advance with the help of the imperial emissaries, the city hadn't yet realized its grand visions but already faced this catastrophic disaster.

"My lords, maybe... you should leave." The city lord of Eternal Night City spoke with trembling lips.

Having Imperial emissaries send reinforcements upon learning of the bug invasion into Eternal Night City was already a tremendous favor that left them deeply grateful.

Chapter 827: Internal and External Worries_2

Now, the internal crisis remains unresolved, and the external threat has arrived in force.

Eternal Night City's own armed forces couldn't possibly withstand the invasion, and what could just a few hundred reinforcements from the imperial capital possibly achieve?

"Leave from the west gate, take a detour, there's always a way to survive. We can send an elite squad to guide all you lords out of the city. Just promise us to avenge us someday, then we'll die without regrets."

"Yes, my lords, please go. All we hope is that the Alliance you establish in the future will remember that there was once a city called 'Eternal Night.' We fought, but human strength is finite, after all."

The War God Ares looked at Bai E, silent.

He had heard stories of Bai E's "miracles."

But back then, he commanded a trusted army entirely under his control, whereas now...

He might very well be on his own.

The Bug Race army outside is undoubtedly troublesome, but at least its threat is straightforward.

The chaos within the city is even worse—those infiltrators blend in with the residents and exploit the complex urban terrain, requiring massive manpower for identification.

Either danger could easily obliterate the city.

The only way to save Eternal Night City is to eliminate threats on both fronts simultaneously!

"Can it be done?" Ares looked at Bai E, his luminous eyes brimming with anticipation.

Bai E flashed a bold smile, "Shouldn't I be asking you whether you can spot those infiltrators first?"

"You've already cornered them to this extent—if we can't take them down now, wouldn't that mean underestimating your allies?"

Hearing the two men's confident exchange, the officials of Eternal Night City were dumbstruck.

"My lords, do you mean to say...?"

Ares turned to the speaking official, his eyes ablaze, "Do you want to give up on your city?"

The official froze, "Of course not!"

"Then, do you want to give up on your people?"

"They are more important than I am!"

"Then what are you waiting for?!" Ares threw his head back and laughed, "Gather every warrior you have and join me to drive out the infiltrators!"

The officials of Eternal Night City were stunned, "But the Bug Race outside..."

Ares roared with laughter, "With Bai E here, what are you afraid of?"

Immediately, everyone's gaze shifted to Bai E, their eyes filled with disbelief, as if their world had been turned upside down.

Either the world has gone mad—or I have!

Finally, under the crushing weight of pressure from both sides, haven't I gone mad after all?

Many silently sighed in despair.

But then, out of nowhere, a blue-and-white mecha appeared in the empty space before everyone.

Bai E leapt forward and landed before the opened cockpit.

Standing at the edge of the entrance to the cockpit, Bai E looked down at the crowd of figures staring up at him and, smiling, said: "Let's race to see... whether the bugs outside fall first, or the bugs inside."

With that, his figure disappeared into the cockpit.

The cockpit closed, and the mecha instantly shot into the sky, like a comet streaking across the night sky, darting toward the frozen plains outside the city.

All the residents along the ring-road avenue froze, looking up at this "comet" streaking across the heavens.

"Is that... someone from the imperial capital?"

"What's someone from the imperial capital doing?"

"I heard the Bug Race outside is launching a massive attack. We're... probably still doomed." A well-informed resident lurking among the crowd muttered in despair.

But they were immediately interrupted by swaggering, resolute warriors headed toward the inner city, "Doomed or not, that's not yours to decide. Even the lords from the imperial capital haven't abandoned us, so what gives you the right to abandon yourself?"

"But the Bug Race's army..."

"Didn't you see the City Lord Bai E already heading out to face them?"

"But he's all alone!"

Similar doubts arose in almost everyone's hearts.

Watching the distant "comet," the officials of Eternal Night City still couldn't snap back to reality: "Can he really do it? That's an entire bug hive's army... and we're already out of troops."

"Who needs your troops?" Ares strode forward, heading for the inner city, "Don't let us lose face—having him hold out alone while we cower in shame! You may be able to, but I most certainly cannot!"

The War God Ares was a name known far and wide, recognized universally.

Now seeing this legendary figure place such unwavering faith in Bai E, the despairing officials of Eternal Night City couldn't help but feel a flicker of hope.

"Maybe... we really can try," they thought to themselves. The city lord beckoned his trusted aide, "Send a team of sharp-sighted men to observe City Lord Bai E from a distance. If he unfortunately perishes... continue with the original plan."

The fact that the imperial lords were even extending aid already demonstrated their unparalleled righteousness—there was no way they could drag them into this doomed abyss and risk total annihilation alongside them!

"Understood, sir." The aide gritted his teeth and disappeared into the darkness.

Then, the city lord rallied the warriors around him: "For the people, for the city! Slaughter those bugs!"

"Roar!"

"Kill them all!"

...

"Whoosh~"

"Boom!"

The comet descended, and the shockwave of its landing rippled through the frozen ground.

The closest swarm of small worker bugs and drone bugs toppled over instantly, their grotesque clicking sounds blanketing the vast icy plains.

Bai E drew two blades: one was the primordial Star Devourer Blade, and the other was its replicated counterpart.

The two blades, virtually identical in authority, manifested simultaneously in the hands of the blue-and-white mecha. Facing the swarm surging unpredictably across the horizon like a mismatched carpet, Bai E swung his blades and charged straight through.

As the mecha crushed their bodies underfoot, the frenzied worker and drone bugs clawed desperately with their bladed limbs, trying to latch onto the bold construct defying their tide.

Even in death, they sought to embed their jagged limbs into the mecha's structure.

The swarms advanced relentlessly; larger mantis bugs stepped upon their fallen comrades, climbing layer by layer until the mecha's surface was completely coated in their writhing forms.

Though their claws couldn't easily penetrate the heavily armored mecha's exterior, the sheer weight of their bodies posed a crushing burden.

To topple the target, they didn't mind sacrificing their lives. That was how they had overcome humanity's colossal war machines in the past.

But this time... their opponent wasn't the same.

A thunderous wave of Spiritual Energy blasted forth, blowing all lesser bugs in Zuo Jin away. At last, the mecha standing amidst the swarm revealed no restraint and unleashed its full firepower systems.

Two giant flamethrowers mounted on its arms, along with missile arrays embedded in its shoulders and waist, erupted in an apocalyptic spectacle.

With its awakened machine consciousness, the mecha seamlessly linked to Bai E's Psychic Storage Space.

The stockpiles of ammunition stored in the void within the Psychic Storage Space required no manual reloading; they materialized directly into the mecha's inner structures.

"Fwoosh-fwoosh-fwoosh-fwoosh!"

The missile bombardment, more intense than ordinary fireworks, rained down relentlessly, while the flamethrowers scorched every frozen inch of the battlefield.

Underneath the charred shells of the Bug Race, their discolored internal fluids mingled with melting ice, trickling silently across the ground.

The murky liquids reflected the retreating flames, leaving only scorched, broken insect carcasses behind.

With his third-tier Spiritual Energy, Bai E could have piloted the mecha to soar above and strike directly at the hive's ruler.

But even these swarming low-level bugs posed a threat Eternal Night City couldn't counter.

He had to charge through them head-on, cleaving a path to the hive ruler!

Chapter 828: The God Descends to Earth!

The blue-and-white Mecha descended like a god, rampaging through the dense insect swarm and gradually penetrating deep into the sea of bugs.

Watching the earth-shaking commotion from afar, the observation team sent by Eternal Night City's lord was collectively rendered speechless, their faces frozen in awe like statues carved out of wood.

It wasn't until the blue-and-white Mecha delved into the depths of the swarm, a place they dared not pursue, that the team slowly regained their senses.

"Is he even human?"

"Unbelievable!"

"No wonder the city lord ordered us to monitor him. This level of combat power is completely on another level compared to normal humans!"

Watching the distant explosions recede with the Mecha's advance, one among them cautiously asked, "Should we follow him?"

One of the soldiers looked out toward the dark icy plains, where the faint sounds of segmented limbs stirring echoed ominously.

The man piloting the Mecha was undoubtedly eradicating all bugs encountered along the way, but the widely dispersed bugs meant many still lurked beyond the Mecha's reach.

These lower-tier bugs were insignificant to that man, but for any ordinary human soldier, even the weakest drones and worker bugs posed a horrifying threat.

Humankind had always been the disadvantaged side in the fight against the Bug Race.

Without the protection of steel fortresses and city walls, humans were no match for these perfect creatures.

Especially out here in the dark, desolate ice fields, how could their unmechanized team possibly traverse the swarm and keep up with that man's pace?

Yet not following him... What was the point of their surveillance mission?

The thought of the city lord's orders made them grit their teeth. One of them pointed toward a mountain coated in ice in the distance.

"Climbing that mountain might give us a better view."

Though scaling the mountain was arduous, it seemed far less reckless than charging through the swarm, and everyone agreed this suggestion was more feasible.

...

"Boom! Boom! Boom! Boom!" The rhythmic explosions and monstrous roars formed the ice field's relentless symphony.

Gigantic beasts fell to the ground amid echoing cries, their long, drawn-out wails accompanied by tremors that made the climbing team's task even harder.

But alongside the difficulty came a growing sense of exhilaration.

As long as the chaos continued, it meant that man was still fighting.

As long as he held the line until the city's army could annihilate the mutated bugs infiltrating Eternal Night City, humanity's fight against the Bug Race might not be a lost cause.

'Hang in there!'

'You mustn't fall!'

'Just avoid the truly elite bugs—holding off the swarm's main force is enough!'

Upon learning that the insect hive had mobilized its entire swarm in an overwhelming offensive, despair had gripped the heart of every resident of Eternal Night City.

Now, with a sliver of hope emerging, the members of the observation team on the scene felt the weight of uncertainty more acutely than anyone else.

They feared seeing humanity's last glimmer of hope extinguished right before their eyes.

Yet at the same time, they clung desperately to that hope, for humanity's frontline against the Bug Race lay directly ahead.

As long as the battle noise persisted, Eternal Night City still had a chance to endure!

When the team finally struggled their way to the summit with the aid of support equipment, breathing in the thin air at the high altitude, they raised their binoculars to gaze into the distance. What they saw left their minds spinning, overwhelmed by disbelief.

Illuminated by the occasional flashes of explosive fire, the fallen silhouettes of massive beasts were plainly visible.

Cannon Bugs, Mantis Bugs... these types of regular Elite Insect Race creatures no longer counted for much in the Bug Race's later battlefields.

Even Thunder Beasts—once thought immobile and thus allowing humanity brief reprieve—lay collapsed, their mountain-like bodies unmistakable.

Sand Worms, unsuited to the frozen terrain and rarely seen near cities, were also lifeless, their bodies sprawled like segmented centipedes.

Here a pile, there another, their numbers uncountable.

Amid the sea of corpses, several enormous crimson forms—bugs that once plunged Eternal Night City into paralyzing fear and were deemed invincible—circled the solitary blue-and-white figure, trying to crush and destroy him.

By the flickering firelight, the observation team counted the adversaries surrounding him—

Three Swarm Guardians and... the Dominator.

The Dominator's terrifying Psychic Energy domain sent shivers down the spines of the distant observation team, yet the man in close proximity seemed unfazed. Piloting his Mecha, he maneuvered with an agility surpassing that of a human body.

As they continued to watch, the team found themselves frozen in the icy winds of Eternal Night, their frost-covered brows and lashes unable to extinguish the fiery determination in their hearts.

One team member rubbed his eyes, rubbed them again, and blinked incredulously at the battlefield image he had stared at for over a minute. "Am I hallucinating?"

His teammate muttered under his breath, "That's the Dominator, isn't it?"

"And there are three Guardians too."

During Eternal Night City's most confident offensive, they had relied on their prideful war fortresses to defend against beings like these, only to see the creatures use their dense bone armor to close the distance effortlessly, then tear apart the supposedly impregnable fortifications with their merciless crushing claws.

If these Swarm Guardians hadn't been limited by their role of guarding the hive, Eternal Night City doubted its sturdy walls could have held against such creatures.

Now, however, it was obvious that much of what they thought they knew about the Bug Race was wrong.

But it didn't matter because they seemed just as ignorant about humanity's own combat capacity.

Since when had anyone heard of a lone Mecha pilot rampaging through a bug army like this?

Now, they were witnessing it firsthand...

The thunderous clash of clawed blades against war daggers reverberated across the vast icy plains. The seemingly overwhelming advantage of the bugs surrounding the Mecha was being overturned, with the Mecha exploiting its agility to toy with them.

The heavy carapaces, impervious to countless missiles and artillery fire, fell apart under the twin blades of the Mecha as blood and flesh sprayed.

Even from a great distance, the observation team could clearly see the giant beasts being carved open by the Mecha's ferocious strikes.

In that moment, a singular thought echoed through the minds of every team member—

The sea of bugs was surrounding the Mecha, but the Mecha alone had them cornered!

"Hiss~"

Amid a drawn-out screeching roar, one of the towering ape-like Swarm Guardians crashed to the ground, sending tremors rippling across the land.

Chapter 829: Encircle and Rescue!

The mecha wielding twin blades seemed like an eternal, tireless War God.

Even when besieged by multiple giant beasts and an endless swarm of bugs, it didn't exhibit a single ounce of defeat.

And as one beast after another fell in battle, even those fearless bugs began to flee from this terrifying place.

Eternal Night City? Forget it!

The entire bug swarm started to converge on the position of their leader, attempting to buy time for their ruler to escape from this fearsome human enemy.

As the embodiment of the hive's will, the ruler's command was the absolute law that the bug army had to obey.

Yet, how could a sluggish, hulking ruler escape alive under the mecha's relentless pursuit?

Bai E piloted the mecha, trailing the ruler not too far behind, continuously exerting immense pressure upon it.

After all, as long as the ruler was present, it could restrain its underlings from dispersing recklessly.

If it were decapitated too early, the endless swarm might scatter in all directions upon realizing this iron monstrosity had no meat and was tough to fight.

This situation wasn't like the last Blackwater City assault on the Blackrock District Hive, where Bai E had an army assisting him after decapitating the leader.

If these scattered bugs smelled blood and swarmed the city collectively, Bai E's mecha wouldn't be able to handle such a widespread attack efficiently.

Thus, maintaining a calculated distance while cornering and attacking reinforcements was Bai E's chosen strategy.

Standing atop the mountain range, watching the blue-and-white mecha disappear into the bug swarm, anyone uninformed might mistake the mecha for the swarm's leader.

But the swathes of bug corpses piled beneath the mecha's feet were unmistakable proof of the machine's allegiance.

"How are they... getting farther and farther away?"

The observation squad perched on the ridgeline looked dumbfounded.

The bugs and mecha could move, but the mountains couldn't!

After finally finding a spot to observe the battle, how did the fight manage to shift so far away?

Not toward the city, instead further away.

Weren't they supposed to be attacking Eternal Night City? What's with the retreating battle?

"At this rate, we won't be able to see anything..." The squad captain, clutching binoculars, muttered, visibly frustrated.

"Of course they'd retreat! They don't stand a chance..." One soldier remarked with a sigh, fully accepting the bugs' perspective.

"Yeah, if it were me, I'd run too."

"Can't Mr. Bai catch up to the ruler? How long can this chasing last?"

"Clearly, Mr. Bai is focusing on cornering reinforcements. Without the ruler rallying the swarm, if the bugs scatter and storm the city, who holds them back? You or me?"

"Fair point..."

Another soldier scratched the back of his head, his laughter slightly sheepish.

Little did they realize that amidst their casual banter, they'd unconsciously acknowledged one undeniable fact—

This massive swarm had truly been driven away by Mr. Bai and his mecha, all by himself.

As for extermination, based on the current situation, it appeared to be just a matter of time.

The captain's gaze sharpened as he calmly commanded, "I'll follow with Old Two and keep observing; the rest of you, go back and report! The Bug Race... they've retreated!"

What had once seemed like an overwhelming catastrophe—a bug invasion—had been forcefully repelled by a solitary mecha.

Nobody could comprehend the terrifying strength required for such a feat, but they all understood this: for the first time, hope had truly descended upon this land.

...

Inside the city, the warriors shouted furiously, unleashing flames of anger onto the defiant "civilians."

No matter whether these rebellious "civilians" were disguised "lurkers" or not, they had to swiftly eliminate every enemy!

Because time wasn't on their side.

Outside the city, Mr. Bai was singlehandedly facing the enemy; no matter how capable he was, his allies needed to give their all on their own battlefield.

After all, a civilian's life may matter, but didn't a warrior's life matter too?

Instead of paying a hefty price to investigate whether the few insurgent civilians had been bewitched by the Lurkers, it was better to treat them all as Bug Race operatives and eradicate them entirely!

Only by cutting out the city's rotten flesh could the giant move forward unburdened.

However, the agile Lurkers often relied on their formidable close-quarters combat abilities and the maze-like internal architecture of the Inner City District to prolong the skirmish through street warfare, making this final operation profoundly arduous.

Right as the battle reached its boiling point, reports from outside the city finally reached Eternal Night City's high command—

"Victory outside the city!"

"Numerous low-ranking bugs decimated, countless Elite Insect Race members slain, multiple giant beasts killed, three guardians down!"

"The bug swarm has been singlehandedly driven away by Mr. Bai!"

"Currently, Mr. Bai is pursuing the ruler across miles, while simultaneously cornering reinforcements to try and annihilate every bug in the hive!"

Upon hearing these shocking reports, the tension that had been gripping the hearts of Eternal Night City's high officials finally snapped, releasing a wave of relief.

Only now did they feel the joy of surviving the catastrophe seep deeply into their spirits.

"Mr. Bai... truly did it..."

"Unbelievable! Absolutely unbelievable! Chasing an entire hive with just one mecha! No wonder they dared to come support us with such a small team, despite knowing the city was already crawling with bugs."

"To have such a War God among the Human Race is truly humanity's fortune!"

Ares, also called a "War God," absentmindedly scratched his ear.

He had also received the battlefield reports through his radio headset promptly.

Even though he had expected as much, witnessing such feats repeatedly left him in awe every time.

This time, the conditions were far more challenging than during the previous battle.

Executing a swift decapitation strike to leave the bug swarm leaderless—allowing regular armies to sweep up the disorganized lower-tier bugs—was considered the most practical analysis of Blackwater City's supposed victory over the Blackrock District Hive.

But now it seemed that even the most logical explanation couldn't capture Mr. Bai's unparalleled strength.

Instead of a rapid decapitation strike, he chose to immerse himself within the swarm, systematically grinding it down like a one-man mill, erasing the Bug Race's active forces by himself!

Such a feat was a thousand times harder than executing a decisive kill.

'Is that guy really this absurdly strong?'

Ares finally confronted an unsettling realization.

He'd always assumed his level far exceeded that of others, but perhaps even he lagged behind that man by worlds apart...

'What the hell!'

Bothered by this newfound realization, Ares channeled all his pent-up frustration into the Lurkers in front of him!

"Every single one of you—die!"

Surging with a ferocious vitality, Ares launched himself like a missile into the heart of the Inner City District, wreaking havoc as dust and debris exploded around him!

Chapter 830: The First Shrine

After the external threats were eliminated, the warriors of Eternal Night City became even more fearless.

When countless octopus-headed corpses were strewn across the ground, all the survivors finally collapsed onto the ground, either waiting for rescue or easing their fatigued bodies.

"We survived..."

"Survived again."

"Hahaha! Wonderful! This pitch-black night—I could gaze at it for a lifetime and never tire!"

No matter where one lives, at least one is alive.

Eternal Night City had languished in darkness for countless years and battled external threats for countless years.

Yet no one ever considered simply giving up.

Life, once born, should strive to endure and carry on.

Generation after generation, Eternal Night City persisted this way.

The city may one day face destruction, but by no means can it happen under this generation's watch.

"Do you see? This is the reason I sought to form an alliance." War God Ares stood atop the tallest building in the city, his finger tracing toward every corner below.

In those dark corners, every life shimmered with brilliance.

"The old men in the city only care about preserving humanity's final shred of dignity, unwilling to gamble with the last of our resources to push humanity forward."

"I know that, relying solely on our own imperial capital's strength, it's difficult to help every city around the world achieve a bright future."

"But time is never on our side. I refuse to let humanity's lineage vanish without even one attempt to fight back."

"When I pressed my blade to those old men's throats and forced them into this alliance, even I didn't know what direction the future of this alliance would take."

"Luckily!" Ares clapped the figure beside him heavily on the back. "Luckily, I have you! Seeing you, I finally know this alliance has a future!"

A combat force so overwhelmingly strong that it can singlehandedly destroy a Bug Nest—if he is willing, he could dedicate his life to clearing this planet of all alien threats, one step at a time!

Returning humanity to a world of blue skies and white clouds where they can breathe freely once more!

"You are humanity's true beacon of hope!" Ares pursed his lips. "And perhaps an even more freakish monster than me..."

Though honored as the "War God," the vast gap in strength between him and others often led to people calling him a freak.

Now... finally, someone even freakier than him had emerged!

Ares felt a shred of solace.

This title could now finally be passed on from him.

"Hmm..." Bai E turned his face away, refusing to answer directly.

The scope of the global threat was truly vast. For him alone to clean it all up—how many years would that take?

The attention he bore would not allow him to stay solely on this planet forever.

When would the Bug Race's massive fleet return?

A hundred years? Two hundred?

Five to ten years? One year or less?

So, he couldn't fulfill Ares's expectations.

Reclaiming this planet would ultimately require the efforts of ordinary people in the majority.

Ares, oblivious to Bai E's hesitations, simply continued speaking with a carefree grin: "If only you had appeared sooner..."

Bai E pursed his lips and shook his head. "I just managed to finish dealing with the matters in the city."

If he had come sooner, he wouldn't possess the strength he had now. It could only be said... everything had happened just at the right time.

Ares let out a hearty laugh. "True! After all, I heard you were a general before—there must've been some stories during that time too."

Saying this, Ares clapped Bai E on the shoulder again. "You're stronger than me! They actually considered making me the city lord, but I know myself—I couldn't handle being a city lord. I just want to lead soldiers and roam the world looking for trouble with those bugs and beastmen! When you wage a global campaign, you must take me along... although, you probably won't need me."

Ares felt a bit deflated.

The man before him could single-handedly annihilate an entire Bug Nest army. With combat prowess of this caliber—what need would he even have for Ares?

Teaming up with him would only waste manpower; splitting into two separate forces and attacking from different directions to eradicate the global bug infestation was the most effective strategy.

To singlehandedly annihilate a Bug Nest!

What an unimaginable feat for humanity!

And when this news spread throughout the city, Eternal Night City erupted into a frenzy.

The city had been invaded by bugs!

Shock, panic.

The imperial capital's leaders had come to help weed out the bug infiltrators!

Joy, gratitude.

The Bug Nest had launched an all-out assault outside the city!

Deathly silence, despair.

And the Bug Nest army was wiped out single-handedly by a lord from the city!

What?!!!

This—this was the collective emotional rollercoaster experienced by every resident of Eternal Night City upon learning the sequence of events.

When the initial shock gradually subsided in each person's mind, only then did they start to realize that everything that had happened in such a brief period... was indeed real!

The bugs disguising themselves as humans and infiltrating the city, perhaps living for many years as neighbors, was real.

The Bug Nest army launching an all-out offensive to obliterate the city was also real.

But all these disasters, any of which could have spelled annihilation for Eternal Night City, were all resolved with a single wave of a hand by the same individual.

At the city's central plaza, countless residents of Eternal Night City gathered around the expansive central tower stage, attentively listening to someone passionately narrate the legendary tale that had unfolded right before their eyes.

"Who, at the alliance conference in the imperial capital, uncovered the bugs' plot to infiltrate our human society?!"