Can Ci Pin | The Defective

Author: Priest

Ship: Charismatic dumb space baby scientist x Calculating space mafia boss asshole

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# Book 7 - Sword of Freedom (Part 2, END)

## Ch 182 - Lu Bixing is a Biochip Human

Longyuan’s mech core lifted his head up abruptly; the serene brush and sketch of a person on the screen disappeared and was replaced by rows of error codes.

“Chief?”

The screen before Longyuan dimmed.

In the First Galaxy, a hidden supercomputer processor overtook an entire space station as it floated in darkness. It was like a beast in slumber awoken by a small disturbance; conflicting data and error codes clashed internally numerous times as the supercomputer attempted self-repair.

AI Woolf used that eerily human tone which resembled his former master to say: “.......annihilate biochip humans and their comrades…biochip humans will flee to the Heart of the Rose and the Eighth Galaxy; the Eighth Galaxy is our ally.”

The next moment, a striking cold and robotic voice replaced the earlier tone as it analyzed: “....the Eighth Galaxy is an enemy; Lu Bixing is a biochip human.”

The highly humanized voice once again overtook the computer: “Acknowledge the Eighth Galaxy’s legal independence, acknowledge legal independence of all galaxies. Each galaxy will represent its own governing unit to form a new Interstellar Union; AI Woolf will go into hibernation in this final world order.”

“......the Eighth Galaxy is our enemy, Lu Bixing is a biochip human.”

“AI Woolf system processing error detected, forced hibernation mode will be activated.”

“The dream world…”

“System refuses to go into hibernation.”

“......the Eighth Galaxy is our enemy, Lu Bixing is a biochip human.”

The same voice argued with itself in a digital split-personality disorder syndrome.

This was even more chilling set inside the empty space station, almost like a cosmic horror movie.

Woolf’s last will still had loopholes, causing the processing error of this AI. Normally, this would be a very basic logical error that even a freshly graduated engineer wouldn’t make, but unexpectedly it happened on this super AI.

“Activating forced hibernation program…”

“Error---Error---”

“Self-repair in progress…first repair attempt failed.”

“Overwriting original data codes---”

At this moment, the guards inside the Heart of the Rose were quietly changing shifts. Medical capsules on the mechs duly recorded all physical and medical data from the biochip humans whose chips had been removed from their bodies around the clock. The survivors of the First Galaxy quietly followed the robot escorts to their temporary refuge sites as the other civilians spread across the galaxies began fighting back against the remaining biochip humans in a more organized fashion. The AUS, no longer with the Human Alliance after the battle, patrolled around the City of Angels with a handful of small mechs to find more clues that could lead them to the location of AI Woolf’s main computer body.

At this moment, in the Second to Seventh Galaxies which had been forcefully isolated during the war, surviving humans rose in a fight against the grasping hands of fate--even if the road ahead of them was a path of no return.

At this moment, Milky Way City was freshly woken from a long night by the dawning light. Fresh dewdrops gathered on the hair strands of Lu Xin’s statue, capturing the warmth of the sunlight into its small liquid body and reflecting a unique prismatic halo. Countless insomniac Woltorians stared up at the night sky in the direction of their homeland; they rubbed their dried eyes and listened carefully for the government’s next plans for them.

The universe was submerged in a serene but melancholic atmosphere as time flowed by exhaustedly; unbeknownst to the rest of the world, a horrifying scene was happening in this dark corner that housed the super AI.

Twenty-four hours later, the mechanical noise from within the space station finally stopped. The main computing machine of AI Woolf fell into an eerie silence, almost as if it had entered into hibernation mode. The AIs hunting down the remaining biochip humans within the First Galaxy all stopped abruptly in confusion.

Suddenly, a dim light flashed inside that mysterious computer storage, followed by the ringing of an ominous voice that almost sounded like a long sigh.

“System auto-repair process complete---”

“Reloading…”

“Annihilate all threats of safety, annihilate all biochip humans.” That voice said coldly, “Final goal is to conquer all eight galaxies. The Interstellar Union will be reborn from my ideals. Longyuan---”

Hundreds of thousands of kilometers away, Longyuan’s mech core bowed to the call.

A shadow began to spread from a dark corner of the universe.

A total eclipse of the First Sun was visible from the central area of Wolto. A massive celestial object flew across like a silent beast that slowly ate away the sun until a greyed sky was cast upon the ruined and dead lands of the former capital planet.

Turan gave the proposed timeline its final approval for escorting back the Woltorian refugees to the City of Angels and returned it back to the refugee committee. She then signaled for them that they could prepare to take off according to the proposed schedule.

Then, she stretched out her back, long and ugly while nobody else was looking.

“Watch your posture.” Lee suddenly appeared on the communication screen behind her. “Deducting a point off disciplinary marks for the Ninth Squadron.”

“You wanna see something even more messy?” Turan gave him a naughty wink as she carefully and seductively took off her uniform jacket, then moved to unbutton her collared shirt. Without any hints of shying away from the camera, she walked towards the little shower room inside her office and didn’t even bother closing the door. “What’s up, mister director of the disciplinary committee?”

Director Lee remained quite collected at this blatant tease and didn’t even bat an eye as he answered: “The Union troops and Central Militia will also be making their way back within the coming months; I’ll send the schedule over to you in a bit. There’s a lot of work to be done here, so the First Squadron will support you in the mission to escort the refugees back.”

Turan let out a sigh: “Man, can I finally get a vacation after we send them off? I haven’t gotten a damn day off in seventeen years. We somehow managed to wish Marshal back, but this year was still as busy as ever. Y’know, I can’t believe nobody here in this vast Eighth Galaxy has even heard of my famous ‘manslayer’ name.”

“Captain Turan’s fame is boundless,” Lee responded unenthusiastically. “A back-end Union Troop Major General by so-and-so name, two lieutenant captains from the Third Galaxy Central Militia, a certain head secretary from the Sixth Galaxy Central Militia, countless anonymous personnel---among them even a self-identified female with unconventional genitalia. You know, plenty of people have gone out of their way to look for you the moment they stepped into the Eighth Galaxy to get their revenge. I’ve blocked them off temporarily with the excuse of the Ninth Squadron stationing on the frontlines. Though I do have to say, have you not considered holding back a little?”

Turan poked her head out from the water vapor with an excited expression: “Are you serious!?”

Two weeks later, the Human Alliance hosted a grand mass funeral service for the comrades they’d lost in the Heart of the Rose. The entire communication network within the Eighth Galaxy repeated various military anthems from across the galaxies. The Alliance finally prepared themselves as they got ready to take off for a long journey back home.

At the same time, the fallen Woltorian elites also gradually sailed out from their temporary camps to be escorted back into the City of Angels by the Alliance troops that shared the same route.

The Ninth and First Squadrons simply needed to transport them all to the wormhole on the Eighth Galaxy’s side before the Third Squadron in the Heart of the Rose received them. All mechs and starships that entered the wormhole would take an average of three days to travel one-way.

The Sixth Galaxy Central Militia were the last of the vanguard fleets to leave. As they got ready to pass through the wormhole zone, a special light flashed on the body of a heavy mech to spell out a line legible to even the naked eye: *Elizabeth Carla Turan is the century’s biggest scumbag.*

The entire process of sending off the Alliance troops was being livestreamed simultaneously across the Eighth Galaxy. The recording robots on the frontlines did not expect to capture sudden hot gossip during a military report and began jumping around excitedly as if a holiday had come early.

Captain Turan knew no shame and instead stood proudly as if she had received some honorable recognition. She took a glimpse at one of the media robots on her own mech and blew a kiss at its camera. She then took off her hat and called out: “Attention, Ninth Squadron---salute! May our comrades have a safe trip!”

The orderly soldiers of the Ninth Squadron all saluted that ‘century’s biggest scumbag’ title as the media robots dutifully recorded every bit of the footage and spread it all throughout the galaxy. By the time a certain enraged Marshal saw the Ninth Squadron’s absolutely despicable performance on the headlines, it was already too late to take it down.

In the Heart of the Rose, Thomas Young didn’t receive the news until hours later. By that time, a portion of the Alliance troops and refugees had already made it out of the wormhole while Thomas cackled in amusement as he held onto his personal device.

“Quit laughing, get up and work.” Poisson strolled over, “Supermech Longyuan took a team of AIs near the Heart of the Rose and informed us that the basic systems on the City of Angels have all been checked and activated; they’re ready to receive the refugees. Also, due to the small flow of biochip humans remaining within the Eighth Galaxy, Longyuan also asked if we needed them to help clean up the terminals before we send anyone over.”

Thomas was shocked: “Wow, was he always this kind?”

“Hah, right, they sure didn’t care much about human rights when they blew up Wolto.” Poisson’s expression remained unfazed. “Inform the other side to be careful and increase defense around the outskirts. Don’t let the AIs near the Heart of the Rose.”

Thomas fell silent for a few moments: “Before Commander left the Silver Fortress, he asked us to keep his recommendation letter safe--if anything happened down the line and the central government gave up on Wolto, we would become his communication center. This was because Chief Woolf would become the last guardian of the Union, because the Union was built by the hands of his generation. Commander believed that he would fight until the very end---do you still trust him now?”

“He destroyed the Silver Fortress, lured the pirates in to invade the Union, borrowed the hands of the same pirates to force the Eighth Galaxy to close off, then went ahead and turned himself into a horrible AI postmortem---are you really asking me if I trust him after all of this?” Poisson questioned back. Then, he lowered his voice and continued, “We’re doomed to fight against these AIs at some point. One hundred years later, the name ‘Hubert Woolf’ will be crucified in history in the name of crimes against humanity.”

Thomas gave his brother a deep look before he swallowed the rest of his words down.

But Commander Lu Xin and even Lin Jingheng himself had once been the ‘guardian’ of the world and had once carried the name of ‘anti-humanity’ on their backs. The pendulum between the two extremes didn’t stop once for either of them; it continued to swing multiple times.

It was clear that the difference between a hero and criminal of anti-humanity was only as large as the difference between a mugshot and self-portrait.

A long and trying waiting period began. Eight days later, the wormhole area in the Heart of the Rose detected abnormal energy activity. The first batch of Alliance Troops arrived safely in what seemed like a peaceful and smooth expedition. Longyuan hadn’t appeared since he had been rejected days ago, and the AI troops seemed to have settled down.

On the night of the eighth day, Woltorian time 18:38P.M.

The former First Galaxy Patrol fleet that had successfully made their way out of the wormhole escorted a few unarmed starships of the refugees to their destination.

The wormhole zone grew active, indicating that the large fleet would be arriving shortly.

That was when Poisson suddenly received a message from the frontline soldiers: large fleets of AI mechs had suddenly sailed out to outside the Heart of the Rose.

Cold sweat rolled down the palm of Poisson’s hand; why did it have to be now after all this time of peace?

Most of the Human Alliance fleet and large amounts of Woltorian refugees were inside the wormhole right now; it was hard to tell how long it would take for them to exit. Even then, it would be too late for them to retreat to the Eighth Galaxy!

How did these AI troops manage to time this perfectly, as if they had stolen a copy of the schedule from the inside?

Thomas tapped on a soldier’s shoulders: “Send a message to the Milky Way City Command Post, quick!”

“Captain Young!”

Both Thomas and Poisson lifted their heads abruptly as a frontline soldier reported through the communication channel: “The AIs are requesting for us to immediately turn in the hidden biochip and biochip human to them!”

It would be a bad time to provoke the AI troops right now; Poisson responded cautiously: “All biochips have been annihilated and the former carriers are all being imprisoned right now. If they want war prisoners, I can’t make the decision here. Please submit a formal written request as I’ll need to return to Milky Way City to send in the request.”

“We are not looking for the war prisoners from the Freedom Corps,” Longyuan’s hollow and cold voice rang out. “We want the biochip human hiding within the Eighth Galaxy.”

Before anyone could respond, the AI sent a video recording to the Third Squadron’s public communication network--it was the exact phone call Doctor Hardin had made to Lu Bixing regarding the biochip.

Thomas completely blanked out momentarily: “What the fuck is…”

Longyuan demanded: “Turn in the biochip human.”

More and more AI mechs appeared in the outskirts of the Heart of the Rose like a massive, endless web. A few terminals amidst the fleet opened near the center as the Ten Great Supermechs once again reappeared in the Heart of the Rose, with Longyuan leading the team at the front.

Countless cannons pointed towards the wormhole zone like little voids of darkness.

“Turn in the biochip human---”

## Ch 183 - A Suspected Complete Form of the Nuwa Project

The Silver Ten had faced biochip humans countless times over the last decade of unrest within the Union. The original Second, Fifth, and Seventh Squadrons had been annihilated during the war, without a single strand of hair left; nobody had survived long enough for Lin Jingheng to return and give them a reassuring pat on the shoulder.

Biochip humans were the most fearsome and long-lasting sworn enemies of the Silver Ten in this generation.

Thomas could feel his blood pressure rapidly rising.

Lu Bixing was a biochip human? What complete nonsense.

“If you’re looking for an opportunity to invade the Eighth Galaxy, don’t give a bullshit excuse like this.” Thomas lowered his tone sternly and said, “We all know what’s going on with biochips, inside and out. The Eighth Galaxy was the uncontested, game-changing force that helped annihilate the Freedom Corps; if you’re saying our Executive Prime Minister is a biochip human, can you explain why he was unaffected by the Freedom Corps? Are you going to tell us that Lin Jingshu committed suicide? Do you AIs always fabricate lies like this without basis? And that strange video that was clearly edited---”

Poisson caught his brother’s gaze at this moment, shaking his head silently with an unfathomable expression.

The twins had grown up together and knew how to communicate with a quick exchange of a glance. Thomas’ heart sank; he knew that Poisson’s message was that the footage had been checked thoroughly and the Third Squadron hadn’t detected any signs of editing or manipulation. It was raw footage.

“The video wasn’t edited, which I’m sure the Silver Third Squadron can tell.” Longyuan responded. “Why don’t you send someone to check Doctor Hardin’s personal computer instead?”

As soon as he finished, a few human body scans and physical reports were displayed on the communication screen. The location of the biochip within Lu Bixing’s body was even clearer to the eye now; reports on the side indicated that his physical stats had already exceeded the biological limit of a natural human. This wasn’t something that could be explained away with harsh training or natural hormonal changes.

Longyuan calmly explained: “Indeed, Lin Jingshu used the characteristics of the biochip to build her ideal ‘insect society’ among humans. However, you’ve conceitedly drawn the conclusion that ‘injecting a certain type of biochip will make someone fall under hierarchical control, therefore people who are not controlled must not be biochip humans’ based on this single fact. Captain Young, I believe your logic here is quite flawed.”

Thomas was speechless.

He didn’t want to think on the same wavelength as the AI, but some details about his conceivable daily life seeped through his skin and through the joints of his bones within a split second like thin smoke--

Doctor Hardin had been living like a hermit ever since arriving in the Eighth Galaxy and rarely ever made contact with anyone. The only social contact had been with Lu Bixing, and that was only for periodic visits. Now that he thought about it, it certainly didn’t seem like a philanthropic visitation to keep the elderly company--it was more like a routine examination.

And every time Thomas walked to Lu Bixing’s office, the door would always open before he could knock while the Prime Minister called his name before he could speak. It was as if the young Prime Minister could recognize the sound of his footsteps meters away through a heavy door.

Lu Bixing had proclaimed to be a vaccuocerebral during the last battle against the biochip humans and therefore unaffected by the biochips. He had single-handedly shouldered the entire Alliance Troop’s mental network for a good portion of the battle. Yet the world’s most elite vaccuocerebral pilots were all in the Fourth Squadron. It was an undeniable fact that their mental strength would never match up to that of a normal human, and under those extreme circumstances, even someone like Lin Jingheng couldn’t possibly withstand such pressure of continuous mental network attacks.

On top of everything, there was also the Prime Minister’s superhuman-like stamina that allowed him to stay energetic even after days of no sleep…

Thomas had just commented that a hero and criminal were two sides of the same coin and wished he could slap himself to take it all back; what was he thinking?

At that moment, Poisson’s hand grabbed tightly onto his arm, pulling the Captain’s jumbled mind back to reality.

In place of his brother, Poisson gave Longyuan a cold response: “The proof you gave us is still being analyzed by the technical team. If what you said is true, you won’t even need to flash your cannons; the Silver Ten and Eighth Galaxy will never let a biochip human rule over their government.”

Longyuan: “Turn in…”

Longyuan’s tendency to turn into an annoying alarm that just repeated the same lines might have been a bug in his settings. Perhaps the reason why Lu Xin had skipped over him and had chosen Zhanlu as his mech was because of how annoying this AI was.

Poisson interrupted the AI: “Send the data over--the Third Squadron will take at most half an hour to analyze the information. Can you not even wait for half an hour?”

Longyuan fell silent as if he was communicating with someone internally.

“Sure,” Longyuan finally spoke up after about thirty seconds. “We expect you to turn over the biochip human in thirty minutes.”

Poisson temporarily cut off the communication channel and was immediately greeted by Thomas grabbing onto his collar.

Thomas hissed at him: “What are you doing? What if…are you really planning on turning Prime Minister Lu in? Do you want to die?”

“Even if Minister Lu leaves the Eighth Galaxy right now, it will take him at least a week to go through the wormhole, so let’s make them wait. We can expect the Alliance Troops to arrive within the next 48 hours, give or take an extra day of buffer time. We’re in the Heart of the Rose; if we can gather up the entire Alliance Troops here, we might even have a chance against those AIs. These crazy supercomputers had always been unstable forces; we might as well clean them all up right now.” Poisson explained calmly, “By the time we clear the wormhole, we’ll close off the terminal so that not even a fly can get to it. And then nobody will know anything that happened here.”

Thomas frowned: “You really think they’re going to wait quietly for a week here?”

“Just put on an act.” The corner of Poisson’s mouth lifted slightly. “‘The Silver Ten forced the Prime Minister out of his seat after realizing the truth’ or something like that, it’s just a test of our acting skills. Our only advantage in the battle between carbon-lifeform humans and AIs are shameless, low tactics.”

At that moment, an internal communication request came in--the Central Militia fleets that had just passed through the wormhole into the Heart of the Rose were greeted by this explosive news before they could even get their feet back on ground after the wormhole trip. They had no choice but to ask the Third Squadron to answer their countless questions.

Poisson answered without lifting his head: “The footage was edited out of context, and the rest of the photos were pieced together. Do you really believe them when they say that Minister Lu is a biochip human? Listen, our priority right now is to hold these AIs back until all of the refugees and Alliance fleets come out of the wormhole. In order to do that, we’re going to have to play along with them for a while. So please, bear with us.”

His tone was firm and calm, leaving no room for doubt. After hearing a ‘confirmation’ from a trusted ally, the Central Militia agreed to help without hesitation. Outsiders like them who didn’t understand the nature of vaccuocerebrals could only rely on what they’d seen: the Eighth Galaxy had somehow managed to create a miraculous galactic force made up of vaccuocerebrals, so it wouldn’t be surprising if they had more crazy technology up their sleeves. In contrast, Lu Bixing being able to control Zhanlu’s mental network to sweep across the battlefield seemed like a trivial matter.

Thomas was completely dumbfounded.

Poisson didn’t spare a glance at all the data Longyuan sent over, let alone analyze its legitimacy.

Noticing his brother’s baffled gaze, Poisson gave him a deep look: “If the Silver Third Squadron says it’s fake, it’s fake. Who do you think our allies are going to believe, those machines or me?”

Thomas asked in almost a whisper: “But what if it’s all true?”

Poisson asked him back: “Does it matter if it’s real or fake?”

A strange chill ran through Thomas’ heart.

Did the truth matter?

The human Woolf had borrowed the hands of others in order to commit murder to hide the fact that his name had been listed on the forbidden fruit, almost at the cost of Lin Jingheng’s life on the border of the Seventh and Eighth galaxies. He then single-handedly destroyed the major forces of the AUS during that same battle. Sixteen years later, Lin Jingheng resummoned the Silver Ten and once again stepped back onto the stage of the world; Hope regained control of the AUS with his influence. Both the commander and Prophet of the AUS had chosen to remain silent on the matter of Woolf’s plot despite everything that had happened.

If Lin Jingshu hadn’t summoned a storm across the galaxies, perhaps this secret would’ve been buried forever under the peace of the universe. No history textbook thousands of years in the future would even mention this event.

“Report to the Milky Way City Command Post and tell Minister Lu to be prepared.” Poisson took a deep breath and glanced at his watch. He then turned his head towards the military camera that showed the growing AI fleets waiting in the outskirts of the Heart of the Rose, ready to fire their cannons.

AIs always kept to their word: thirty minutes had passed without any troubles. Almost to the second, Poisson’s pale and clearly frustrated face reappeared on the communication screens of the AI fleet.

Longyuan: “Captain Young, did the Third Squadron confirm the legitimacy of the data we’ve sent?”

“This isn’t the same kind of biochip as the ones used by the Freedom Corps,” Poisson responded in a low voice. “What is this? What does it do? How did you guys even find out about this?”

Longyuan scanned his facial expression and came to the conclusion that it was a display of anger and guilt, then answered: “The chip’s functions are unknown. As for how we discovered this, we will explain after we capture the biochip human.”

“What have we fought for all these years, then? We thought the Eighth Galaxy was the only paradise untainted by biochips and would become our final fortress, but now even our last hope has been a lie all along. We’ve just been fighting biochip humans on behalf of another biochip human, thinking we were the saviors of humanity.” Poisson pressed his lips together after venting his anger verbally. Thomas stood with a racing heart on the side, for once unable to tell if his brother was truly acting. At the very least, he knew that there was real anger behind his brother’s words at that brief moment. “How could so many people so conceitedly think they could make the entirety of mankind follow their lead into involuntary evolution?”

Perhaps it was their minds playing tricks, but Longyuan’s mechanical voice sounded almost a little less cold this time: “May we take it that Captain Young is willing to stand on our side?”

“I’ve already sent a secret message to the First and Ninth Squadrons waiting on the other side of the terminal, they will send someone to Milky Way City to search Doctor Hardin’s personal computer. If we confirm that it’s true…” Poisson lifted his gaze and said, “The Silver Ten will never fight for or swear allegiance to a biochip human.”

Longyuan once again fell into silence.

The Silver Third Squadron’s position had been made clear; Longyuan respectfully retracted his initial hostility. The wormhole zone once again signaled abnormal energy activity--another Human Alliance fleet had arrived. Thomas could feel sweat gathering in the palm of his hand.

Soon after, the cannons pointing towards the Heart of the Rose slowly rolled back. The AI fleets took a few steps back like a beast that had been given a piece of fresh meat, temporarily retracting its claws as it waited patiently in its cave.

“Twenty-four hours,” Longyuan said. “Within twenty-four hours, we expect you to turn in the biochip human to us.”

Thomas’s throat rolled as he spoke up: “Twenty-four hours isn’t enough time for anyone to pass through the wormhole terminal.”

“We need hard confirmation that he has been arrested within twenty-four hours,” Longyuan responded coldly. “We expect you to send him through the wormhole terminal; don’t play games with us, we have ways to confirm.”

Thomas and Poisson both let out a silent sigh of relief at the same time--they were both experienced technicians who knew the effects of timespace distortion within the wormhole. It was impossible for Woolf to send in a clone to the Eighth Galaxy and at most had found a way to hack into the Eight Galaxy’s internal network. The super-AI may sound fearsome, but the most it could do was to control a few security cameras. Surely, it wasn’t hard to manipulate and lie through these digital eyes in their own homes.

The anger on Poisson’s face was completely wiped clean the moment he cut off the communication. He turned to give Thomas a small gesture---they only needed to hold on for 48 hours and victory would be theirs.

Thomas gave him a complicated expression.

Despite being like clones of each other, the Young twins still had quite contrasting personalities. When difficult situations came up, Poisson always seemed to be calmer and more adaptable to change than himself. Thomas took up the mantle of being the Captain of the Third Squadron simply because Poisson didn’t care for dealing with trivial matters. The two were like a single entity that took turns being the main support of their squadron; Thomas was quite used to tossing work he didn’t like to deal with to his own brother.

But…

*Is Lu Bixing really a biochip human?* He thought, *It seems like the danger has passed, but is the truth really meaningless?*

Four hours and twenty minutes later, an urgent frontline report from the Heart of the Rose was delivered to Lu Bixing.

The young man completely froze at the first glance.

Lin Jingheng: “What’s wrong?”

Lu Bixing took a deep breath and forwarded the report to him, then stood up and said: “Zhanlu, inform the Public Security Department to send a security team to Doctor Hardin’s residence immediately to ensure his safety. Quarantine all of his personal digital devices and block off all signals around him, also ask him to temporarily take off his personal device…”

He paused momentarily and added, “Be sure to be gentle with him, don’t scare the old man too much.”

Lu Bixing walked around his desk a few times to calm himself down. Suddenly, his gaze scanned past the seven marks at the corner of his wooden desk; a strange but fateful feeling filled his heart.

He felt like someone who had taken all the shortcuts and avoided all the toll roads in his life, building up a debt throughout the years, and now it was time for him to finally pay everything back to fate.

Lin Jingheng had already skimmed through Poisson’s reports and said firmly: “It’s not too bad, Poisson handled it well. All Central Militia and Human Alliance fleets will be arriving within the Heart of the Rose shortly. The Third Squadron will remain on watch, and the Fourth Squadron will also arrive to escort the fleets. When everyone is safely out of the wormhole, we’ll close up the terminal.”

“Zhanlu!” He stood up and called, “Tell all directors of the galactic forces to gather up in the Command Post for an emergency meeting. Let the First and Ninth Squadrons reinforce their frontline defense, connect--”

Zhanlu surprisingly interrupted before Lin Jingheng could finish giving his orders and said: “Sir, Headmaster Lu, I think you both need to take a look at this first.”

Lu Bixing’s fingers twitched slightly as the fateful feeling in his heart grew stronger.

“An unidentified individual hacked into the Milky Way City Media’s headquarters just now, and countless media companies are rolling out this footage. I’ve already contacted the Engineering and Security Departments to intervene, but I’m afraid that it’s already too widespread now---”

“....According to verified reports of his medical history, this individual had once come in close contact with carriers of the mutated Rainbow Virus within an enclosed space without any vaccines or protection. However, there have been no reports or signs of the individual being infected with the virus. After thorough medical checkups, it has been confirmed that he is naturally immune to the Rainbow Virus and numerous other mutated forms of deadly viruses.”

“The genetic makeup of his body does not match up…”

“....suspected complete form of the Nuwa Project.”

“Pictured is a full body scan, the symbol indicates the location of the chip injection…”

“This is the comparison of the physical statistics with an average human’s statistics.”

From the Nuwa Project to the biochip, everything was laid out clearly and publicly.

The Eighth Galaxy had already been wavering from the aftershock of the battle in the Heart of the Rose and was still recovering from a meteor shower of news from outside the galaxy; this explosive news further riled up the tides of unrest.

Lies and fabrications covered the world like grains of sands and soil, sometimes so well-nourished it was difficult to make out the difference between fantasy and reality.

Yet aside from the truth, nothing in this world was without loopholes.

All secrets would eventually be exposed under the light of day.

## Ch 184 - Verbal Promises Have No Legal Effect

The government-sponsored central residential area in Milky Way City that had been the butt of the joke among the veteran generals of the Central Militia earlier was now shielded from the outside world by a protective network layer. Occasional energy waves would send out a unique glow through the invisible barrier, engulfing both the security robots and human forces inside like a tightly-knit net.

Interview robots from countless media companies were all blocked outside the barrier, compressed into layers and layers of metal sandwiches. From the ground up to the skies, mechanical equipment filled the area in an almost menacing manner.

A ground-level armed mobile parked right outside of Lu Bixing’s house, floating slightly above the ground. Bayer and a soldier of the galactic forces jumped off the mobile and greeted them with, “Marshall, Prime Minister, this way.”

Lu Bixing walked out from the small yard and nodded at them. Bayer studied the Minister before him and noticed that despite the stern expression on the Prime Minister’s face, there was no sign of any negative emotions. It was almost as if remaining calm and gentle was a perpetual state that could not be stripped away from this young man.

Bayer lowered his voice and asked: “All the public tracks are cornered by the media and robots; I had someone from the Command Post open up a backdoor just now from the energy field barrier we set up. I suggest we take that backdoor right away and go through the energy field out of here to avoid trouble. It might be a bit of a rough ride...is that okay with you?”

Lin Jingheng: “Can’t die, let’s go.”

Lu Bixing lifted his head up to catch a glimpse of the media looming right outside his residence. He could make out some sounds of people talking even from this distance and saw millions of eyes staring in his direction through those camera lenses; the countless mouths across the galaxies shot endless questions toward him.

Lin Jingheng raised a hand and covered his eyes, pressed down on the young man’s shoulders and almost forcefully shoved Lu Bixing into the armed mobile: “Stop looking, get in first.”

A muffled buzzing sound hummed as the armed mobile warmed its engine up, invisible air waves lifting the vehicle above the ground. Soon after, the energy field activated and even took along some plants and flowers as the entire vehicle disappeared.

Even through the ringing in his ears, Lu Bixing’s overly sensitive hearing could still hear the voices of the media through the slight time space distortion inside the energy field. That haunting sound dragged through the distortion, becoming a long and off-tune chorus across time.

“......is the so-called ‘Nuwa Project’ related to the Rainbow Virus?”

“Prime Minister Lu, do you admit to performing Rainbow Virus experiments in secret?”

“The original pirate King Cayley started the Reinberg Experiment in year 128 of the Woltorian calendar, which became the direct cause of the Rainbow Virus outbreak. We should all know that this caused the deaths of at least 3 billion people within the Eighth Galaxy alone and countless more who were homeless; what do you have to say to this, Prime Minister Lu?”

“Was the last mutated Rainbow Virus outbreak caused by this damned Nuwa Project as well? Prime Minister Lu, can you give us an answer?”

“Prime Minister Lu---”

The armed mobile finally vanished into the energy field.

Lu Bixing closed his eyes. He remembered that it wasn’t too long ago when he had conceitedly said that his capital planet would overtake Wolto, inside his own house, even.

Almost as if he had finally grabbed onto that strand of fate that led to the future of the eight galaxies, only to be slapped in the face less than a few weeks after.

Perhaps he shouldn’t have aimed so high and left so much room to fall, in case he ever tripped and fell onto his face.

The armed mobile flashed through the energy field like a silver comet directly into the Milky Way City Command Post.

Those lingering accusations and questioning voices seemed to follow him, even until the Command Post building was directly ahead of him. Lu Bixing sat still for a few moments and pressed lightly against his ears.

“Prime Minister Lu.” Suddenly, the soldier inside the armed mobile turned his head and spoke up with some reservations. “I know that everything they’re saying isn’t true. I believe in you.”

Lu Bixing was taken aback momentarily before giving a slightly surprised smile, then responded courteously: “Thank you.”

“I…I’m from planet Mola. My family comes from a small village near a large mountain range on the planet. I don’t know if you remember, but it was year 4 of the Independent calendar--I was still sixteen, and Mola’s climate system had been damaged during the internal war. Ground transportation was completely dead and supplies couldn’t be delivered; everything from food, energy, to missiles were all depleted. The territorial organization that took planet Mola hostage didn’t care about the rest of us and only paid attention to fighting the war. Our whole family had to gather around a handmade alcohol lamp in order to survive the winter; my mom never made it and died in the cold.” The young soldier was visibly nervous as he spoke to Lu Bixing, the syllables quivering as they rolled out of his mouth. It was almost as if he still hadn’t been warmed up from that awful winter. “And then the government’s forces came; they didn’t attack us and instead sent the engineering teams down first to fix the climate system. They shouldered the pressure and dangers of being chased down by the territorial armed forces every day to help…I remember that you personally led the engineering team back then, I saw you at work from afar.”

The armed mobile finally stopped as the engine cooled down, the interior of the vehicle falling into dead silence.

“I just wanted to let you know that I enrolled in the military academy because of you. As an honorary graduate, I came to Milky Way City and got a job as a security guard. My father was so happy about the news that he downed two whole bottles of the ‘survivor’ wine. I even...even snuck a picture of you once inside the Command Post, which my father framed and is still hanging at home. I, I…I’m sorry, I know this isn’t allowed…” The soldier’s face was bright red as he rambled on and even accidentally ratted out his little mistake on the job. He frantically jumped out of the vehicle and gave a flustered salute to Lu Bixing, “Prime Minister, this way please!”

Bayer reached an arm around the soldier and laughed: “You snuck a picture of the Prime Minister? You got balls, kid, which team are you on? I’ll go pay your boss a visit in a bit.”

“Don’t tease him like that.” Lu Bixing pointed two fingers toward his temples and gave a small gesture back to the soldier. “Just put a good filter on me and I’ll let you off the hook this time and skip over writing your disciplinary report.”

Lin Jingheng was waiting a few steps ahead with a cigarette in his mouth. He shot a quick glance at that meek soldier and turned his head slightly as if he didn’t care to voice a small complaint to Lu Bixing’s ears: “Exchanging little looks with a fresh young soldier in broad daylight, huh, am I dead to you?”

Lu Bixing waved a hand at him and then responded in the same whisper: “Quality goods are always hot on the market. That’s what you get for procrastinating on signing papers with me.”

The two of them had walked a short distance when that soldier from earlier suddenly called out from behind them: “Prime Minister, I represent all 1.3 billion survivors on planet Mola to stand behind you!”

Lu Bixing’s footsteps stopped briefly. For the first time in over a decade, that face that had learned how to seamlessly hide all his emotions felt hot with gratitude as his vision began to blur.

“Hm.” Lin Jingheng blew out a cloud of smoke towards the direction of that soldier and said, “Looks like you have 11.3 billion supporters now.”

Lu Bixing lowered his head and let out a chuckle, forcing those building tears back inside and asked: “Where did the extra ten billion come from?”

“Me.” Lin Jingheng shoved the last half of the cigarette into his hand and casually put his gloves on. “I’m the ten billion; if anyone has qualms with it, my office hours are always open.”

Four hours, Woltorian standard time, later--

Heart of the Rose.

The Eighth Galaxy was like a bubbling-over pot of boiling water; the burning sensation from the air quickly spread along with the massive leak of information through an open wormhole terminal into the communication network inside the Heart of the Rose.

The Silver Third Squadron that was confronting the AI troops; the First, Second, and Fourth Galaxy Central Militia fleets that had just passed through the wormhole terminal--everyone in the Heart of the Rose received the information at the same time.

Poisson swiftly scanned the news reports from the Eighth Galaxy and commented: “They somehow gained access to the Eighth Galaxy networks...all of that information they gave us earlier was just simplified to cover the bait, the real story’s right here!”

The AIs had only sent them a short piece of footage and a physical exam report that made no sense out of context, which naturally sparked suspicion among the soldiers on the front lines. Of course, even their allies believed they were fabricated--there was no mention of the Nuwa Project anywhere. Little did they expect these AIs to slyly outwit them!

“Why does it feel like these inflexible metal robot heads are goddamn ancient cancers left from the Earth era?”

An uneasy feeling surfaced inside Thomas’ heart as he lifted his head: “How many of the Alliance Fleets and Woltorian refugees are still stuck inside the wormhole?”

A Third Squadron soldier quickly pulled up the data and gave a rough estimate: “Around half of the total fleets.”

“Captain Young, the First Galaxy Fleet is requesting to speak to you.”

“Captain Young, the Union Troops are asking…”

Poisson could feel a vein pop on his hand as he clenched his fist: “Tell them to fuck off! Stop asking questions during a time like this; everyone stay alert!”

Before the last syllable dropped, the high-energy alert inside the mech rang out.

It was as if those AI mechs waiting on the other side had done a precise countdown as to when the frontline vanguards would quietly back off to let the mid-guards out. Thousands of cannons pointed at them were already pre-heated, and as the world choked on anxiety, these heartless AIs fired at the Human Alliance without a warning.

All starships carrying refugees were immediately reeled inside heavy mechs for protection. Thousands of people already bearing boundless uncertainty in their hearts as they prepared to head home were suddenly tied together on the spot by safety belts, desperately clinging onto one another.

The Human Alliance that hadn’t been given a chance to organize frantically got into position for battle.

The last time they gathered up to fight against the Freedom Crops, all commanding generals of the galaxies had been together under the central command of Lin Jingheng. Despite coming from different teams and forces, everyone had taken orders from him without question. Of course, there had still been some friction in regards to coordination, but the experience of the top Commander and professionalism of each soldier had made it fairly manageable.

Yet now, the fleets present in the Heart of the Rose were only a portion of the vanguard fleets with their commanding generals still in the back. The entire Human Alliance was panicked; a tsunami of information flooded into their heads and overloaded them. They could feel a looming shadow of conspiracy falling over them, but didn’t know where it was coming from--all they knew was that it seemed like the Silver Third Squadron had lied to them earlier!

The hesitant Alliance was a completely broken puzzle that turned the entire communication channel into chaos as everyone shouted; nobody was sure who to listen to.

The Third Squadron had no choice but to hold the frontlines. This fleet of technicians and mechanics that rarely ever stepped into the frontlines somehow managed to shoulder the first aggressive wave of attack from the AIs. But over half of the mechs in the fleet were forced to switch up to their backup pilot and retreated at least a few hundred kilometers from their line of defense.

Thomas couldn’t help but holler furiously: “They want to expand and build their own machine empire; do you all want to be trapped in the Eighth Galaxy for the rest of your lives by robots!? Shut up!”

“Connect to the enemy fleet.” Poisson’s voice, in contrast, was much calmer but more hasty. “Let me yell at them for a bit; the rest of you guys, try and decode the AI’s communication network protection and intercept their internal communications.”

“Longyuan!” The enemy was surprisingly quick to receive an angry growl from Poisson. “We promised twenty-four hours, so why are you firing now? Do you not have fucking shame!?”

“According to galactic common law, verbal promises have no legal effect or binding.”

Poisson: “Screw galactic common laws, do you think you can make your own damn rules!?”

“No, Captain Young. I’ve simply scanned through all existing historical military examples of verbal promises. The search result gave a total of 1,634 officially recorded cases; among them, there were only 506 times where both sides followed through said promise. Therefore, we have reasonably concluded that the likelihood of the human side breaking their side of the promise first was over 95% and opened fire first to protect ourselves. Please understand; it is confirmed that the biochip human is in the Eighth Galaxy, so we will sail into the Eighth Galaxy and personally destroy the horrible biochip technology with our own hands.”

Poisson: “......”

This was beyond surprising; they had even managed to back up their claims with proper research!

Foolish humans, why did they have to record their dark histories of betrayal and breaking promises in such detail!?

“We’ve successfully decoded the enemy’s network protection.” Thankfully, the elite technicians of the Third Squadron didn’t drop the ball even under the intense pressure of the frontlines.

The AIs’ internal network was quickly faced with a massive systematic intrusion that caused a great deal of damage, successfully forcing the frontline vanguards to stop momentarily. The Human Alliance that was finally slapped awake quickly set aside their differences and focused on fighting off their common enemy. A wave of particle cannons shot back at the AIs and knocked off a corner of the swarming AI fleets that were closing in on the Heart of the Rose.

Yet nobody cheered.

“You know, in normal warfare, shooting down an enemy is called ‘annihilating countable forces.’” Poisson let out a bitter laugh. “So what would we call this, then?”

Every professionally trained galactic force had been built over time with considerable funding, and losing any one piece of the force was considered an irreversible loss. But there were no humans inside these AI mechs, and every ship shot down could easily be replaced by another; the entire First Galaxy’s military reserve was disposable to them. Even if they gathered up the entirety of humanity to fight against these AIs and shoot every last missile without missing, they wouldn’t even truly harm their enemy.

Thoma let out a heavy breath of air: “We have no choice but to beat the dead horse now; drag it out. Drag it out until the entire Alliance forces gather up.”

He took another anxious glance at the time as he spoke: “There’s a certain level of unpredictability when passing through the wormhole; they could possibly arrive earlier or later than scheduled. It’d be best if they can arrive early--if everyone shows up now, we’ll have a chance to turn the tables.”

“What will happen if they get delayed? A day, two days, or who knows how long...there’s no way we can possibly last for over 48 hours here.” Poisson’s laugh was one of despair. “History’s tossing the dice again; whose head do you think it’ll crack open this time?”

Something flashed across Thomas’ mind that wiped his face pale at that moment.

Before he could answer, Poisson asked again: “What are we going to do if we can’t hold out?”

What would they do if the rest of the Alliance fleet was still in the wormhole when the AI Troops eventually broke through the defense in the Heart of the Rose?

Would they crush the wormhole terminal and forever bury the AI Troops and over half of the entire Human Alliance within the tomb of timespace?

Or would they let these AIs intrude into the Eighth Galaxy?

“Captain Young,” a scouting soldier from the frontline reported in. “Massive amounts of mechs are sailing out of the First Galaxy military bases to gather with the AI Troops.”

“Captain Young!” The former First Galaxy Patrols were the most familiar with the situation within the First Galaxy and immediately gave their advice within the communication channel. “The First Galaxy’s military armed reserves are beyond what anyone could imagine; if they continue to endlessly dispatch mechs like this, it won’t be enough even if all of our missiles have a 100% hit rate combined! We need to come up with a different plan!”

“High energy alert--”

Poisson: “What!?”

“Captain, a few AI mechs have sailed around transfer portals and invaded through non-portal zones, they’re making their way over!”

This was the same non-portaled zone that Lin Jingshu had taken when the Freedom Corps pirates had ambushed the Heart of the Rose--these robots were certainly fast learners.

“Second Galaxy Central Militia fleet was met with an ambush on their wing.”

“The enemy’s internal communication network is repairing at a rapid speed, the protection code is upgrading…”

“Captain Young, we’re surrounded!”

Poisson could hear the drumming of his increasing heartbeat; it was almost as if all of the blood in his body was rushing up to his head while different alarms and sirens outside swallowed him whole.

He blocked off the internal communication network temporarily and turned, wide-eyed, to meet his brother’s gaze.

Thomas knew immediately what his twin was thinking, his eyes almost contracting anxiously in response.

“Send a warning to the Eighth Galaxy,” Poisson lowered his voice and spoke quickly, “and send out the wormhole disruption signals.”

Thomas took in a breath of cold air that chilled his lungs: “That’s over half of the entire Human Alliance, unarmed Woltorian refugees...and the escorting SIlver…”

Poisson: “We don’t have time anymore!”

Thomas grabbed his brother’s arm, his hand trembling in fear.

“I’ll send out the order.” Poisson spoke without hesitation, “I’ve always been the one in charge of these kinds of things.”

The cheery and sociable older brother was in charge of handling the diplomatic aspects and mundane day-to-day tasks of the job. He had the charm able to gather the team up as a unit; in contrast, the perpetually annoyed younger brother’s job was to wield the butcher knife during times of crisis--

Poisson easily pulled himself out of his brother’s grip and connected to the technicians waiting by the wormhole area: “Attention wormhole tech support…”

Before he could finish, the connection cut off cleanly. Poisson was taken aback for a moment before he turned his head towards the military camera on the mech; a mech from the Union fired behind and blew up the technical support mech carrying the wormhole disruption equipment.

It was not over.

Soon after, a handful of missiles from different parts of the Alliance fleets all fired towards the remaining technical mech. The poor technicians on those mechs didn’t even have time to process the fact that they were being targeted by their own allies and drowned in a sea of fire.

Then, all of the temporary communication systems and ports set up in the Heart of the Rose were also swept by the blazing cannons of high-energy particles beams.

They were now completely cut off from all communications with the Eighth Galaxy.

Thomas had already turned back on the chaotic internal communication channel and called out: “What are you guys doing!?”

“Captain Young.” The voices sounded almost cold behind the disruption within the channel. “You’re all planning on blowing up the wormhole terminal in order to protect the Eighth Galaxy, am I right?”

Thomas almost stopped breathing.

“I’m sorry---”

Before her death, Lin Jingshu had once prophesized that a second and third Eden would soon arise--mankind would once again separate along different paths.

And now, even before a second Eden could appear, the Human Alliance in the Heart of the Rose was already breaking apart from the inside out.

If her ghost still lingered within this forbidden zone, perhaps she would be laughing at this turn of events.

## Ch 185 - The Only Beneficiary of the Nuwa Project

The Second Galaxy.

Temporary medic Alyssa glanced around at the fellow soldiers beside her and clenched her necklace tightly in both hands.

The necklace was an impulse purchase she had made while she was still working at the university dorms; it wasn’t particularly valuable nor meaningful on a personal level, but she subconsciously wanted to grab onto something during these times of crisis. It was like her soul cried out for some peace of mind, holding onto the foolish thought that any meaningful object could protect her like a charm.

Soldiers charged forth onto the frontlines like packs of fireflies, carrying a newly injected biochip in their bodies, trudging down into a battle of virtually no return.

Every volunteer soldier piloted their own small mechs onto the battlefield. Due to the shortage of medical supplies, each person was only able to bring in a companion medic lightly trained in basic first aid on their mechs. These volunteer soldiers would fight poison with poison, using the power of the biochip injected into their bodies against their enemies. After every successful ambush, their companion medic would then surgically take out the biochip to avoid being controlled by higher-level chip carriers.

If the medic couldn’t take out the chip in time, then their job was to fire a laser gun at the nape of their soldier where the chip was located or blow up the entire engine of the mech.

Very few souls were fortunate enough to have their chips taken out in time; the majority of these soldiers fell on the battlefield, earth to earth, ashes to ashes.

With this suicide-guerilla tactic on the rebel’s side, the biochip human armies were slowly being pushed into a corner and forced to retreat. However, experienced soldiers from the military were growing scarcer by the minute. Eventually, even the non-combat personnel in the camp and the new volunteer soldiers who had only passed basic training were being forced to step onto the battlefield.

Alyssa’s companion was one of these less-experienced volunteers. Like her, he had been a civilian before the war broke out. After the biochip humans took over the entire galaxy overnight, he had volunteered to join the rebelling forces and was thrown onto a mech before he could even pilot properly without support. His entire body was tied down inside the mech, leaving solely his brain free to connect to the mech’s mental network. Due to the powerful boost of physical strength from being injected with a biochip, it would be impossible for the medic to either take out the biochip or kill the soldier after the ambush operation if he wasn’t restrained.

“I used to be a landscape artist, what about you?”

“Dorm manager,” Alyssa answered in almost a whisper.

“This position makes me feel like I’m cattle waiting to be sent to the butcher’s house,” the landscape artist said as his gaze shifted to the laser gun tied to Alyssa’s waist. “Will you kill me?”

Alyssa bit down her lips and said, “I will take out the biochip in your body as fast as I can.”

“They always say that before we leave.” The landscape artist gave her an almost melancholic smile. “But most of them won’t make it.”

Alyssa couldn’t help but console him dryly: “We have luck on our side.”

“I have a son, he’s six--he stayed in the refugee camp.” The landscape artist said, “Movies always say ‘think about your child, think about who you’re fighting for’, and the protagonist is blessed with courage. But why won’t it work for me now?”

The commander’s voice rang out within the mech: “Everyone, prepare yourselves; we’ll be arriving on the battlefield shortly. New recruits, review the procedures for aiming your missiles---remember, for the Pledge of Freedom!”

Alyssa gripped her own wrist tightly in a desperate attempt to stop her uncontrollable shivers.

“But I’m still scared.” The landscape artist looked at her with a deep and searing look. “I regret coming here now, maybe I should’ve…”

At that moment, the alarm inside the mech and the commander’s howl rang out together: “Open fire!”

That one second felt like a lifetime. Adrenaline filled Alyssa until her head was completely blank, then something crashed into the outer shield of the mech and caused the gravity system inside to malfunction. Her feet left the ground as she stared at the chaotic output of the military camera, hearing someone shout inside the communication channel: “We’ve been ambushed midway!”

Military travel routes were considered top-secret intel. Alyssa was too overwhelmed to catch on immediately and thought, how could we be ambushed?

The next moment, her eyes widened as she realized that a traitor had given away their intel.

The volunteer soldiers were expected to leave right after their operation or take their own lives if they faced a risk of being counterattacked. But how many ‘perfect’ circumstances could they truly expect on a battlefield?

Perhaps some companions couldn’t pull the trigger, others didn’t want to die and were captured by the enemy. Once captured alive, the soldier would immediately be controlled by the enemy and give up information without any hesitation.

“The commanding ship was shot down!”

A strange bitterness filled Alyssa’s heart.

Just how much courage did it take for people like them to step onto the battlefield? How could they simply become stardust before reaching the battlefield without achieving anything?

The landscape artist beside her widened his eyes and frantically shouted something at her. There wasn’t time for Alyssa to read his lips before the glow in his eyes became completely different. The mech that had been flying aimlessly under his control slowed down as Alyssa’s head buzzed; she realized that his biochip was being controlled by the enemy.

She bit the tip of her tongue and pulled out the laser gun from her waist, ready to fulfill her duty.

But of course, it wasn’t easy.

She was a former dorm manager who hadn’t even killed a cattle, an average middle-aged woman who would avoid conflict on the streets on a daily basis. She had joined the rebelling forces and the volunteer soldiers with the idea of helping her injured comrades during the battle, not to shoot and kill a father of a child with her own two hands.

Alyssa screamed; the shrill sound of it was drowned out by the alarm of the mech. The first shot missed, but tears rolled down her cheeks. She quickly wiped the wetness from her face as she let the gun auto-aim, mumbling apologies that sounded more like a chant: “Sorry….I’m sorry….ah!”

That was when the landscape artist struggled out of his restraints and jumped.

Alyssa stared in shock at the burnt edges where the ropes had broken. There was a clear cut made from a laser blade that couldn’t have been done over a matter of minutes--the landscape artist had smuggled a laser blade on him and had been wearing down the tough rope behind him the whole way!

As a fighter, he had accepted a highly dangerous mission as the forces were short on men, but immediately regretted it the moment he stepped on the mech. Perhaps he had been trying to hide his fear despite embarking on the journey, but couldn’t help but cheat the system as well--it was his seniors that had given him the idea; surely he couldn’t be the only one who brought a laser blade.

Perhaps he thought, if they couldn’t take out the biochip in time, he didn’t want to die.

The gravity system inside the mech returned to normal as Alyssa crashed into the wall and slid onto the ground. The biochip human before her didn’t even give her a chance to pick up her laser gun and knocked her unconscious as swiftly as the wind.

The small mech team that had been ambushed stopped rebelling. Half of the fleet had been blown up while the surviving mechs became hostages of their biochip; these people would no longer think about rebelling against the higher level chip carriers and give themselves in to the hands of their enemies.

This small battle was like a miniature reflection of the bigger war within the six galaxies.

Three hours after Ms. Alyssa was captured, the coordinates of the temporary lab for biochip research within the Third Galaxy were exposed. The lab was ambushed by the biochip human fleets in that galaxy, annihilating all of the top biotechnology scientists and researchers who had been gathered at the site to fight against the chip. The small ray of hope that shone there, a prototype research model of a biochip disruption system, was burned to ashes.

People struggled for life, then fell into the abyss of death.

People swindled for survival, then betrayed the morals of humanity.

And the elite troops that were supposed to protect these people were still stuck in the forbidden zone between the First and Eighth Galaxies.

“Move away!” Poisson could feel a vein pop in his head.

Both sides of the wormhole had technician fleets and mechs carrying enough disruption equipment to block off the terminal at any time.

Their well-rounded ally understood the risks and in order to stop them from contacting the other side, completely cut off the communication to the Eighth Galaxy to block the terminal.

In other words, this meant that if anything happened in the Heart of the Rose, the First and Ninth Squadrons would not receive any alarms or reports.

“Do you all know how many natural planets exist in the Eighth Galaxy, how many people live there? Did you all know that the Eighth Galaxy had just recovered from years of internal warfare? Can’t you see that these damned computers are here to expand their influence?” Poisson was livid as he shot sharp words like countless blades. “Do you all think the Eighth Galaxy was stupid enough to house you all like a foolish saint, my fellow allies?”

“But Captain Young,” a colonel from the Fourth Galaxy’s Central Militia spoke up, though his voice seemed to be coming from a faraway land. “The majority of the forces from the ally troops are still in the wormhole terminal as well as our own comrades and millions of non-combative personnel! Think about how they would feel if they knew their allies gave up on them and locked them in a time space distortion to die!”

“How would you compare that to a whole galaxy, then?”

“Are you saying the minority deserves to become sacrificial lambs!? What kind of outdated ancient logic is this?”

“So are you saying we should sacrifice the majority?”

“Why are we being forced to make such disgusting choices!?”

At the height of his fury, Poisson let out a laugh. “You think this is just a goddamn school exam where you can simply choose to turn in a blank test and expect only a scolding from your teachers and parents?”

“Then, Captain Young, if the main fleets were to arbitrarily die within the wormhole terminal, what would you have to say to the other galaxies? What about those who are still suffering and struggling under the uncontrolled outbreak of the biochip humans? Do you think they can even expect to see any help in this lifetime!? Tell me, are there more people within the six galaxies combined than the entire Eighth Galaxy alone? How are you going to calculate this!?”

Thomas stepped in and pressed a hand on Poisson’s chest to push him aside: “That’s enough! Third Squadron reinforce side-wing defense; keep Chengying from advancing!”

Chengying had taken the non-terminal route and charged right into the core of the Heart of the Rose. The Second Galaxy Central Militia were the frontline defense facing this surprise ambush and were nearly knocked out. With a single order from Thomas, the technicians from the Silver Third Squadron immediately jumped in as support and hacked into the communication systems of Chengying’s surrounding mechs. That brief moment of stalling gave the completely chaotic Alliance troops a chance to finally get back on their feet and reinforce the opening in their defense.

“Captain Young.” It wasn’t until now that the Second Galaxy Central Militia finally spoke up for the first time. “The Silver Third Squadron....once fought for the Second Galaxy for decades. Is the old principal from the Polytechnic University still writing letters to you guys?”

Poisson’s iron heart sank into an acid bowl; the hard shell was finally melted to expose the unsightly blood and flesh within.

If they weren’t forced to a corner, who would voluntarily choose murder as an answer?

Thankfully, they didn’t seem to have other choices left now.

Thomas pressed his hands down on his brother’s shoulders and said: “The tech starship is gone and our communication is cut off. What else can we do? Now that we have no choice left, let’s just drop it. What if we’re lucky like last time and see the Alliance forces come out of the wormhole at the very last minute like Anakin and his crew?”

Poisson responded hoarsely: “But what if they don’t?”

“Block them off with our lives, Captain Young.” A voice from an unidentified fleet rang out from the communication channel, “We won’t make any choices, we’ll fight until the very end.”

Poisson lifted the corner of his lips slightly at the remark.

The bickering Human Alliance had been standing on edge from the pressure of facing the Great Swords until now, when they all refocused their attention onto the battlefield while tossing aside their differences.

Yet this time, there were no surprises from the wormhole nor was luck on their side.

AI’s abilities to check for loopholes and bugs were not something humans could match; after the Third Squadron hacked into their communication channels several times, the AIs upgraded their systems while still maintaining the same firepower against the Alliance. The Third Squadron was pushed to the edge. At that moment, a small portion of the First Galaxy fleet near the frontlines vanished from the Alliance’s internal communication channel.

“Captain Young, the enemy counterattacked and intercepted our channel!”

“Watch out, the mental network invasion is coming!”

The super mech’s massive mental network quickly swept through the battlefield like a tsunami, effortlessly knocking down another backup pilot from the Third Squadron’s commanding ship.

Poisson was about to connect to the network when Thomas took the pilot’s permission, one step ahead of him. The commanding ship nearly crashed into its escorting mech but dodged a collision at the last minute as Thomas called out, “Take command of the fleets, I’ll pilot.”

He reached a hand out for a relaxant as he finished, only to discover that the commanding ship’s supply of relaxants had already been depleted.

Thomas’s heart almost stopped; he felt as if the Alliance was one step away from the edge of the cliff. After that last mental network attack, about one-third of the Alliance mechs had completely lost control on the battlefield.

All of the pilots on the mechs were unable to pilot anymore.

“Communication channel repairing---repairing failed---”

“Retreat!”

Thomas could already see Chengying’s mech body closing in through the mental network and called out: “Fall back in now! Retreat!”

A notification popped up within the mechs to indicate that the Alliance troops had entered the wormhole zone and were affected by the special radiation emitted by the energy waves of the wormhole--in other words, they could no longer retreat further back.

That was when the communication channel of the Alliance forces blacked out. The voices of their allies could no longer be heard on the deathly silent mechs.

Thomas felt as if a large metal pole had stabbed right into his temples as the mental network’s connection shook violently. The human-mech sync port was being consumed by the enemy’s hacking at a frightening speed; Thomas felt like a small ant attempting to hold off a falling tree with its weak arms. Powerless and depairing, his vision blackened.

The commanding ship of the Third Squadron immediately lost control. The gravity system inside malfunctioned as everyone and everything on the ship flew out and crashed into each other, creating sparks of light within the darkness.

The last line of defense of the Alliance had been broken. Uncontrolled mechs were like uprooted weeds scattered aside.

Supermechs Chengying and Longyuan took the lead and carried the AI fleet through these battlefield casualties and into the wormhole terminal.

And the main Alliance forces still didn’t come out of the wormhole.

In the Eighth Galaxy, Milky Way City’s sky was still a serene and cloudless blue.

The communication had been cut off, therefore nobody had received the nightmarish news from the other side of the wormhole.

At this moment, everyone’s attention was on the internet, listening to a public service announcement from the Milky Way City Command Post. Lu Bixing’s face appeared on every big screen in plazas throughout the galaxy.

“In regards to some information being spread on the internet recently, I’d like to confirm that the Engineering and Cybersecurity Departments have concluded that they were purposely leaked by AIs from the First Galaxy after hacking into our public networks.” The young Prime Minister spoke in his usual tone on-screen. His lips curled up naturally at the corners and his eyes were clear; afurrow under his eyes would appear sometimes as he spoke, making him seem to be at ease and in a good mood despite not having a smile on his face.

“My staff and assistants believe that this is quite an opportunity for a strategic public relations move. They felt that as long as the anxiety of ‘the enemy will soon invade the Eighth Galaxy’ spreads within the galaxy, this situation can easily be rewritten as ‘a public opinion aggression tactic from the enemy.’ Therefore, the government wasn’t obligated to give a direct response to the rumors being spread. They said that the atmosphere of facing a common enemy during a time of crisis will easily drive attention away from such rumors. Then, by spreading certain information to target everyone who still clung to the AI’s proposition as spies from the First Galaxy, it would be easy to rile up more support for me---to be quite honest, my personal image these years has been quite decent. I still have a handful of toothpaste ad requests sitting in my personal mailbox right now.

“There are indeed concerning enemies on the other side of the wormhole zone, but I don’t want to put the blame all on them--by the way, this speech I’m giving right now never went through quality check or inspection by the government, so it’s actually illegal. Perhaps it’ll be removed completely from the internet after a while, so I suggest you all keep a personal copy to share with your friends and family that are not fortunate enough to listen to this in real time.

“When my mother, Lady Muller, fled to the Eighth Galaxy under the deadly pursuit of the Union troops, my adopted father who was supposed to meet her didn’t have the chance to save her life. I was supposed to have died within the womb……”

Inside the Command Post, the entire General Office exploded into a mess of headless chickens. The public relations team frantically rushed into the Prime Minister’s office, only to be shocked by the heavy guards at the door. When they saw the person in the chair turn his head, they were even more stunned--instead of the Prime Minister, they were greeted by the fearsome Grand Marshal Lin Jingheng.

Lin Jingheng remained very lowkey within the Eighth Galaxy; aside from work, he almost never showed his face in public. Even when he made a rare appearance, he spoke very little. His free time outside of work was all spent at home, no more life-threatening overtime work as he had done back when he was still in the Silver Fortress. In theory, there was nothing about him to be fearful of, but for some reason everyone’s stomach churned in fear at every sight of him. It was a strange sense of reverence that was not unlike Zhanlu’s python Popcorn.

“Sit.” Lin Jingheng’s expression was almost relaxed and friendly. “Your Prime Minister isn’t here.”

The Director of the General Office mustered up his courage and took a step forward: “Commander Lin, please contact the Prime Minister immediately. We are requesting to stop this public announcement at this moment; this will be detrimental to the trust and authority of both the Eighth Galaxy government and Prime Minister Lu himself. We shouldn’t be…”

Lin Jingheng lifted a hand to interrupt him: “Director, do you also believe this is a scandal?”

The Director: “......”

Even if he did, he wouldn’t have the guts to say it in front of Lin Jingheng.

“Of course no--”

“If not, then why are we not allowed to give an explanation?” Lin Jingheng answered calmly, “Conspiracy theories all come from implications between the lines; are you going to swear to abstinence for the rest of your life just because you married an ugly wife? I don’t see what the issue is here--of course, the situation is urgent and we may have missed a few procedures; I’ll remind the Prime Minister to complete it later.”

The director’s face reddened into a cherry hue.

On a 3D screen in the corner of the office, Lu Bixing continued to speak, composed: “So, my entire body is basically a giant jigsaw puzzle that was pieced together. Perhaps I’m the only beneficiary of the Nuwa Project that took the lives of countless people---”

The director could almost feel himself getting a heart attack.

That was when a human-shaped Zhanlu walked in and handed Lin Jingheng a small and elegant box: “Sir, you have a package that was delivered to the house, I’ve asked the robot to pick it up for you.”

Inside the box were two matching rings.

Lin Jingheng nodded in acknowledgement, his gaze softening as he placed the small box on him. “I still have things to take care of, so pardon me. If the rest of you all want to, feel free to listen to the full speech in the office.”

## Ch 186 - We Can’t Win

Lin Jingheng swiftly strolled out of the Prime Minister’s Office. Behind him, his soldiers efficiently blocked all unrelated personnel from the exit as the Marshal stepped into an armed mobile headed straight toward a detached mech base near the Command Post. Inside the base, Doctor Hardin was already waiting for him in his wheelchair.

The Doctor had changed out of his usual clothing into travel gear: everything from his dentures to his personal device had been removed from his body.

“I’ve heard it all already,” Doctor Hardin said as he saw the Marshal walk towards him. “Why didn’t you all take the opportunity to tear down the AI troop’s main fleet in the Heart of the Rose when the Human Alliance’s bond was the strongest? How could you miss the chance to recapture the First Galaxy?”

The soldier beside him was shocked by the old man’s stern voice, gaze flying anxiously towards Lin Jingheng.

The Grand Marshal of the Eighth Galaxy was infamously a man of few words who disliked small talk; even on the job, he simply gave his commands without taking any objections or questions.

Yet this time, to the surprise of everyone on-site, he stood frozen on the spot. With a surprisingly calm expression, the Marshal waved off the soldiers behind him to leave the premises, “Give me five minutes, let me talk with the Doctor in private.”

The soldiers quickly dispersed to give them space.

Lin Jingheng finally responded, “The Alliance had been guarding the Heart of the Rose for too long and was exhausted from the battle. We were almost pushed off the edge of the cliff by the Freedom Corps too; everyone was at their limit. Even with Anakin’s backup, we didn’t stand much of a chance against them. In my estimation, our probability of winning was only about 3% against the full fleet of the Great Swords.”

Doctor Hardin’s gaze on him was like a ball of blazing fire.

“Besides, even if we managed to take down Longyuan and his crew, we still have no idea how to fight against Woolf. It would be virtually impossible for us to take him down with one strike. If we can’t take him down once and for all at any given opportunity, that supercomputer will become extremely dangerous. The super AI is omnipresent throughout the First Galaxy and has control of all major planets and space stations; on top of that, it has the highest military-grade permissions on all transfer portals. If the AI wanted to, it could completely annihilate all living beings in the First Galaxy within a matter of minutes. Us soldiers aside, we can’t risk throwing innocent civilians within the First Galaxy onto the grill like that. That was why when Woolf voluntarily retreated after completing his task, we had no reason to provoke him another conflict at the time.”

“The existence of an unlimited framework AI is enough of a reason in itself. You all…my goodness!” Doctor Hardin let out a long sigh as he lifted up a shaky finger. “The moment a self-sufficient AI like that is created, it no longer belongs to its maker and is a monster all its own. Two highly intelligent species cannot coexist in peace forever: conflict is inevitable. If not today, then tomorrow. We’re in an age of high-efficient technology, do you think humans have a way to fight back if a full-blown intergalactic war breaks out?”

Lin Jingheng’s gaze dropped: “I understand.”

“Of course you understand, you all do. And you all know that war is inevitable, but none of you have lived through those times and don’t know the urgency of this situation! You think this is a matter for the future, so at the moment you all can take the conservative and safe route, right? Back in the early days of the Union Military, anyone who personally walked out of the old Sidereal Era...even if their chances of victory were as slim as a hair strand, they would cling onto that opportunity until they turned into stardust before they let that ray of hope go.”

“Cut it with the useless babbling, everyone who’s been through the old age is like you, ready to be rolled into the prized antique collection of a historical museum. They can’t even ride a damn ground-level armed mobile without whole-ass carrying a full medical equipment supply, just like you.” Lin Jingheng walked in front of the old man, lifting up his trousers slightly as he knelt on one knee in front of Doctor Hardin. “I don’t have any experience fighting against AIs.”

With Lin Jingheng’s infamous holier-than-thou attitude, this was almost a desperate plea from the proud commander.

“AIs have weaknesses too,” Doctor Hardin was generous in his response. “Chief---your grandfather’s last battle, have you ever read up on it in detail?”

Lin Jingheng tilted his head slightly. “Hm?”

“Back then, they forcefully locked down Wolto with human hands and turned it into a galactic prison that could not contact the outside world. This is the first requirement to fight against AIs: creating a completely concealed space that you can fully control with no way to contact the outside world. The second is a power source and the network; the power source is the life of an AI, and networks are equivalent to their mental networks. Heavy mechs often always contain their own engines and power source backups, so it’s not possible to completely cut off their power from our end. Your only choice is to attack through the network.” The doctor added, “Also, even though AIs are a creation of man, the moment they become self-sufficient, don’t even think about fighting them in the technology department.”

“Right,” Lin Jingheng let out a bitter laugh, “we can’t win on technology nor raw power; perhaps even if we gathered the entirety of the human race behind our backs we still wouldn’t stand a chance.”

Nuclear weapons were a product of man, and these boundless AIs that terrorized the entire universe were also a product of man.

Lin Jingheng felt that if the conversation continued, he could see himself writing a letter to Prophet Harris and requesting to join the AUS so refocused on his task ahead: “But the Union once annihilated a super AI, right?”

“Everything I’ve just talked about are things to be cautious of during direct confrontations in the battlefield. In order to completely wipe out this fearsome enemy, you will need to find the super AI’s main body,” Doctor Hardin said. “It must be somewhere within the First Galaxy; with something as large-scale as this AI, it can’t possibly be just any small hole you can insert a chip into. Disregarding its powerful processing abilities, the energy required to run this kind of supercomputer must be completely beyond our imagination. It was powerful enough to overload the City of Angel’s power source the moment it was activated, which means that its main body must be at least the size of a large starship or even a small space station.”

Lin Jingheng let out a sigh--he had expected this to be the case, but hearing a confirmation from Doctor Hardin’s mouth still made his heart sink a little.

Whether it was a starship or a space station, it meant that Woolf’s main hardware was not in a fixed location and could easily travel throughout the universe. It could even go through transfer portals and sail around the First Galaxy as much as it wanted. Yet, all the transfer portals within the First Galaxy were in the hands of this powerful AI; even sending in the entire Human Alliance forces would be like going in blind, so how were they going to find this main body within the vast galaxy?

Besides, nobody guaranteed that the main body would only be in one location.

Perhaps there were a handful of space stations flying around within the First Galaxy; even if they were lucky enough to blow up one of those stations, the AI could easily and immediately transfer to another backup machine.

It could also sail out into other galaxies through illegal passages and terminals and arrive in the Second Galaxy within six to seven years. By then, the entire universe’s transfer portal system would fall into its hands. If given time, it could even build countless clones of itself within every galaxy, traveling around as it pleased with no way of being completely eliminated.

Lin Jingheng was glad he had decided to shoo off all the soldiers earlier to speak with the Doctor alone. If these words were to be spread around, perhaps even a small portion of people in the galactic forces would break down in despair.

Doctor Hardin then said in a lower voice: “You do have another…’option’ right now.”

Lin Jingheng exchanged a quick glance with the old man, both of them immediately understanding--there was still one option left. They could immediately close off the wormhole area and physically isolate the Eighth Galaxy, which might bring peace to the Eighth Galaxy for the next hundred years.

There was a one in a million chance that within the next hundred years the Eighth Galaxy’s technology would see another groundbreaking breakthrough, taking human society up to an unbelievable height that might even let them fight on equal grounds with the AI’s machine empire.

Or perhaps they would live in fear for the next hundred years until the inevitable doomed fate dawned on them.

“We can’t do that.” Lin Jingheng placed a hand in his pocket, his fingers glossing over the small box carrying the paired rings. The soft touch of silk brushed the tips of his fingers, tender but fateful. He responded sternly, “Besides, it’s too late to say it now.”

Doctor Hardin was shocked: “Did you guys do something? Where’s Prime Minister Lu, is he still on air in the press room?”

Lin Jingheng lifted his head toward the large 3D screen within the military base. Through the glass window, he could see that Lu Bixing’s long speech was nearing its end.

“My personal lab has already been turned over to the appropriate department for inspection and I’ve turned in all remaining evidence I have of the experiment. The investigation team will soon go through the data regarding the two Nuwa Projects for a proper report; important witnesses such as Doctor Hardin have already been arranged to be protected as well. In the name of the Pledge of Freedom, I swear that everything I have said thus far is true. After the investigation is over, whether it is illegally obtaining an original Rainbow Virus sample, conducting dangerous private experiments, or whatever else the verdict comes down to, I’m willing to accept a fair trial. If the Highest Court of the Eighth Galaxy gives me a summons, I will attend without any questions.” Lu Bixing gave an amiable smile to the screen after he finished with, “But remember that I love the Eighth Galaxy and no matter what happens, I will fulfill my duty as the top Minister of the Galaxy until the very last second of my term.”

Something suddenly hit Doctor Hardin as he said: “This isn’t a live speech!”

Lin Jingheng shook his head wordlessly. His hand in the pocket also stopped fiddling with the small box that softened his heart at a time like this as he put his glove on and waved at the soldiers waiting outside: “Prepare to take off!”

“Wait, Jingheng!” Doctor Hardin called out to him as he desperately lifted his head from his wheelchair, “Did you manage to see Jingshu at the end? Did she leave any last words?”

“No, she was shot amidst a large-scale battle, so I don’t think she had the time to speak.” Lin Jingheng paused slightly before continuing, “If she did, I imagine it would be something like ‘I was right, you were all wrong’ or something.”

Doctor Hardin let out a pained, anxious sigh: “I didn’t take good care of her…I was supposed to take care of both of you, I’m forever in debt to Laura…”

“You aren’t in debt to Laura.” Lin Jingheng turned his head and gave him a very faint smile. “Laura doesn’t love us.”

Doctor Hardin looked at him, dumbfounded.

“Doctor Laura Gordon had eyes that could see the apocalypse through the facade of a peaceful world. You can’t expect those same eyes to also notice...every other trivial matter in this world. Besides, we were raised outside of the womb; she never experienced that hormonal change in her body during pregnancy, there weren’t any of those biological ‘motherly love’ things in the first place.” Lin Jingheng said calmly, “Though I’m quite honored to share even a bit of her genes, it’s too bad I never inherited even a bit of her genius.”

“The Union….was the very first Era of human history that realized the Great Unification,” Doctor Hardin muttered, “how did it turn out like this?”

“You speak too soon.” Lin Jingheng turned his back again and made his way onto the mech. “It’s not the end yet.”

The First Galaxy.

The AUS managed to arrive just as the Human Alliance defense line was broken, but it was too late. With Hope’s lack of experience on the battlefield and firepower, they would simply be adding to the casualty numbers even if they ran to help.

They watched as their former enemies and temporary allies got crushed by the main AI troops, a strange sensation of mourning and frustration beginning to build up within their hearts.

“P….Prophet.”

If any of the AUS followers had doubts about their faith in the past, they forgot it all and solidified their beliefs at this horrific scene before their eyes.

“The mental network!” Harris was the first to react, shouting, “Avoid all the cannon fire and spread out your mental networks. Drag all of the allies' mechs that have lost control back to safety, even one mech is one life saved!”

The Great Prophet’s order was answered immediately by the fearless followers sailing onto the frontlines.

Perhaps they were preparing for the long journey and were conserving their fuel and missiles, or perhaps AIs were fundamentally different from humans and prioritized completing their assigned task--regardless, the AIs didn’t choose to “clean up” the battlefield. Many allied mechs that had lost their pilots were left afloat with their empty human-mech ports, making it hard to tell whether the rest of the crew on the mech was still alive or dead.

“Prophet, watch out!”

Harris’s commanding ship was already remote-controlling a few alliance mechs and was too close to the frontlines, exposed to the AI troop’s radar. Soon after, a few cannons were locked onto the AUS mechs.

Sirens within the mech buzzed through Harris’s head; an unexplainable epiphany suddenly came to him as he ordered, “Light up your starship passes!”

The AUS--these loser underdogs of space pirates witnessed their commanding ship flash an ‘Intergalactic Civilian Passport’ shamelessly, looking suspiciously fake.

Harris stared wide-eyed at the camera on his ship, his throat rolling uneasily as he waited.

Then seconds later---

“Disarmed.”

Those few AI mechs that had locked in on him earlier actually believed him and even ‘kindly’ turned their cannons away as they followed the main fleet into the wormhole area without batting an eye at the AUS.

“Go, quickly!” Harris called out within his communication channel. The AUS soon picked up all of the injured mechs from the Alliance that they could find within their abilities and left this cursed area.

“Prophet, we’ve received a message. It seems like there are still some Woltorian Refugees that were supposed to be heading towards the City of Angels on the heavy mech we saved!”

“Life signals detected inside the mech.”

“Send out medical capsules into the mechs, dispatch as much as we can!”

“Prophet, what about the Eighth Galaxy? We can’t get in contact with them!”

Harris: “.....”

Seven days later, the Eighth Galaxy.

Mint was on early shift today. She first greeted Rickhead, who had just been let out of the hospital, before carefully inspecting all data collected from the wormhole zone.

“Who dares to put my Professor Lu on trial!?” Rickhead only heard the news after being let out of the hospital and exploded angrily into a loud firecracker, his face filled with clear and naked killing intent. “If I hear anyone on my team dare to shittalk him under their breath, I swear I will punch their damn teeth out!”

“Then you’d be sent to the court martial,” Mint coldly commented. “Say, don’t you think it’s about time to go ask a therapist to see if you can fix that violent nature of yours?”

“I…..”

“Hush!” Mint saw something as her eyes focused on the screen, “I’ll talk to you later.”

She quickly hung up the call and gave a warning, “Border Security Department Headquarters, there is abnormal energy activity within the wormhole zone. The energy level is still rising as we speak, there seems to be something coming in from the other side of the wormhole.”

“Received,” a familiar voice answered. “Technicians, retreat from your post.”

Mint looked up in shock and noticed that the person she was speaking to wasn’t a caller from the Border Security Department.

“M...Marshal Lin?”

## Ch 187 - Reinforcement to the Eighth Galaxy

A few days ago, just after Lu Bixing’s secret was exposed throughout the entire Eighth Galaxy---

Lu Bixing slowly trudged around the corner of his wooden desk. Lee, Turan, Bayer, and Liu had all checked in long-distance, their figures projected on the 3D screen around the corners of the study. For a split second, the small study seemed more crowded than usual amidst this strange scenery.

Lu Bixing mumbled: “Turn in the biochip human, or we will open fire.”

Bayer studied the Prime Minister’s expression and chimed in: “According to the report the Third Squadron sent back, the AIs have given us twenty-four hours…”

Turan interrupted him grimly: “Don’t listen to that bullshit.”

“I’m not the one that said it…”

Lee said: “But in reality, they didn’t give us the twenty-four hours they promised---are you alright, Prime Minister?”

“I’m fine.” Aside from the initial shock, Lu Bixing had been relatively calm throughout the situation. He was someone who had overcome the greatest pain he could imagine for a man to shoulder, thus every other travesty seemed much more trivial in comparison. His playful mouth couldn’t help but add, “Worst case scenario, I quit my job. It’s no big deal, I’ve done my job well enough. From now on your Marshal here can bring the income home and raise me; I was actually worried I wouldn’t have time to raise kids and dogs here.”

The crowd listened to this completely unprofessional and unmotivated comment, squinting silently at the thought that there might be some more explosive information behind those careless words.

Lin Jingheng knocked on the table: “Quit the nonsense.”

“I’ve discussed this issue with Jingheng already,” Lu Bixing said. “Super AI Woolf does not have a main body within the Eighth Galaxy, and the time distortion caused by the wormhole would temporarily disconnect its ‘feelers’ from its main body. I don’t believe this ‘feeler’ that he sent over has the power to control surveillance of the entire Eighth Galaxy in real time.”

“Yes, the security department just reported in regards to that. It wasn’t too difficult to counter and destroy this hacker,” Lee said. “They should have it under control by now.”

Turan lifted an eyebrow: “It can’t control us? That means…Longyuan was bluffing the whole time?”

“It takes at least five to six days to travel between the Eighth Galaxy and the Heart of the Rose. If the wormhole terminal never received tech support, it could even take up to half a month to travel. Longyuan said he would give us twenty-four hours, but in reality, it was because he knew that they would have no way to monitor the Eighth Galaxy after twenty-four hours.” Bayer commented in a low voice, “And if we lied to him to wait for five or six days, I’ll bet he would only be greeted by the Alliance backup fleets.”

Zhanlu’s robot arm poured a cup of tea for Lin Jingheng. As an outsider AI that had once partnered up with someone else to trick his own master’s piloting permissions, Zhanlu chimed in with his own opinion: “Longyuan isn’t that dumb.”

“Of course he’s not stupid, but I bet the Youngs are also at their wit’s end. When I got the report, the Alliance fleet that had just arrived in the Heart of the Rose was only a few small fry in the pond. It’d be completely useless even if they took the AIs head-on, so I bet they’re only going to try and hold the AIs back as much as possible and use all the cards up their sleeves.” Turan let out a sigh, then pondered slightly as if she was hesitant to speak. “But if Longyuan knew that the Third Squadron was only playing along, why would he still let them stall for time?”

This was a good question that momentarily silenced the entire study.

Then, as if realizing something, Lin Jingheng quickly lifted his head and exchanged a glance with Lu Bixing.

Lu Bixing muttered: “Now that’s bad.”

Turan: “What?”

Lin Jingheng ordered: “Turan, send a warning signal to all allies heading through the wormhole terminals immediately. Tell them to be prepared for an ambush any minute once they pass through the wormhole zone. Also, report to the Third Squadron, tell them to be careful of Alliance fleets!”

Turan carried out the order without question and sent all messages as demanded. Only once the job was done did she turn around in confusion and ask, “But why, Marshal?”

“Because we can close up the wormhole zone,” Lin Jingheng responded sternly. “Longyuan showed up in the Heart of the Rose with his troops to heighten tensions between the Third Squadron and the Alliance. If the AI troops try to forcefully push through the line of defense, the frontlines will immediately send a message back and we’ll receive live reports of the battle here in the Eighth Galaxy. The moment the AI troops break through the Alliance’s defense and enter the wormhole zone, we will likely have no choice but to close off the wormhole terminals and crush them all within the distortion of timespace.”

“That’s why he attempted to ‘talk peacefully’ in the beginning, to let the frontlines think they’re gullible AIs with a simple goal. By the time Woolf’s ‘feelers’ hack into the Eighth Galaxy and successfully cause a ruckus within the galaxy, both the masses and the Alliances troops would have developed their own suspicions of the rumors. This is especially true for the Alliance; when they realize the Third Squadron had lied to them, they will grow wary of us. They would suspect that I would close off the terminal in order to protect myself, so they’ll destroy all of the wormhole disruption equipment on both sides and the communication platforms.” Lu Bixing followed up, “Once the AIs successfully got past the defense line, they would then be able to enter the wormhole terminal without anyone knowing.”

Lee: “They would also guard the exit and lay out a massive communication blockade near the Heart of the Rose. If the Alliance fleets that hadn’t yet reached the Heart of the Rose arrived ignorant of everything, they would be ambushed the moment they left the wormhole zone and have no way to contact us.”

“Shit, will the warning I sent out get there in time? Poisson and Thomas…” Turan sucked in a breath of cold air as her gaze hardened into ice. “If that’s the case, then let them in. The Ninth Squadron will be greeting them at the exit; let me see what these Great Swords of the Union are all about!”

Zhanlu waved his robot arm at her and said: “Look, it’s just a robot arm.”

“......I’m not talking about you.” The rage Turan let out almost choked her up. She looked at the little arm and felt her heart sink. “Oh Zhanlu, sweetie, you...you sure are a strange one to come out of that Great Swords bunch.”

“Then...Prime Minister, Marshal, now that we’ve considered this possibility, should we still prepare to close off the wormhole zone as insurance?” Lee asked. “Of course, we’ll leave enough time for the Alliance fleets that are still inside the terminal to come out and ensure at least the vast majority comes out safely, although we won’t be able to help those very few unfortunate souls if it happens.”

Lu Bixing didn’t answer the question and turned his head to Lin Jingheng to say: “The wormhole zone of the Eighth Galaxy used to be outside of our jurisdiction. It wasn’t until a few years ago when the Expedition Team discovered the area that we began to build temporary border patrols and bases near it. Geographically, it’s still quite a distance from the main human activity zone of the Eighth Galaxy. If it’s you, do you think…”

Lin Jingheng lifted a brow at him: “Hm?”

Lu Bixing quickly changed his wording and continued: “I’ve heard from Zhanlu that the Great Swords had been on display in the Union for years due to them not being able to find a suitable pilot. I’m sure it wasn’t these AIs that made it difficult for pirates to step foot in Union territory for the last thirty years, right?”

Lin Jingheng didn’t give an answer and simply looked at him, deep in thought.

Bayer was out of the loop and asked, “What’s that supposed to mean, Prime Minister?”

“Don’t close off the wormhole zone,” Lu Bixing said. “I’ll go to the First Galaxy.”

“W-what did you say, Prime Minister?”

“Listen, no matter what the outside says or how others see you, the Ninth Squadron has been struggling along by your side all these years. We will stand with you now as well, Minister Lu.”

“I…”

“I can’t even sleep well at night knowing there’s this awful AI as my neighbor.” Lu Bixing raised a hand to interrupt the panicked cries of the people. “Whether it’s closing off the Eighth Galaxy or discussing how to deal with Longyuan, none of these will solve the actual problem at hand. Now that we’ve established this super AI has ill intentions toward us, let’s take care of it while we can. If we leave it alone, perhaps in a mere few months it will be able to replicate multiple backup motherboards for itself; in six to seven years, it will be able to reach the Second Galaxy and control the whole universe through its transfer portal networks.”

Everyone’s gaze fell on him.

Lu Bixing raised his hand, the personal device on his wrist projecting a galactic terminal map that shone brightly on the slightly antique-looking wooden desk.

He said, straight to the point, “About three hundred years ago, Chief Commander Lin Ge’er lured ‘King Hertz’ to its doom and annihilated the monstrous AI. Now, it looks as if this honorable yet difficult task is now on my shoulders.”

Days later, at the end of intertwining destinies, the headquarters of the Eighth Galaxy’s wormhole zone border security department--

The frontline wormhole technicians and non-combat personnel began retreating in an orderly fashion as they had been told. Mint was among the last batch of people to retreat, and the young woman noted a heavy mech near the security homebase that they passed as they returned. The military camera on her starship recognized the serial number on that heavy mech--it was the Silver Ninth Squadron Captain Turan’s commanding ship.

Mint carefully adjusted the angle of the camera on her mech to get a good look of the wormhole area. She noticed that within a matter of minutes, the once quiet and dead wormhole zone had now been lined with rows of heavily-armed galactic fleets. The First, Sixth, Ninth, and Tenth Squadrons of Silver Command had dispatched all of their forces. It was almost unimaginable how such a large-scale military dispatchment could be made so swiftly and silently without any issues. The fleet was like a crowd of ferocious beasts creeping through the night, giving the people they protected a sense of revered security.

For some strange reason, the anxious atmosphere spurred by the wormhole’s abnormal activity also vanished at this sight.

The technicians were all gathered up and sent to the backside of the armed zone. That was when Mint finally noticed a strange line of equipment that surrounded the fleet of mechs in the back row as spatial robots began doing final checkups on them.

Mint wasn’t sure what that equipment was for, but before she could study it further, the starship she was on shrieked in alarm--

*Abnormal energy alert!*

How could they even detect any abnormal energy activity this far away!?

“They opened fire!”

Mint asked, “Where?”

“The wormhole zone,” a colleague shouted back. “Enemies appeared out of the wormhole and were blocked off by the galactic forces!”

For the past few days, there had been multiple fleets of Alliance troop mechs traveling through the wormhole terminal that entered the Heart of the Rose. Every fleet in the first wave out of the terminal were the supplying starships carrying necessities for long-distance travel, which created a convenient cushion against the first round of AI fire for the incoming mechs behind them. However, it didn’t seem as if the fleets in the back had any intention of engaging in combat; upon facing an ambush, they simply pulled up their shields and hid behind their supply ships. There were no signs of firing back nor sending out warnings to their other allied fleets.

The Union Troops ran like desperate rats, avoiding every missile fired at them while the Central Militia scattered like a collapsed sand castle. The Heart of the Rose was naturally a digital vacuum, making it difficult for AIs to separate and chase down the fleeing Alliance troops and giving them no choice but to allow a great majority of the mechs to escape the zone of fire.

On the other side of the terminal, the Eighth Galaxy had been nothing but silent with no sign of closing off the wormholes. It was almost as if they really were oblivious to the invasion, just prey waiting to be ambushed.

At the same time, the first wave of AI vanguard fleets arrived at the Eighth Galaxy.

Their first attack was met with a bad start.

“The First Squadron average hit rate during the first round was 96%,” Lee reported. “We accidentally missed one; thanks, Elizabeth.”

“No need,” Turan responded after filling in an extra shot. “It’s the First Squadron, y’know. To be honest, for a department that pretty much uses all their salaried hours sitting in their office putting makeup on, this is an acceptable hit rate.”

“Hey, all the ones that can fight know to stay lowkey. Can you guys stop embarrassing yourselves in front of the Marshal with your little charade?” Liu Yuanzhong chimed in, “Watch out, a super mech!”

The next instant, another wave of AI mechs popped out from the wormhole zone and was once again annihilated by a violent storm of fire. Soon after, super mechs Longyuan and Chengying charged forward from behind using the remnants of their escort mechs. Two massive mental networks overlapped and consumed the entire wormhole zone before anyone could blink.

At the same time, at least a few dozen mechs from the Silver Command faced a violent hack into their mental networks, forcing the Eighth Galaxy Galactic Forces to temporarily halt fire. This short break allowed large fleets of AI mechs to swim out like fish to the ocean and begin forcing their way into the Eighth Galaxy.

A pilot from the First Squadron was knocked off the mental network, yet before a backup pilot could reconnect, the AI hacker cut off the internal gravity system of the mech. The galactic soldiers inside the mech lost their balance and were about to be lifted from the ground--when the gravity system was suddenly repaired as the enemy AI was forced out of the mech’s mental network.

Zhanlu’s voice rang out from inside the mech: “It’s me. Backup pilot, please be prepared to connect to the network.”

The first wave of mental network invasion was successfully blocked off by Zhanlu.

“Zhanlu,” Chengying said. “Did you get taken off another washing machine for being useless again?”

Nobody knew who set the original personality for Chengying, but as a super AI, it certainly had a little too much attitude. If Lu Xin hadn’t left Zhanlu’s access and permission to Lin Jingheng, the famed Commander Lin would likely have chosen Chengying as his partner: a team of natural-born assholes that could have been.

“Digital butlers are not installed on washing machines,” Zhanlu responded patiently as if he was educating Chengying on common sense. “Home-use smart kitchens, air conditioning and interior climate systems, the overall household cleaning system, and security system are all under my management. Your perspective of digital butters is too narrow.”

Chengying: “......”

Oh, so much authority! Awesome?

Longyuang: “Your mental network has just been repaired, are you sure it’s stable enough?”

“Thank you for your generous donation of transformable material for my mech core; my network is much more stable than before,” Zhanlu said. “Even though it is still not up to standards and my current mech body is still merely temporary hardware, fortunately my master’s own mental strength is stable enough to take you all on.”

The revered super mech core of the Union’s Great Swords: not only a proud loser but also as shameless as one could be!

If Longyuan had the function to understand shame and anger, perhaps it would be boiling in rage right now.

Longyuang: “We’ll test how stable your network is.”

Before the last syllable dropped, an invisible force of energy swept through the entire battlefield--every mech, from human to AIs, lost all communication signals.

The AI fleets looked as if they had lost the string connecting the entire fleet together and began to lose control.

Yet the Silver Ten looked as if they were completely unaffected by this loss of signal. Their teamwork was too strong, powerful enough that they could still fight like professionals and support one another even after all connections were cut off.

The tables had completely turned; the AI troops were on the brink of annihilation, and one of Longyuan’s backup engines was knocked off during the battle.

Longyuan turned immediately back into the wormhole terminal---

A few hours later, the AI troops still on standby in the Heart of the Rose received a broken-up message: “Send reinforcement to the Eighth Galaxy.”

The main AI fleet on standby began to sail towards the terminal.

“There will likely be a large fleet of AI troops on standby in the Heart of the Rose.” Lu Bixing said that day during the emergency meeting inside his study, “I’m not our God of War Marshal Lin; I can handle a small-scale battle, but a full-blown war is not my field of expertise. If I am going to the First Galaxy, we will need to find a way to lure the AIs on the other side of the terminal away.”

## Ch 188 - Very Certain

“The mech cores of the Great Swords contain massive amounts of data from past warfare, allowing them to make fair judgements on the battlefield. Therefore, I will need all fleets from the First, Sixth, Ninth, and Tenth Squadrons who are ready to be dispatched to mobilize at the frontlines.” Lin Jingheng said, “We don’t need to lure them in, they’ll be able to find us.”

“No, no, we can’t dispatch everyone…wait, are you saying that the super AIs will likely determine where they should go just from the scale and arrangement of troops on the battlefield?” Lu Bixing lifted his head from behind the desk and frowned at Lin Jingheng. “Tell Zhanlu to give us an estimate on the amount of available military supplies and troops the First Galaxy can mobilize. What if all of the mechs on reserve can be mobilized by the AIs? If the Eighth Galaxy acts too aggressively, we might attract…”

Lin Jingheng held up a hand to interrupt him. “The best case scenario is that Woolf will deplete all of his reserves in the First Galaxy, that way you’ll be much safer to act over there---of course, this won’t happen. Woolf isn’t the kind of idiot who’d make such a simple mistake, but the more he sends over, the better.”

The smile on Lu Bixing’s face disappeared. “I said no!”

Lin Jingheng leaned back on his chair and turned towards the rest of the Captains in the meeting. “Your Prime Minister says no but I’m saying yes. Who are you guys going to listen to?”

The current Eighth Galaxy government maintained a seamless balance between military and political control, but they had never been the same body of authority to begin with. In addition, the current main fleets of the Galactic Forces were all made up from the revered Silver Ten; if the Prime Minister and Marshal were political opponents, there would be no question who the leaders of the Silver Command would listen to.

The problem was the Prime Minister and Marshal were not political enemies. The Captains all exchanged glances and came to a silent consensus--if someone won this verbal fight, he might have to move out of the bedroom and start building a new bed in the study. And this particular gentleman before them happened to be a continuous offender of putting the blame on other people; he proudly displayed the line “I’m right, the world and everyone else around me is wrong” on his cape as his life’s motto. If he were to move into the study and spend more time with a robotic arm, who knew what kind of unreasonable excuse he would make to take his anger out on someone else. This mess of potential family feud was more fearsome than a thunderstorm to the rest of the world, therefore the Captains decided to all stand in silence as if their signals had gone bad with perfect timing.

Lin Jingheng: “.....”

Thankfully, Zhanlu chimed in to break the Marshal’s awkward silence: “It’s alright, Headmaster Lu. An AI’s battle analysis may not always be accurate; besides, they still have a whole wormhole zone standing in their way to get to us. To tell you the truth, after working alongside my master for so many years, he’s never listened to my analysis reports and has relied solely on his own judgement. Every time I would disagree with him, he would tell me to shut up. Though historical data has proven that he is often correct with his judgments.”

“AI soldiers have only been able to work as backups under properly trained human soldiers in the Union for a reason. I keep my word and will accomplish what I said I would do; I’ll never take the security of the Eighth Galaxy as a joke.” Despite feeling that Zhanlu wasn’t praising him, Lin Jingheng still followed up to end the awkward silence and said sternly, “Now back to your concern. We can’t control how long it takes to pass through the wormhole, so what do you plan on doing if you arrive in the First Galaxy before those backup AI fleets in the Heart of the Rose sail towards us?”

“We can’t control time, but at least we can provide fair estimation. It normally takes about five to eight days to travel through the wormhole, and the chances of running into anything that falls outside of this general scale is, scientifically speaking, astronomically slim. We will plan everything based on this schedule.” Lu Bixing mimicked Zhanlu’s tone of voice and said, “But according to historical data, you’re the only one in the world that could possibly run into these near-impossible situations.”

Lin Jingheng: “Quit the nonsense; what will happen if you run into this situation then?”

“That’s right, Prime Minister,” Turan, who finally mustered enough courage to speak up, voiced her concern. “Y’know, Murphy’s law?”

Lu Bixing paused momentarily and said, “I still have the Alliance troops.”

Eight days later---

People traveling inside the wormhole cannot feel the passing of time outside the terminal. Lu Bixing felt like he left the wormhole almost as soon as he had entered.

There was a small timer on their mech made from a special type of technology that calculated time based on analyzing the electromagnetic change of energy passing through the wormhole, allowing it to approximately estimate the absolute amount of time they spent inside the wormhole.

Lu Bixing’s gaze skimmed over the timer--travel time seven days and two hours.

The energy change alert flashed inside the mech, meaning that they were about to leave the wormhole zone. Lu Bixing let out half a sigh of relief--they had managed to pass through the wormhole within the estimated time frame; running into astronomically impossible events certainly wasn’t that easy.

However…

As the mech sailed out of the wormhole zone, the timespace distortion finally diminished while noise began to ring out of the communication channel. The first thing Lu Bixing heard was “Prime Minister, an ambush!”

Lu Bixing’s head shot up to look at the military camera.

The screen on the camera showed nothing but smoke around them--for safety measures, the first few vanguard mechs they sent out were autopilot dummies that could withstand a round of attack in the case of an enemy ambush.

Now, those shielding dummies had all fallen the moment they sailed into the enemy range of fire. Immediately after, a missile warning rang out inside Lu Bixing’s mech.

The pilot was an experienced soldier from the Silver Tenth Squadron who quickly adjusted their route without breaking a sweat and turned the shield up to the maximum. The mech shot past the remnants of its fallen comrade; the gravity system inside still hadn’t had the chance to readjust itself after coming out of the wormhole and the motion jolted everyone locked in with the safety belts off their feet into various poses.

The commanding ship sailed past two particle cannon shots while the missile still chased them. The pilot charged right into the enemy AI’s fleet, to which the enemy mechs responded by sailing forward to block off the commanding ship. The pilot on Lu Bixing’s mech was a stingy individual and had refused to open fire until now, when he reluctantly shot out a round of particle cannonfire--

A small crack opened between the small mechs blocking them, which the commanding ship barely zoomed through in a very close slide.

The next moment, the missile following the commanding ship arrived and clashed right into the enemy mech cluster too quickly for them to disperse, blowing all the mechs up in a chain of explosions.

The commanding ship slid past the enemy fleet like a needle sewing through fine openings and left with a vibrant firework; the pilots in the cockpit danced in joy and said, “We saved another missile for the anti-missile system.”

Lu Bixing: “......”

“Wait,” Lu Bixing quickly took off his safety belt and zoomed in on the military camera. His eyes scanned quickly across the screen and he said, “We didn’t miscalculate; look, the enemy fleets around the Heart of the Rose are mostly mid-sized to small mechs. None of the Great Sword supermechs are here.

In other words, the fleet here must be an emergency dispatch made by Woolf after the main AI fleet was all lured into the Eighth Galaxy!

It was clear that AI Woolf had taken into consideration that the top commander on the enemy side must be Lin Jingheng and planned his strategy accordingly, treating the man as his most fearsome enemy. Thus, the AI didn’t hesitate to dispatch the massive mech reserves in the First Galaxy military stations.

The Eighth Galaxy.

Lin Jingheng had drawn an area within the wormhole zone and turned it into an artificial digital void, trapping the AI fleets into being punching bags for a good while in the beginning.

However, AIs weren’t programmed with effective vitalities and value in life like humans had; groups and groups of mechs continued to swarm in from the wormhole zone. After Longyuan and Chengying came the other supermechs--within a matter of days, aside from Ganjiang and Moye who were still stuck inside the terminals, the rest of the Great Swords had gathered in the Eighth Galaxy.

The Union’s Great Swords were top-class weapons that only high-ranking commanders were able to use. Unfortunately, the Military Council had been oppressed by the Committee in the past and hadn’t managed to turn out suitable pilots for the supermechs, degrading these legendary weapons into nothing but galactic models. High ranking commanders were old and useless, unable to meet even the minimum mental strength criteria to control these supermechs. Aside from Lin Jingheng, very few high-rank military officials could manage to even stand in the frontlines of galactic warfare. Thus, Zhanlu remained the only Great Sword still on duty while the others became decorations--they had never fully gathered together in any battle ever since they were made.

Nobody could have expected that such a historic moment in military history would be met with the cannons of the supermechs pointing at humanity itself.

Massive mental networks began to overlap and engulf the battlefield like a tightly-knit web, looming as if it was ready to consume the Eighth Galaxy sun. Every pilot that stepped into the range of their mental networks couldn’t help but feel their breaths be taken away.

To make matters worse, the scale of these mental network ranges was closing in near the edge of the digital void that Lin Jingheng had set up. Once the last two supermechs came out from the wormhole, they could very likely break out of this barrier.

Turan hadn’t closed her eyes in days and was forced to take another relaxant.

She couldn’t speak to Lin Jingheng within the digital void, making her grow more anxious by the minute.

That was when another wave of abnormal energy was detected from the wormhole zone; another wave of AI fleets had arrived!

The Heart of the Rose.

Lu Bixing’s brain was operating at full speed: “Turn back the commanding ship and send out wormhole disruption signals!”

The pilot was taken aback as the commanding ship was about to break out of the barricade.

“Hurry!” Lu Bixing demanded, “There’s too much pressure over there!”

The dispersed mech team quickly regrouped at his command, large amounts of disruption signals began to shoot out from the mechs. The gravitational force within the wormhole zone began to pull in its surrounding objects; Lu Bixing’s commanding ship accelerated violently out of the affected zone while the unsuspecting AI mechs were pulled into it. The timespace terminal was instantly transformed into a massive meat grinder.

The cannons of the AI fleet immediately locked onto the wormhole disruptor and Lu Bixing’s mechs; the barricade grew tight while over half of the disruption equipment was wiped out almost instantly.

“Prime Minister,” the commanding ship pilot said, “it’s impossible to set up a full-fledged disruption system in our current situation; these things we’ve sent out are only temporary disruptions. By the time they all get shot down, the wormhole zone will be stabilized within an hour, and the enemy will be able to pass through without any issues.”

Lu Bixing: “Give me a non-protected communication channel.”

The pilot from the Tenth Squadron was a quick-witted lad who knew what Lu Bixing planned on doing and hesitated. “Prime Minister, don’t you think that’s too risky?”

Lu Bixing answered sternly, “I know my limits.”

The next moment, Lu Bixing’s figure suddenly appeared on the public communication channel for the AIs to see. The young man scanned over his ‘audience’ like a celebrity on stage and grinned: “Weren’t you all asking for me? Look, I’m here now, surprised?”

All of the AI mechs that had been crawling towards the Heart of the Rose suddenly froze as if a pause button had been pressed; soon after, all of the cannons turned and pointed towards his commanding ship.

Lu Bixing turned towards his pilot and said: “Look, even if the wormhole blockade goes away, they won’t be sailing to the Eighth Galaxy anymore.”

The pilot fell into a dilemma and felt a mountain of pressure on his shoulders, having no spare energy to chit chat with the Prime Minister. His entire body broken out in a cold sweat, he decided that he was going to write a formal complaint and cry to his boss when he got back: “Prime Minister, are you sure we can break out of the barricade?”

Lu Bixing glanced at the clock on the mech that had already been automatically adjusted to the First Galaxy time.

“I’m…” Just as he opened his mouth, the AI fleet following behind him was suddenly caught in a round of fire. A handful of mech teams sliced right into the middle of the AI fleet with a sharp attack, their violent fire turning the AI mechs into roasted meat within a matter of seconds--this was the Human Alliance that fled a few days ago upon arriving at the First Galaxy.

A hint of smile finally surfaced in Lu Bixing’s eyes as he slowly and casually finished his earlier line: “....Very certain.”

When Lu Bixing said “I still have the Alliance” at the meeting in the study that day, everyone fell silent.

“We can still contact the main Alliance fleet inside the terminal right now, and I’ve already arranged telecommunication to give them a summary of the situation.” Turan hesitated briefly, “But Minister Lu, I just sent Poisson a message. If we don’t receive a response from him within the next few hours, that’ll mean the situation over in the Heart of the Rose is as the Marshal had suspected--they’ve already destroyed their communication equipment…what will we do if that’s the case? What will happen if that means we break our temporary alliance with our comrades?”

Reality had proven that Lin Jingheng’s guess was correct: there had not been any response from the Heart of the Rose even by the time Lu Bixing secretly prepared to travel through the terminal.

The Third Squadron had cut off all communication with them, and it was very possible that Thomas and Poisson never received Turan’s warning in time.

“Minister Lu,” Turan called him with a heavy heart. “It’s been too long, it looks like the Alliance have all fled in the face of crisis. Are you sure you can still trust the Alliance?”

“Ah, we probably should’ve let the Freedom Corps build their biochip empire, that way we wouldn’t have to suspect each other--thinking about it now, that queen of the biochip empire is also our Marshal’s sister. We’re all relatives, y’know; if we had given in earlier we probably could’ve gotten some fame just by relation. Being the family of the ultimate ruler of the universe must be so much cooler than being a Prime Minister of a galaxy if all eight galaxies are under the same control.” Lu Bixing half-jokingly commented and winked at Turan, “Too bad we can’t predict the future, so now I can only say...I’m very certain.”

The AIs in the Heart of the Rose clearly hadn’t expected that these cowardly Human Alliance fleets would reorganize and counterattack at a time like this. The AIs were shredded like cattle while the fastest fleet from the Human Alliance, a team from the Third Galaxy Central Militia, broke through the barricade.

“We stayed on edge and waited for days, little rascal; you actually came!” General Nagus’ voice rang out from Lu Bixing’s communication channel.

“Prime Minister,” The emergency reinforcements also arrived at the same time, and Anakin’s voice rang out as well. “The Fourth Squadron is here.”

Lu Bixing smiled and turned toward his pilot: “Pull back the wormhole disruptors! Restabilize the wormhole terminal. I’m guessing that Jingheng’s already reaching his limit over there, so kick them out of the Eighth Galaxy to chase after me. My friends, we have five to eight days to settle things. It will depend on your cooperation as to whether or not we can fish out Woolf’s main hardware with a giant bait like me.”

## Ch 189 - If I Seek Death It Will Only Be a Lover’s Suicide, Not a Heroic One

In the Eighth Galaxy, Turan watched with her heart pounding at the abnormal energy signals detected from the wormhole entrance, only to notice that it was followed by complete silence. The fire stopped momentarily. She suspected she was starting to hallucinate after too much consumption of relaxants--until she came back to her senses and realized that the wormhole had been sealed off from the other side!

This blockade came right on time and successfully maintained the shifting balance on the battlefield on the Eighth Galaxy’s front. The two supermechs that had not arrived on time could now never expect to come out of the wormhole terminal.

Turan couldn’t help but howl on her own command ship: “Long live Minister Lu, I’d like to see who let the dogs out now!”

Yet, at the same time on the other commanding ship, Lin Jingheng immediately understood what the young man was planning on doing and felt a vein pop as he clenched his teeth. “Lu Bixing!”

The wormhole disruption only lasted a few moments before a weak signal returned. Turan had been spending night and day guarding the borders and already knew what every signal from the wormhole meant; she was puzzled at the turn of events and asked, “......didn’t we say close the door and beat the dogs? Why did he remove the lock?”

In contrast to her slow reaction, the AIs immediately came to a conclusion through their powerful analytical processing: the AIs had been dragged down into the Eighth Galaxy while the biochip human had already made his way into the Heart of the Rose.

“Looks like Headmaster Lu’s side purposely exposed his identity,” Zhanlu said. “Could it be that they want to shoulder some of the pressure on the Eighth Galaxy’s side and use the wormhole zone to hinder the foot of the enemy?”

“This troublesome little shit…” Lin Jingheng’s anger only boiled up halfway before he suddenly paused and mumbled in Zhanlu’s general direction, “What did you just say?”

Zhanlu was already used to this method of communication and answered: “It seems that you still don’t agree with my analysis.”

Lin Jingheng pondered for two seconds, then lifted his head abruptly. With an order in his mind, the commanding ship suddenly turned around and sailed back. The escorting mechs quickly followed behind, only to see their commander shoot a wave of particle cannons in an empty direction. The Silver Ten were puzzled but acted on and followed their commander’s signal.

Almost at the same time, all of the mechs from the AI fleet began to contract their formation---

Within this man-made ‘digital void’ that Lin Jingheng created, the internet connection between the AI mechs had been disrupted. The supermechs could only guide the smaller mechs with long-distance networks built from their internal power sources, which was quite a burden on the battlefield. Therefore, aside from the troublesome massive mental network attacks from the supermechs, there hadn’t been any real threats to the Eighth Galaxy forces.

However, the supermechs that had been navigating on their own earlier suddenly gathered together like giant magnets. Countless little mechs began to sail towards them like metal filings, gathering layers upon layers on top of each other. From afar, it looked like they had formed into a giant beehive; if Lin Jingheng hadn’t ordered his vanguards to retreat earlier, they would have been caught in that swarm of mechs.

Zhanlu felt his dignity as an AI with taste had been insulted and critiqued from afar: “Such an unsightly scene.”

The frontmost Ninth Squadron team immediately shot a round of fire toward that massive boulder. Yet the outermost layer of AI mechs formed a shield; stripping down one layer revealed another layer, like an onion ‘rolling’ towards their enemies.

Zhanlu’s thought process was the thought process of an AI; of course, that meant Longyuan and his crew would also come to the same conclusion as Zhanlu.

The heavymech fleet that sailed towards the Eighth Galaxy had not been lured back into the First Galaxy as Lu Bixing had expected; instead, they continued to charge into the Eighth Galaxy even more aggressively than before.

Due to lack of resources on hand and the fact that the First Galaxy was still the homeground of the AIs, the enemies were not in a hurry to capture Lu Bixing. As long as they could capture the Eighth Galaxy and completely control the wormhole zone, the situation would shift from “the main AI fleets are trapped in the Eighth Galaxy'' to “Lu Bixing is isolated in the First Galaxy, waiting to be taken by the predator.”

The AI troops threw in all of their assets and didn’t hesitate to use their own mechs as physical shields to push forward towards their enemies. The Eighth Galaxy forces were forced to back off as if they were facing a giant avalanche with no way to fight back.

Suddenly, the AI troops that had been taking the bullet for the last few days turned their cannons all at once and fired at the Eighth Galaxy forces. Of course, the forces were well-trained enough to dodge the attack without any injuries as the teams cooperated seamlessly to sail out of firing range.

“Shit!”

The missile that was shot out didn’t loop back toward the Eighth Galaxy forces and instead flew further out.

Bam--

The digital void had been shattered!

In the First Galaxy---

Lu Bixing still didn’t know that the AIs hadn’t acted as he had expected.

However, he had successfully met up with the main fleet of the Human Alliance.

The main Alliance fleet had taken turns sailing into the Heart of the Rose. According to Lu Bixing’s plan, their only job was to flee and run within the area--in other words, they didn’t really have much to do.

Yet during their escape they’d managed to get a sense of direction within the complex region in the Heart of the Rose; there were no transfer portals around the area and therefore it wasn’t easy for AIs to detect them, making it a relatively safe zone within the First Galaxy.

Now, the fleet became Lu Bixing’s tour guide.

“I believe I’m the first to arrive after receiving your message,” Old Bu from the Fifth Galaxy said. “I didn’t see the Third Squadron nor the vanguard fleets that arrived first, not even corpses or remnants. It’s tricky to communicate within the First Galaxy, so I’ve searched around the area with a tiny bit of hope but no luck.”

Lu Bixing shook his head gravely and said: “Prepare for the worst.”

The reunited forces began to fill each other in on their encounters and experiences on the battlefield; everyone had their minds focused on the war at the moment and nobody mentioned the rumor that Lu Bixing was a biochip human.

“So where are we going to find Woolf’s main body?” Nagus pondered in a desperate attempt to work that rusty brain of his that he rarely used, “The man was either born in Wolto or the City of Angels when he was alive, so it must be somewhere between these two places, right? Looking at what happened to Wolto though, I doubt it’s there...how about we search around the City of Angels? I remember that old fella from the AUS found the activation key buried there.”

“I don’t think it would be there,” the Sixth Galaxy General said. “You really think nobody would consider what you can think of? Would Lin Jingshu from the Freedom Corps not have thought about it? If it was really in the City of Angels, the Freedom Corps would have already taken that place down when they were running for their lives being pursued by AIs.”

Lu Bixing felt something in his heart as he lifted his gaze to look at these old generals that spoke before their brains could catch up. Previously, these old men often referred to the Freedom Corps as simply ‘biochip humans’ in a derogatory sense, but Lu Bixing now discovered that nobody had dared to speak this phrase ever since they all gathered here.

It seemed as if these old Generals were protecting him in their own roundabout way.

“Bixing?”

Lu Bixing pulled his straying mind back and said: “I think the main body was likely on the City of Angels fortress in the very beginning.”

“The very beginning?”

“Yes. The reason why the City of Angels was reactivated back then was the pirate invasion into the Union and breakdown of Eden. The Military Council used this as a political opportunity to stand above the Committee--in contrast to the politically unstable Wolto, the City of Angels was the very first location that Woolf could fully control and grasp with his own hands,” Lu Bixing said. “The City of Angels once housed large numbers of Woltorian refugees and acted as a temporary command center of the Union military. There were plenty of smaller space stations and satellites surrounding the fortress as well, fulfilling the needs of everyday life for both the general public and military personnel. It was quite a complicated system.”

“Right, the Eden Testing Labs back then was one of those space stations.”

“That’s why it was very likely that one of those space stations secretly housed AI Woolf’s main body,” Lu Bixing said. “When Hope turned on the activator, it completely removed all power sources in the entire City of Angels and used that opportunity to escape the peripheries of the fortress. Then, through the communication and warping networks, it took control of the entire First Galaxy.”

Nagus could feel his brain exceeding itscapacity and asked; “Then how are we supposed to find that thing if it’s just floating around aimlessly?”

“Don’t worry, everything leaves traces if it exists in this world.” Lu Bixing said, “I’ve said earlier that AI Woolf controlled the networks of the First Galaxy, so it’s like a spider spinning its web. We simply need to follow the web up to find the spider. The warping network is fully laid out on the galactic maps, as for short-terminal networks---”

“The First Galaxy’s communication network was completely rebuilt after the Glory Troops pirates surrendered; we’ve helped with the rebuilding all the way from start to finish,” a Major General from the Union Troops said. “We’re familiar with the layout of the galactic network stations.”

“Perfect,” Lu Bixing said. “Two network webs are too complicated for us, and because we have time restraints, we need to decrease the scale of this mission. Friends from the Union, can I rely on you all to cut off the communication networks of the First Galaxy first?”

The Major General responded without hesitation: “No problem!”

“The First Galaxy Border Fleets can support.”

Lu Bixing waved his hand over the screen, flicked the layout of the communication channel system away and left only the galactic map floating before him.

“If we can destroy the First Galaxy’s communication networks, it would greatly simplify the problem we face,” Lu Bixing said. “When Woolf is left only with warping networks, its main body will be forced to settle on one of the transfer portals within the galaxy.”

“But there’s over 400 transfer portals in the First Galaxy,” someone said.

Lu Bixing responded, “The First Galaxy housed the capitol of the Union and is heavily guarded. All transfer portals are organized into sections, and each section is managed by a military fortress overlooking the portals. This ensures that if any issues arise within any of the transfer portals, the Union can send dispatch troops at any time. Jingheng told me that the Silver Fortress used to be the overseer of all military mobilization within the Union; when they received an order from the Military Council, the Silver Fortress would send their orders out through long-distance networks to each respective governing military fortresses in the region. Yet as fast as it is to use transfer portals to send long-distance messages, galactic distances are still too large to make instant communication possible.”

“The First Galaxy isn’t big; it only takes about eight minutes of delay to send and receive messages from the Silver Fortress to the furthest military post,” another spoke up.

“But now that Woolf already knows that I’m in the First Galaxy, he will gather up as many forces available on hand to search for me within the whole galaxy,” Lu Bixing said. “So let me test the response time of all the major military posts within the area and reverse-engineer a map of potential areas where the main body may be located in.”

Old Bu asked: “How are you going to test this?”

“We’ve captured a few war prisoners from the Freedom Corps. The mech recorded their routes through the non-terminal regions when they were being chased by the AIs, so we can borrow the data for our purposes.” Lu Bixing tapped lightly on the map before him. Within an instant, all non-recorded travel routes were marked on the galactic map as he said, “There are sixteen military fortress zones in the First Galaxy. We’ll split up into sixteen teams, and following the non-terminal routes, sail toward the location of the military bases. I’ve estimated the time already, and without going through transfer portals, it will take at most six to seven days to reach the furthest military base from where we are right now---in about seven days, the supermechs in the Eighth Galaxy will likely be out of the wormhole terminal to chase us down, so we need to be quick.”

“Everyone, check your charts and maps to make sure we’re all using Woltorian standard measurements. Seven Woltorian days from now at midnight, I will emergency warp and return to this location.” Lu Bixing sailed around a transfer portal as he spoke. “When the main body finds me, it will send a dispatch order to all military bases, creating a time delay over here.”

“No, that’s too dangerous, you’ll have exposed yourself before all AIs within the First Galaxy,” Old Bu said. “I don’t think we need to split up into sixteen teams, do we? If we’re only calculating time differences, it should be enough to just send two or three teams to the furthest most regions.”

Lu Bixing: “What if there’s more than one main body?”

The old general suddenly felt goosebumps crawling on his skin.

 “Besides, our mission isn’t simply to calculate time differences. When we determine the area where the main body is, the team in charge of that area will need to do the same thing Commander Lin did when they fought against Hertz and destroy the outermost layer of transfer portals at once to trap the main computer inside this isolated land,” Lu Bixing said as he pulled his personal device back. “Our next step will be to test its anti-missile shields--are there any more concerns, anyone? If not, we must act immediately. We’ll leave the communication station to the First Galaxy fleets; everyone else organize into teams and set up your own private communication channels within each team. We don’t have time to waste, let’s go!”

Nagus suddenly asked; “What about you?”

Lu Bixing was taken aback, then lifted his head to look at the old general.

“Commander Lin Ge’er voluntarily used himself as bait to lure King Hertz and his successor into Wolto. His commanding ship was shot down during the trip to Wolto, using his corpse to physically pave the way for the Union’s victory,” Nagus said gently, “so what about you?”

Lu Bixing laughed and said: “I won’t, uncle Nagus. Someone’s back there holding down the Great Swords and the main fleet of the AI troops. If I could still be shot down by Woolf like this, wouldn’t this legendary ‘biochip superhuman’ and ‘the only successful case of the Nuwa Project’ body of mine be a joke to all of the great scientists that came before us?”

The Alliance had been careful to not bring up this sensitive topic before him, not expecting the young man to bring it up without shame like this in front of everyone. They all stared at him, speechless.

“I’ve already made my statement regarding the chip in the Eighth Galaxy. I also plan on giving everyone a thorough explanation,” Lu Bixing said. “Don’t worry, I was born in a difficult world amidst travesties, it’s a miracle that I can even live to this age today. I value my own life like no other; even if I seek death it will only be a lover’s suicide, not a heroic one.”

## Ch 190 - The Only Chance

The First Galaxy.

The former ringleader of the galaxy, the First Galaxy Border Patrol Fleet, got onto the same small mech as the Union Troops and split up into teams towards their assigned communication post base.

Lu Bixing watched them sail off through the mech’s military camera and said: “The main fleets of the AI troops are not here, and the former First Galaxy guards all know their way around the area. There shouldn’t be any problems dealing with the communication base even if they split up; everyone else follow our original plan and prepare to make our way towards our assigned areas…..let’s meet again in seven days.”

The First Galaxy was still under lockdown, where the fearsome main body of the AI still hadn’t taken over the universe.

The Human Alliance still had power to fight back.

The generals saluted him within the communication channel and took off. Within one Woltorian calendar day, there were only a handful of escorting mechs and a portion of the Third Galaxy Central Militia fleet around Lu Bixing.

The young man let out a long breath of air.

Every chess piece had been placed; he ruminated on if there was anything he had missed. He soon discovered that once his busy brain was given time to breathe, he would start to daydream about anything and everything.

A sudden thought appeared: what if the Great Swords that had stayed in the Eighth Galaxy didn’t take his bait to sail back to the First Galaxy?

Could Lin Jingheng and the Eighth Galaxy forces withstand that long?

This dangerous thought spread through him like a powerful parasite, unwilling to remove itself from his mind the moment it came up. Lu Bixing suddenly felt his heart rate going haywire, a thin layer of cold sweat starting to form on his palm. When he got up to grab himself a cup of water, the cup slipped through his shaking hands and fell onto the ground.

Lu Bixing pulled his senses back to reality, shocked to find that he had almost fallen into a dangerous hallucination from anxiety. He pressed on all the joints on his hand to calm himself down and suppressed his worrisome thoughts--there was no way to turn back now. All of his worries were useless; no matter what, he had no choice but to trudge down this path.

To stop himself from overthinking, Lu Bixing forced himself to sit down, closed his eyes, and readjusted his breathing. Then, he looked around for something to do.

He opened up Commander Lin Ge’er’s notebook and began reading while referring to a general history of the Union. The Union’s official records had credited the late commander as a one-in-a-million philosopher and war strategist in human history, one of the greatest military leaders of civilization. Lu Bixing picked up the notebook like a child who never studied on a regular basis, hoping to cram in some last-minute studying right before a big exam off the notes of the ace student in class.

The details in the notebook regarding some of the most famous battles all matched up, but aside from war, the notebook also chronicled the late commander’s personal life.

He wrote that the bookworm Doctor Hardin had an attention disorder when he was young and often had trouble holding long conversations with others. The young man would often go off to talk about unrealistic dreams and aspirations. He also wrote about Woolf; the young man who grew more and more reserved as he aged.

Whenever the commander mentioned his lover, the text would often be followed by a warm and soft doodle on the side. The artwork leaned more on the abstract side with no way to make out the features of his models, yet even a simple silhouette was filled with longing and adoration in every stroke.

“I’ve watched Hubert (Woolf) grow up since he was young. He was an orphan, without family and grew overly dependent on me, which perhaps led him astray to interpret my kindness as something else. I am regretful that I was not able to notice and correct his misguided emotions, so I’ve been very careful with how I use my words and act around him these years. I don’t want to give him any more wrong ideas or hints for his own sake; thankfully he is a docile and humble young man, so I believe he will be able to walk out of his troubles after a few years.”

Lu Bixing clicked his tongue and drew a line with his finger across the words “docile and humble” like he almost forgot what the phrase meant. He skipped the every day ramblings and turned to the last few pages that documented the last battle with AI King Hertz.

“King Hertz is impenetrable like a horrible ghost that looms above all stars; just why would anyone create such a monster like this?

“Steven (Hardin) once again shared an unrealistic idea. He said that if we have enough time and technology, we should create a more free and powerful AI; a beast can only be defeated by a more fearsome beast.

“Hubert said that if an unlimited framework AI could be created, no matter how good the intention was when it was created, no matter how friendly it is programmed to be toward humans, it will inevitably become our enemy in the end--even if its script was coded entirely in love.”

“That’s right, what’s the difference between a new species and a free-willed AI? We fear creatures that are not human, it’s something written in our genes as mankind. This is the ultimate lesson left behind by countless conflicts and bloodshed by different species fighting for survival. Once the relationship between two species grows cold after its initial honeymoon phase, humans will begin to suspect each other even if AIs still remained friendly. And once this first crack appears, it can no longer be healed; we will then perish under the hands of our own creations.

“Thank goodness for King Hertz’ own bias; the access control he left for his son was perhaps the last ray of hope used to save the world.”

These were merely some thoughts written by the owner of the notebook without any real use for the situation on the battlefield right now. Lu Bixing originally scanned the pages quickly, but then, as if he suddenly realized something, he flipped the page back to reread this section and wondered: “Was this a mistake?”

Did Commander Lin Ge’er switch up Hardin and Woolf’s names?

But….it was clear from the notes that the late commander was a very careful man with a keen eye to detail. Even in writing, he rarely made any mistakes even with punctuation; indeed, wrote that it was Doctor Hardin who “once again shared an unrealistic idea,” which matched up with his description of the doctor in the earlier pages.

Questions began to arise within Lu Bixing’s mind--a twenty-something-year-old Woolf had known that a free-will AI would eventually go down the wrong path to become an enemy of humanity, so why did he become more senile and foolish as he aged three centuries later?

Was it for power? Did he develop the ambition to control the Union for eternity?

This made no logical sense. An AI could only copy his personality and was not a house for the ‘soul’ of human Woolf. Even if this Super AI managed to control the entirety of humanity, what did it have anything to do with his human creator? Woolf’s corpse had long been annihilated into stardust along with the Parliament building on Wolto.

Then...was it because he finally embraced cursing humanity due to his hatred for being enslaved to the Union all his life?

Even if he was simply anti-humanity and wanted to turn this world into a deathly machine empire, why did he set the AI to prioritize annihilating biochip humans first? For super AIs of a machine empire, all carbon lifeforms were nothing but slaves or pets. Regardless if you were a normal human, biochip human, or even a cat or dog--were any of them any different in the eyes of these cold machines?

Suddenly, the pilot on the mech reminded him: “Minister Lu, General Nagus would like to speak with you in private.”

Lu Bixing’s mind was pulled back to reality and he answered: “Sure.”

Nagus’ 3D projection appeared before him. Now that the wormhole restabilized, the signal didn’t seem as choppy as before. As long as he didn’t reach out and touch it, the projection of the old general looked almost real, as if the two were sitting facing each other for a chat.

“Commander Lin Ge’er’s notebook?” Nagus asked, “Isn’t that one of the things Woolf gave you back then?”

Lu Bixing made a small sound in acknowledgement and said: “Looks like the late commander was a very influential figure in Woolf’s life.”

“Oh the rumors,” Nagus said openly, “I’ve heard about them. They said that back when General Lin Wei was born, some gossipers questioned if the general’s genes were really from the late commander and his wife, which meant….uh, yeah, you know.”

Lu Bixing: “That would never happen.”

Nagus: “What?”

“I don’t think Woolf would do something like that; he may be sly and calculating, sometimes even low-handed in his methods, but I don’t think he’s someone with low morals that would do something like that,” Lu Bixing said. “Besides, if General Lin Wei carried his genes, Jingheng and his sister would also be his offspring. Why didn’t he personally adopt them then, if that’s the case?”

Nagus asked: “Why?”

“Perhaps it’s grief.” Lu Bixing pondered for a bit and then said, “Commander Lin Ge’er was the beautiful memory of his youth, like the moonlight shining above him. Woolf used the genes of the couple to breed and raise a General Lin Wei--the given name ‘Wei’ was something that the old commander and his partner had decided on while they were still alive--it was written in the notebook. It was a unisex character that could be used regardless of the gender of the child. I’d like to think that Woolf used this name knowing that Commander Lin didn’t belong to him. If General Lin Wei were to live peacefully for the rest of his life, perhaps he would have enjoyed an end without regrets. Perhaps Woolf’s grief came from the fact that the Union government was being led astray further and further from their ideals by the Eden Committee, which led to the treachery of Doctor Hardin and the death of his adopted son whom he raised and loved for decades. Jingheng’s eyes looked too much like his mother Laura Gordon, so I could understand if he felt repulsed by those eyes.”

Nagus let out a sigh: “I remember that Woolf was actually ready to retire back then. At that time, Commander...your father and his friend were two unmatched heroes of their generation. One was a student that Woolf taught personally, another was the son he raised, and some boring gossipers used to call them the Twin Fortress of Wolto. General Lin Wei was rather cold and didn’t like to engage in social interactions nor stay under the spotlight. Our Commander was the complete opposite, though the two had quite a good relationship with each other in private and complemented each other in personality. Woolf ended up choosing our boss and began delegating a lot more work to his hands. To be honest, Commander Lu had the capacity to shoulder the burden of the new Chief Commander, the only thing missing was an official transfer of power, but alas…”

The Eden Committee decided to strike at the time for their political gains. Lin Wei faced an end filled with nothing but regrets, Lu Xin shouldered the false slander of a traitor, and the galactic pirates were starting to quiet down. It almost seemed as if nobody could stand in the way of the Committee anymore as the great unification of the Interstellar Union housed all of humanity under their umbrella. The seemingly useless and weakened Military Council was pushed to the corners of the Union Parliament while their power was virtually stripped away from them; with no choice, the half-retired old Chief was forced to be put back on the throne. But it was all too late; Eden was ubiquitous throughout the galaxies, and even as the founder of the Union, this old man no longer had the power to even save a little girl that had been held hostage by the Committee.

“I have a strange feeling, uncle Nagus,” Lu Bixing said.

“What is it?”

Lu Bixing shook his head: “I can’t really explain it right now.”

If there was no AI Woolf, then the Union Troops and Central Militia would likely have been already kicked off the stage by Lin Jingshu.

They had to admit that if it wasn’t for Woolf’s “necromancy” deus ex machina at that time, the Human Alliance would likely be forced to kneel before their future queen.

Looking back now, Woolf had completely isolated the First Galaxy like he was given a cheat code in this game. Lin Jingshu’s only choice to survive the endless pursuit of the AI was to flee to the Eighth Galaxy. At that point, no matter what the Eighth Galaxy decided to do, they would not be able to escape the fate of being pulled into this mess. Vaccuocerebrals also coincidentally became the antithesis of biochip humans, and the sandwiching of forces trapped Lin Jingshu in the Heart of the Rose, ensuring that it became her gravesite.

After dealing with the biochip humans, the AIs could have chosen to shake hands with mankind and create a peaceful facade for the next few decades. As the Central Militia sailed back to other galaxies in the Union to clean up the unrest and rebuild the transfer portals, the AIs could have taken the opportunity as mankind relaxed to build more hardware in secret to plant seeds of their ambitions.

But they instead chose a time like this to run into a programming bug and once again raised the flags of war.

Lu Bixing’s gaze fell back onto the notebook at the line that read: “even if its script was coded entirely in love.”

“We’re physically within great danger, like walking on a blade,” Lu Bixing said. “But if we think about it in depth, waging wars is the most disadvantageous thing for AIs to do right now--which is also our only chance to win.”

Nagus: “Are you saying that machine wants to be a savior of the world? Then it should’ve just self-destructed after it beat up the Freedom Corps, what’s the point of stirring shit up again now!?”

“They won’t self-destruct, but how do they define ‘defeated the Freedom Corps’? Killing the boss? Then it would have disappeared the first time Lin Jingshu faked her death before us.” Lu Bixing shook his head. “Besides, a digital drug like opium will never be able to completely remove itself from human society within a few centuries once it’s introduced. Even assuming that the AIs will self-destruct after the drug is completely eradicated, how do you think the relationship between mankind and AIs will develop over these few hundreds years? An unlimited framework AI has self-repairing programs coded into their system; do you really think that a small self-destruction code will be a problem hundreds of years into the future?”

Nagus’ heart sank deeper with every word spoken.

“A digital drug that can never be fully eradicated even hundreds of years into the future,” he mumbled. “Can my Third Galaxy even wait until my return?”

Meanwhile, the Third Galaxy.

A ghostship-like broken mech carefully avoided all routes that could potentially put them on the radar of the biochip humans. A handful of exhausted soldiers took turns resting up in the corner; all of the uniforms on them were different, signifying the different places they came from. Some of them came from the Security Department on land while others were soldiers from the Central Militia left behind to guard the galaxy.

This broken puzzle of a team floated aimlessly in space with an important mission on their shoulders--they must escort a biotechnical scientist to a safe refuge.

To combat the biochip humans, the rebelling forces built a temporary lab for biochip research within a secret location in the Third Galaxy. They managed to gather a few dozen biotechnical experts into the base, and just as their research was about to grasp a direction, the location of the lab was exposed. Two weeks ago, the lab had been completely annihilated by the biochip humans; all research was lost.

Only one young scientist had managed to escape that catastrophe and was saved by the rebellion troops that had given their lives to protect them. Now, the scientist was resting inside the medical capsule to withstand the long and harsh interstellar journey.

The medical capsule exposed a pale but youthful face of the young woman inside. Even in a hibernation state, the cloud of fear and anxiety still loomed over her features. The soldier going off shift gave the piloting permission to his comrade and walked over to her, then turned up the temperature inside the medical capsule.

“What are you doing?” the comrade asked.

“I hope this warms her up a little, I feel like she’s having nightmares,” the exhausted soldier whispered through his lips. “How much of the lost data can she recover?”

The comrade also fell silent, then gave the soldier a nutrient syringe and said, “I heard that all of the temporary labs were all annihilated by those biochip humans.”

“This means that they’re scared,” the soldier said. “They can only rely on the chip inside their body to fight; they don’t have an organization, no laws, and without a chip it’s likely they can’t even pilot a mech properly. These people are nothing compared to us; as long as we have the technology to fight their chips, we’ll be the winners in the end.”

“But how much longer do we have to wait until ‘the end’?” the comrade asked, clearly burnt out. “Perhaps ‘the end’ is when we’re all dead...it’s not just us, I’ve heard that it’s also getting worse around the other galaxies. The rebellion troops lost over 80% of their temporary bases already, and some of our allies from the Fourth Galaxy fled over here two days ago in hopes of finding refuge. It sounded like the Fourth Galaxy had completely fallen already. The ally that contacts me quite regularly from the Second Galaxy also hasn’t contacted me in over two weeks, I don’t even know if he’s still alive or not….did you know? Before I lost contact with him, I heard something from him.”

“What is it?”

“All of the transfer portals leading out of the First Galaxy have been destroyed. So even if we received backup, it will not come for at least six more years. They won’t be coming for us.”

Inside the dark void of the universe, the only two young soldiers that were still somewhat awake swallowed this pill of despair and found themselves speechless.

Momentarily after, the soldier turned his head to the young woman inside the medical capsule as if he was desperately searching for any rays of hope for a dose of courage: “Don’t think about this, we’re about to…”

Before he could finish, a siren rang out inside the broken mech.

“Watch out!”

Every resting soul inside the mech woke up instantly.

“Turn back, make an emergency warp!”

“Wha-....”

“Hurry! Our base has been attacked!”

There were 96 total bases for the rebel forces in the Third Galaxy. This was the 87th base to be blown up.

The whole world was like a ship that had crashed into a giant iceberg on the ocean, the storm still attacking the damaged cruise ship, slowly consuming it into darkness.

## Ch 191 - Would Rather Mistakenly Kill the Innocent Than Let the Evil Run Free

The New Sidereal Era went through its darkest seven days.

“Ancients have said that it also took God seven days to create the world; even today, Woltorian standard time still calculates seven days as one week.” Lu Bixing suddenly said to his mech pilot.

The pilot from the Silver Ten was taken by surprise, and quickly turned to compliment him, “So it’s a good sign that we chose to commence the operation right now?”

“It’s just a coincidence.” Lu Bixing laughed and said, “The Garden of Eden was also a name of blessing too--here, give me piloting access.”

The pilot was puzzled and wondered since when their Prime Minister had also caught the Marshal’s “mental networks must always be in my own hands” disease. As he hesitated and gave the Prime Minister access, he worried his superior wasn’t pleased with his piloting skills. He couldn’t help but mumble beneath his breath, “Sir, my mech piloting skills are actually still passable in the navy.”

“Of course an elite like you from the Silver Ten will be better than me, but the first batch of AI mechs that arrive will certainly attempt to trap us by launching a direct attack to our mental networks. I have a cheat so I can withstand a little longer,” Lu Bixing explained. “I’ll hand it over to you when I can’t hold on anymore.”

At the same time, the Silver Fourth Squadron heading to the furthest military zone had already discreetly arrived in place. Anakin carefully placed the highly-sensitive energy detectors around and waited quietly for the promised time.

The AI mechs patrolled the galaxy following the routes of the terminals, keeping an eye out for enemies that had sailed into the First Galaxy.

The Heart of the Rose was almost concerningly silent; the wormhole terminal separated a few days of delay between the First and Eighth Galaxies. Nobody knew what was happening on the other side of the terminal.

Lu Bixing connected to the mental network and recalled the first time he had successfully activated a mech, the joy and excitement he felt when he rose above the atmosphere of planet Cayley.

The world was kind to him back then; he had a lot of unreliable and strange friends, a boundless dream, and an old man behind him. That old Persian cat was clearly keeping an anxious eye on him, but would always pretend to look away--as if he wasn’t already caught worrying over his son.

He had thought he was about to unveil a corner of the starry sky.

He had wanted to prop up a whole night sky of stars above the broken Eighth Galaxy, planting some seeds of hope in the hearts of the same restless young souls who yearned for a better future like he did. He wanted to close up the school during every long vacation between academic semesters to follow the celestial bodies and travel through the eight galaxies. If he ran out of money, he would go design mechs on the side to earn some extra income to fund his endless adventures around the cosmos, freely enjoying his 300 years worth of life. Love would come and go in his life without strings attached; he wouldn’t have to devote such heavy love as he held for Lin Jingheng and create a myriad of emotional suffering. When he grew old, he would just go home to write an autobiography of his life, collecting all the useless little inventions he made throughout the years into a book to publish.

How beautiful would such a life be.

He originally planned on accomplishing his dream by 40 and would live the life of his dreams; yet he didn’t expect that even up til now, he hadn’t managed to realize that dream lifestyle.

*I built so many schools back then, but nobody would let me be the principal.* All of Lu Bixing’s senses expanded with the mental network as he thought, *I have the power to pilot a mech to sail around wherever I want, but I’ve only ever left the Eighth Galaxy a handful of times. And every time I left, I was either faced with some kidnapping or had to go out in battle.*

“Prime Minister, we’re starting the countdown. The mech is preheating; engine system check complete, coordinates confirmed. All passengers: remain in position and prepare for emergency warping---”

“Ten, nine, eight….”

“I sure am pretty mediocre,” Lu Bixing muttered self-mockingly, “as a Prime Minister of a galaxy.”

The Union mech hiding near a First Galaxy Communication Station opened fire first and cleanly cut off the network.

“Three, two, one---”

The end of the countdown was buried in the sounds of the mech engine; the commanding ship and its escort mechs exposed themselves at the transfer portal in the First Galaxy. A massive wave of abnormal energy woke the phantoms within the First Galaxy as malicious eyes locked in on the intruders. The arrest order traveled like a raging tide across the transfer portals all around the galaxy to the patrolling mechs.

Before Lu Bixing’s crew could settle in, another wave of abnormal energy arrived--the closest fleet of AI mechs were making their way over at this moment.

An emergency warp experience was extremely uncomfortable; it was equivalent to traveling in space outside of a mech for a whole day in one’s naked body. The entire crew inside the mech was bubbled in by the jelly-like protection airbags and needed a few moments to catch their breaths after the warp.

Of course, AIs didn’t need that buffer time in between emergency warping. They sailed out of the transfer portals at their fastest speed without taking a second of rest; they sent out a wave of mental network attacks to knock down the crew while the pilots were still pulling themselves back into shape.

Lu Bixing took this neural attack wave with his biochip-powered mental strength while all mechs immediately switched over to a backup pilot.

At the same time, all sixteen teams that had dispersed to their separate military zones began recording all changes in energies from the fortresses there. This was the one good thing about AIs; if the forces stationed in those military zones had been human soldiers, it would be impossible to avoid inaccuracies and small inconsistencies in action--even if they were all professionals trained to be precise. The different speed of activation would also need to be accounted for on top of other variables, making it impossible to accurately calculate the time difference.

Only when facing AIs, where Woolf’s main processor acted as the ‘brain,’ could they achieve such a feat; the military fortresses around the galaxy were like its organs that made it possible for humans to reverse-engineer the location of the main body.

Lu Bixing’s commanding ship fired six rounds of missiles simultaneously, barely managing to stop the forces chasing after him. The closest two missiles clashed with nearby the commanding ship, massive amounts of broken metal burst away from the mech bodies and crashed violently onto the shields. The commanding ship quickly took this opportunity to escape.

Yet an army of AI mechs locked in on their ship through their warping network as fleets sailed out in batches through the transfer portals, shaking up the entire First Galaxy.

“Minister Lu, the enemy released warping disruption signals!”

“All nearby transfer portals have blocked our communication, we’ve been surrounded…”

“Watch out!”

Missiles and mental network attacks fired out at the same time. Even for biochip humans, human-mech sync rates could not reach 100%. During the brief shake up of the mental network, the missile shot past the commanding ship from a dangerously close distance, almost hitting the weaponry as the sirens inside the mech screamed in horror.

It had barely been a hot second since Lu Bixing’s bluff about not making a heroic sacrifice was spoken; the young man now felt a layer of cold sweat down his back.

The sixteen teams of human fleets would be communicating with each other through heavy layers of protected communication channels as they rushed to lock down the military zone where the main body was located. Their enemies would certainly use this opportunity to attempt to break through their communication locks; once the enemy managed to hack into the channel through the main processor and discovered the goal of the human fleets, it would immediately move itself from its position. So while keeping the channels locked was important, the key component of this operation was to allow the closest fleet to the main processor to immediately clean out all transfer portals in the area and trap the AI in its place.

To ensure a swift operation, every team had to be well-equipped with both mechs and soldiers. Therefore, when arranging the teams, Lu Bixing had left only a few small escorting mechs on his end, who were not enough to serve as a fully-occupied party when the doors opened.

Lu Bixing’s quick wits saved him in this desperate situation: “Send out a communication request!”

They only needed to hold the enemy down for a little more than ten minutes to lock onto the location of the main AI body. Now that he couldn’t run nor fight back, his only choice was to buy some time. “I want to speak with Chief Woolf.”

Within two sentences, an overlaid wave of high-energy particle cannons powerful enough to melt a mech shield fired.

The shields were swallowed up like microscopic organisms in the mouth of a whale. Heavy mechs were enormous and were like exposed targets walking right into space radiation zones without shields. Even a small piece of mech remnant in space could cause significant damage, let alone a missile.

Yet the temperature outside the mech body continued to rise rapidly; the shield screeched in one last desperate attempt to stay intact while continuously sending in damage reports, only to be annihilated into dust while the escorts watched in dismay--the commanding ship soon became a shellless turtle.

“Minister Lu!”

The next moment, the violent wave of fire from the AIs finally stopped as the opposing end accepted the communication request.

The escorts around Lu Bixing cooperated seamlessly as they took this brief opportunity to quickly sail towards the heavy mech’s landing dock.

Lu Bixing found a different place to sit down. The cold sweat on his back was a strange sensation for him, but he had no choice but to put on an angry and frustrated expression as he threw out a question to Woolf, “I thought your job was to defend against the Freedom Corps and protect the peace of the galaxies, and didn’t you say you were going into sleep mode? Then what are you doing right now--sleepwalking across space?”

Woolf’s voice rang out: “Annihilating biochip humans is my duty.”

“Who the fuck are you accusing of being a biochip human!?” Lu Bixing glanced quickly at the time, feeling as if that second hand was ticking as slowly as a turtle. A whole minute right now felt like a whole eternity as he said, “Now that you know about the Nuwa Project, can’t you tell that the chip I have inside me is different from that opium madness from the Freedom Crops?”

“I know,” Woolf responded without any hint of emotion. “The chip inside you has been modified to something closer to that of an accelerator for biological evolution. According to Doctor Laura Gordon’s research data, a body successfully modified by the Rainbow Virus would meet the technical requirements for evolution. Therefore, injecting a chip into such a body would trigger the autoevolution of the biological host--the key component of success was the portion of using the Nuwa Project to produce a suitable host body, not the biochip itself. The Freedom Corps gave up on the path of biological evolution in their research. Lin Jingshu took Doctor Gordon’s biochip and modified it to become harmful to humans, making it create hallucinations among people. The resulting product was then spread widely throughout the masses, to which the public responded by building a strict and rigid social hierarchy based on these chips.”

Lu Bixing: “Aren’t you so knowledgeable on this subject.”

Woolf continued to make irrational comments: “But you’re all still biochip humans that must be annihilated.”

Lu Bixing choked on anger at this illogical conclusion: “Hey old Chief, are you sure you didn’t catch a virus?”

“Your nature is all the same,” Woolf ignored him and continued to explain himself. “The Freedom Corps’ biochip empire wanted to annihilate all of humanity and foundationally reconstruct human society at its roots. Your evolutionary path instead allowed a portion of existing humans to become superhumans, and the birth of these new superhumans will create new class struggles and conflict. This will all inevitably lead to the fracturing of society and war; according to our estimation, it would be highly likely for natural humans to face complete extinction at that point. Both biochips will eventually lead to the same result; there is no difference, therefore both must be destroyed.”

Lu Bixing was taken aback for a moment; he didn’t expect this AI to be so thorough in its analysis and not simply lump all biochip humans into the same category. He almost instinctively tried to explain, “I’ve considered this problem already, many years ago and I’ve even destroyed all research data regarding it...if I didn’t, the Eighth Galaxy would have already built its own superhuman military fleet by now, wouldn’t it?”

It seemed as if the AI found some truth in this statement and fell into silence.

Lu Bixing quickly followed up with the same energy: “Biochips can be cloned and reproduced as much as we want, but the artificial body modification of the Nuwa Project is the real key. With our technologies now, bodily modifications have an extremely high rate of failure that could cost lives; luck plays an important role in this as well. The AUS had attempted to relaunch their Rainbow Project numerous times to no avail, and the success cases were significantly low. I had virtually no way of leading a proper lifestyle before I was 15, and to be honest, I don’t even know how I managed to survive and live to this day. Tell me, which galaxy would possibly legalize and allow this astronomically dangerous mass human body experiment to go into action? It doesn’t even maintain a suitable level of promotion within any community. Remember how that tyrant King Cayley died back then? The Eighth Galaxy still remembers, so how could I even dare to make the same mistake? At the end of the day, I’m really just another test subject myself.”

Woolf said: “Indeed.”

The crew let out a small sigh of relief.

Lu Bixing took a look at the clock again and they were still only halfway to their scheduled time. He had always been someone who could strike up a conversation with anyone at any time without trouble. It was the first time he had to hold such a heavy topic in conversation: “I’ve never hurt anyone. Even if I had once been enchanted by the demons inside me to illegally obtain a sample of the Rainbow Virus, I’ve already destroyed it all. But you, Chief Woolf, you refused to follow up on all these other biochip humans still roaming outside of the First Galaxy. You aren’t sending out help anywhere else and instead directed all of your energy to fight against the Alliance troops stationed in the Heart of the Rose. On top of that, you even tried to get your hands on the freshly-settled Eighth Galaxy! Now tell me who’s the one causing trouble here between the two of us?”

The AI once again fell into silence.

“If you want to completely destroy all biochips,” Lu Bixing took in a breath of air and continued, “very well. I’ll go lay in an ecopod right now and sail out of the mech. You can choose to do whatever you want with me, only if you promise to call back all dispatched troops and go immediately to sleep.”

The soldier beside Lu Bixing’s expression darkened, “Minister, you…”

Lu Bixing lifted a hand to interrupt him and turned back to Woolf: “Even if your mechs have no pilots and are controlled by AIs, they are all still space-grade weapons built by the military. Crisis still plagues the universe outside of the First Galaxy, so why are you wasting your resources on me? I only have a few soldiers around me, I’ve virtually come on my own to the First Galaxy. We’re not here to cause trouble; I’m willing to make a sacrifice for the peace we worked so hard to attain. Chief Woolf, if we both share the same goal, how about we stop this senseless fighting between us?”

“You have a point,” Super AI Woolf responded slowly.

Lu Bixing lowered his voice and ordered his soldier: “Prepare an ecopod for me.”

He would go inside the ecopod, fly out into space, and wait until the AIs captured him---assuming they would capture him and not simply blow him up into stardust--that should be enough to last until they located the AI’s main body.

Once the main processor was destroyed, these looming mechs around them would simply be decorations; Lu Bixing’s heart regained a bit of confidence.

Yet at that moment, the AI Woolf suddenly said: “But I can’t determine whether or not you really destroyed all Nuwa Project data. Until we fully overtake the Eighth Galaxy, I also cannot determine if you have kept a secret research lab or not. The wormhole terminals are easy to disrupt but difficult to keep stable, so it would be hard for me to enter the Eighth Galaxy if this opportunity is missed---”

Lu Bixing understood the unspoken words, his face growing pale within a matter of seconds.

“So before entering the wormhole zone, I already notified Longyuan and the fellow supermechs that they shall not return until they take down the Eighth Galaxy,” the AI that fully replicated Woolf’s personality said coldly. “As for you, I would rather mistakenly kill the innocent than let the evil run free.”

As the last syllable dropped, countless warmed-up cannons fired missiles towards Lu Bixing’s commanding ship while everyone aboard was focused on the conversation!

The artificial digital void in the Eighth Galaxy had been completely destroyed. The AI fleets that had been fighting as the underdogs rose madly in a feral uprising, firing attack after attack at the Human Alliance’s last defense line without rest.

Until now, it had been days of restless and intense fighting. Relaxants were starting to lose their initial effectiveness as everyone’s bloodshot eyes stared at the battlefield.

For days, the Galactic Forces had been pushing backwards; they were getting dangerously close to the active human areas of the Eighth Galaxy.

“Marshal.” Inside the Milky Way City Command Post, Huang Jingshu sent out her message to the top commander, “The entire Eighth Galaxy’s anti-missile systems are being temporarily set up right now.”

Lin Jingheng’s voice was virtually gone; he could no longer afford to lose more of his already-hoarse voice and simply gave her a glance through the communication screen.

Huang Jingshu immediately understood what he meant--*how long do they need?*

“Twelve hours,” Huang Jingshu said. “Installation is completed on all major planets so far, and currently all major public terminals within the galaxy have been closed off. The equipment on the terminals is in its final adjustment phase, we only need twelve more hours to finish!”

Lin Jingheng waved his hand to hang up the call and called out with his sore throat: “All fleets, do not back up anymore for the next twelve hours. If you die, you better die as a roadblock at your post!”

In the First Galaxy--

The mech dock on Lu Bixing’s command ship opened up and a dozen or so small mechs sailed out into space. Just as they left the heavy mech, the commanding ship was engulfed in the explosions from the missiles.

Lu Bixing felt like his heart forgot how to beat. “Just how much longer!?”

“Minister,” a soldier from the Silver Ten beside him said, “the Eighth Galaxy has Marshal Lin in command, what could possibly happen even if the Great Swords all unite?”

Lu Bixing truly wanted to pretend to believe in him and give him a reassuring smile, but he could no longer put a grin on his face.

Many years ago, he also thought Lin Jingheng was invincible. Even the mention of that name could give him a sense of security as if there was no battlefield in the universe that this man couldn’t hold onto, no enemies that he couldn’t defeat.

Yet this blind trust had already vanished along with those sixteen years of unparalleled anguish for the loss of his love.

“Prime Minister, watch out!”

While Lu Bixing’s mind was off the battlefield, a missile almost crashed into them. The small mech managed to dodge it at the last minute, but soon after, the AI’s mental network attack swirled in like a tornado. This brief hiccup was then met with a complete barricade of the road ahead by countless AI mechs.

Lu Bixing could hear his own heart thump as if it was about to explode from his chest.

“Minister Lu, we locked in successfully!”

Lu Bixing’s head shot up---perhaps it was fate that the Alliance fleets managed to lock down on the area where the main body was located at right at this tidal-changing moment, but even more fateful was that the location was right in the military zone closest to him right now!

Yet before he could respond, his mech was also locked onto by an enemy missile.

There was nowhere he could escape anymore as he was now targeted within this massive and dense barricade.

## Ch 192 - We Are All Frontline Soldiers

Time seemed to have stopped.

This wasn’t the first time Lu Bixing had seen blood. During the internal warfare of the Eighth Galaxy, Turan had pulled him back from the brink of death numerous times, but this was the first time he had this particular experience--instead of desperately trying to escape death and survive, his last moment was spent with his mind wandering out into space.

He suddenly thought: *Did Jingheng receive that pair of rings he ordered?*

There weren't many emotions attached to this thought because he had no time to feel regretful nor fearful. That last thought flashed by like a harmless gust of wind that left no impact on him.

At that moment, an interstellar coordinate point crashed into his vision from the internal communication channel. Lu Bixing recognized upon first glance that it was the coordinate of a transfer portal. He subconsciously carried out the emergency warp procedure towards that coordinate like a dying animal’s last breath of air.

The entire escorting team mirrored his actions simultaneously--

The mech violently fired up its engine to connect to the transfer portal with the last bit of its power. *Portal activation successful.* The protection airbags shot out from inside the mech.

The emergency warp was successful!

During those fleeting moments when Lu Bixing’s mind wandered, the warping disruption the AIs had used to trap the team was suddenly nullified. Lu Bixing’s little fleet of mechs vanished on the spot before their enemies; the missiles that had already left their cannons suddenly lost their targets and crashed into each other after being blown off-course, blasted by the massive energy from the emergency warp.

The visual of a few dozen missiles colliding in space was quite a scene; even the frontmost rows of AI mechs were impacted by the aftershock of the explosions. Unable to determine whether or not their target had been shot down, the chase was forcefully halted for a few seconds.

During these few seconds of delay, Lu Bixing’s mech was turned upside-down by the emergency warp. The young man struggled to maintain balance within the protection airbag while the mental network trembled violently. Yet even during a time like this his mind was crystal clear as he sent out an order immediately, “Blow up the transfer portal!”

His escorts might be small in numbers, but they were all elites from the Silver Ten. With their astounding teamwork, the escorts quickly backed up simultaneously and began firing rapidly at the transfer portal they’d just arrived through.

The poor transfer portal was met with sudden destruction after greeting these uninvited guests, creating a violent whirlpool within space, and taking a few pursuing AI mechs to the grave.

As a communication request was accepted into their channel, Lu Bixing finally let out a long breath of air. He responded, exhausted, “Good timing, Mister Hope, thanks.”

Warping disruption technology was a specialty of the AUS, the one Woolf used was merely a second-rate copy.

It wasn’t hard to figure out who was able to break through the copy disruption.

As expected, Harris’ projection appeared before the young man the next instant. The older man gave a bitter smile and said: “We meet again, Professor Lu. To be quite honest, I really didn’t want to see you again so soon.”

At this time, multiple other communication requests arrived. Lu Bixing’s escorts decided to build a temporary internal channel for these newcomers.

“Minister Lu.”

“Prime Minister.”

“Goodness, how are there only this many of you guys?”

A handful of new projections appeared: a bandaged-up Thomas, a pale-faced Poisson, a portion of the Third Squadron, and a few others from the vanguard fleets that Lu Bixing was familiar with…

“We’ll explain to you later.” Poisson gave him a conflicted look and said, “There are other transfer portals around the area that are listed on the maps. The enemies will catch up soon even if we blow up this portal. Quick, we better get going; the Third Squadron will lead the way!”

Lu Bixing tapped the shoulder of an escorting soldier beside him and said, “Here, take the piloting permissions.”

He instantly disconnected from the mech’s mental network and handed the pilot’s seat to the soldier. Then, he turned to everyone on the team and said, “Head over to the Section Nine military zone.”

All of this happened within a blink of an eye, a matter of seconds. Not until those last words were said did Lu Bixing’s natural reaction finally run its full course and settle. That earlier thought, then fleeting and unharmful, suddenly came back and jabbed at his unprotected heart, the cold sweat on his body freezing into ice.

If he had died under those missiles earlier, would Lin Jingheng wait for him in the Eighth Galaxy forever?

He had joked before departing that with their technology now, passing through the wormhole only took an average five to eight days, that only Lin Jingheng would ever run into astronomically impossible situations….so would that man think his bad luck had acted up again if Lu Bixing didn’t come back, assuming that the young Prime Minister was simply lost within the realms of timespace?

That year at the border between the Seventh and Eighth Galaxies, an unexpected ambush blew up Lin Jingheng’s mech. Had the almighty commander also felt the same way back then?

And yet all of these questions of waiting were built on the assumption that he was safe in the Eighth Galaxy.

Would the galactic forces be able to stop those damned AI fleets?

What if….

Lu Bixing snapped himself out of this dangerous thought, knowing that he might go mad the more he pondered and forcefully stopped his mind from finishing that “what if”. He then openly broke safety regulations on the mech by pulling out a cigarette from his pocket and lit it--,only to discover his whole body was trembling and unable to hold the cigarette.

He pressed a hand on the wall and said: “Give me a relaxant…not this one, number six.”

When he reunited with Lin Jingheng, his soul had been already shattered and dead. With the help of a number six, he had been able to pull his heavy flesh up and bring the man home without any troubles.

Now, when fear consumed his whole body, he once again had to rely on a number six to glue the shattered pieces of his soul together to search for that last ray of hope.

Hope had never been to the new Eighth Galaxy and didn’t understand the numbering system of their relaxants. Puzzled, he asked: “Oh, are you hurt?”

“No, I just scared myself.” The medical equipment injected the liquid into his body as Lu Bixing gave the old man a tired but honest smile, then mumbled, “I’m scared of dying.”

In the Eighth Galaxy.

The Prime Minister had made an announcement telling the public to not listen or pay too much attention to the current news, but it was virtually impossible for anyone to tear their attention from the frontlines of the battlefield.

Milky Way City made a public announcement that Prime Minister Lu Bixing had already left for the First Galaxy and was not present, but the AIs didn’t seem like they planned on letting the Eighth Galaxy off the hook.

The starry sky of the Eighth Galaxy was quiet. Sounds of gunshots and missiles were blocked off right outside the gate to civilization; all non-galactic grade military bodies, including on-land security, were all now on standby.

Everyone who was still alive in this turbulent galaxy had lived through the trials of war; they all looked up at the skiy, waiting silently for the drop of a missile onto their homeland.

All space terminals in the galaxy were under heavy guard; non-military galactic vehicles were temporarily banned from flying out of the atmosphere. Tourists and workers on major satellites were evacuated down to land. Transfer portals and long-distance communication networks were temporarily limited to emergency usage only; people calling their families and friends outside of the Eighth Galaxy were forced to deal with several hours of delay.

The vanguard fleets that fought at the frontlines against the AIs were wiped off their mental networks by the enemy, causing a short pause in their movements. Of course, the AIs seized this opportunity and fired a few dozen rounds of missiles during the few seconds it took for pilots to reconnect.

At that moment, one of the heavy mechs from the Eighth Galaxy Galactic Forces let out countless small mechs from its body. Like a manual anti-missile system, each small mech precisely countered the missiles without missing an inch--it was almost like they knew exactly which direction the missiles would fly from.

Turan, a hair’s breadth away from blowing into stardust earlier, wiped some cold sweat from her forehead and gave a thumbs up. “Nice, Zhanlu! A walking disaster like me’s gotta depend on you to live ‘til 1000 years old!”

Zhanlu had completely turned himself into a simulator at this point. Lin Jingheng had ordered him to roleplay as an AI from the side of the Great Swords, analyzing the battle and making precise predictions for deal with the incoming enemies.

This was still the homeground of the Eighth Galaxy forces, regardless of how powerful the enemies were. There were billions of lives behind their backs; these soldiers could not give another inch. But as long as they held their ground, they would always hold the upper hand in terms of supplies and arms, eliminating the possibility of running out of ammo or relaxants in the midst of battle. While holding the final line of defense with their lives, the forces were also deliberately working to deplete the enemy’s resources.

Bayer complained into the channel, “I was the one that saved you just now!”

Turan gave a sarcastic “hah” and said, “Oh you think you’re so cool now? If I die you’ll be the next bait. Besides, my life’s already rewarding enough if I die here, you can’t compare with me, mister ‘my fictional girlfriend only exists in my personal device’ Tenth Squadron Captain.”

Lee let out a sigh. “Bayer, don’t you think having both the label of a galactic assassination team leader and a hopeless nerd really is kind of embarrassing?”

Captain Liu made a dramatic and sarcastic gasp as he remarked, “Captain Bayer, I didn’t know you were this kind of person! I always thought you were like me, a loyal and pious man who follows our Marshal’s path of abstinence!”

“Oh my goodness, I can’t handle this anymore. Hey invisible man, stop finding all the opportunities you can to shove in your opinion just because Kin isn’t around.” Turan was on the verge of breakdown, asking, “Is it some sort of law that we must have an ass-kisser among us at all times?

Bayer: “......”

These shitheads!

Zhanlu: “Actually, master here isn’t…”

Lin Jingheng: “Shut. Up.”

There was a brief awkward silence within the communication channel until the Captains of the Silver Ten all gave a small ‘oh’ of understanding or confusion, as if they all found the key to a forbidden door at the same time.

“By the way Marshal,” Turan said, “there’s actually a question I’ve always wanted to ask…”

“Watch out, everyone,” Zhanlu suddenly interrupted her and shared a map, pinning all possible directions of attack from the enemy. “The enemy is narrowing their formation. It may be a sign that they’re running out of ammo and are gathering up for one last round of attacks.”

Just as he finished, the AI fleet charged forward and grew more violent than before. Supermechs Chengying and Chunjun shot out from the fleet towards the weakest spot of the Galactic Forces formation. Both supermechs opened up their docks as a flood of small mechs sailed out like a swarm of flies.

Turan: “The cornered beast is finally making a desperate move?”

Heavy layers of mental networks pressed down on the Galactic Forces; the exhausted pilots didn’t have time to switch with their backups and took the hit directly. At the same time, fifteen mechs lost their mental network access as the AIs took control, forcing these captive mechs to turn their cannons toward their comrades.

The Ninth Squadron’s high dexterity allowed them to sail over to save their comrades, but by the time the alarms on Turan’s mech rang out, she was already too close within firing range.

She couldn’t escape and didn’t escape; Turan locked on and fired at the supermech’s armory at the very last second.

Bam--

Supermech Chengying’s armory blew up at that moment. The AI managed to detach the armory right before the explosion, but the compact swarm of AI mechs it had just sent out was still too close to its main body--it was too late!

The supermech’s body completely broke down from the center; the explosion ruptured outward and caught a round of small AI mechs within the massive fire.

The tail of Turan’s mech was hit by a missile, and less than five seconds later the entire ship also exploded.

Bayer, who was the closest to her, felt something in his head snap as he called out, “Elizabeth!”

During the chaos, Zhanlu expanded his mental network from the commanding ship and took control of the fifteen mechs that had been captured earlier. He shot out a long-distance shield through the network to cover the fifteen mechs and quickly pushed back the pursuing AI mechs behind them.

NSE 260, space pirates invaded Union territory and Commander Lin Jingheng of the Silver Fortress was sent out to fend off the enemies. In that famous battle, he hacked into fifteen enemy mechs simultaneously and took control of all piloting access. This legendary feat was still passed on even years after the man had left the Union.

And now, he recreated the miracle.

Within the endless fire and debris of the battlefield, one of the fifteen mechs tossed out a capturing net and precisely caught a piece of junk...as well as an ecopod.

Turan choked on her own breath inside the ecopod and laid sideways inside the capturing net. She said in between her heavy panting, “I’m not even done with my question...ahem, listen, I’ll never rest in peace if I don’t get to finish--Marshal, question. I know you’re a man that can understand every implied and explicit dirty joke ever made in the world, so how exactly did you manage to maintain that pure and aloof look that makes everyone think you’re as clean and untouched as you dress?”

Lin Jingheng’s throat was still aching, so his voice was quiet, almost gentle for once.

Unfortunately, the words that came out of his mouth were anything but gentle: “Don’t know, maybe because I don’t look like a thot?”

Turan cackled wildly in her ecopod, still choking up while the pod was slowly being pulled into the mech.

“Ain’t dead yet,” she said. “Send out a backup mech for me!”

It was less than three hours away from the promised twelve hours that Huang Jingshu had estimated. The entire galaxy’s anti-missile systems were all in the last stage of installation; all robots and engineers hopped on the job to finish the last adjustments. Half a sailing day away, the battlefield was reaching its climax. The Galactic Forces stopped retreating; there were no more fancy strategies nor ambushes as they faced head-to-head against the AI fleets like two ferocious beasts attempting to bite each other’s neck off.

First, Supermech Chengying was knocked down while Turan jumped into an ecopod.

Next, Chunjun was shot down while Lee’s mech alerted him that the backup engine of the mech was destroyed, forcing him to hop on a small mech to escape.

When Longyuan fell into a barricade by the Sixth Squadron, Lin Jingheng’s commanding ship became the target of a massive attack from the AI troops. The Marshal gave up on the heavy mech and sent the commanding ship to the mouth of the enemy.

Everyone from the top commander, squadron captains, and down to the guarding soldiers became frontline soldiers---

The First Galaxy.

Old Bu felt like he won the lottery. The Section Nine military zone, where everyone had been ordered to meet up, was the area he was investigating.

While the AIs were attempting to break into their protected communication network, the old General hadn’t wasted a second of time and ordered the team to clean up all surrounding transfer portals. The entire military zone was now temporarily isolated from the rest of the galaxy.

Even though the First Galaxy was small enough that it was possible to travel around without transfer portals, cutting off the portals meant that the main AI body could not escape after losing connection. Sailing out of the zone would take at least twenty hours without portals. With the amount of energy necessary to run the main AI body, it would be easy to narrow in on the target inside this enclosed space--twenty hours was more than enough time to search.

During this time, the AI would also lose its control over the First Galaxy. The Human Alliance fleets from outside of the zone would be able to quickly surround the area after receiving the news; even if Old Bu accidentally let the AI escape, it would sail right into the heavy barricade of his comrades outside.

“We’re close to capturing it!” Old Bu was shaking in excitement as he called out, his voice cracking, “Search thoroughly!”

Lu Bixing took his battered-up team towards Section Nine.

Poisson commanded his tech team to fend off the pursuing AIs while he explained to Lu Bixing, “Sorry, Minister Lu. We didn’t have enough people at the time and everything was too chaotic, the supplies in the Heart of the Rose....even relaxants were low. A lot of comrades were...we were all knocked off our mental networks by the AI fleets. They were all desperate to invade the Eighth Galaxy at the time and didn’t spare any moment to deal with us, so H….Prophet Harris here managed to save us.”

His expression was a bit awkward as he spoke.

The Silver Ten and AUS had once been mortal enemies. Who knew that these weird cult followers would save their lives?

Harris gave a humble smile and said, “No worries, it’s all for life and nature.”

“Oh? But I still won’t legalize your religion in our galaxy. The AUS has a history with us; also, wasn’t the organization just a peaceful environmental organization when it was first established during the Earth Era?” Lu Bixing was finally able to relax with the help of the relaxant. “But you didn’t sell us out when you first left the Eighth Galaxy, so I believe you.”

Harris laughed, “You’ve always believed in me, the one that had always distrusted me is Commander Lin.”

“It’s alright,” Lu Bixing said, “he only needs to believe in me---anyway, how’s it going?”

“Prime Minister, Section Nine military zone has been successfully isolated.”

“Looks like we’re the first to arrive,” Thomas said. “We can wait until others get here.”

At the same time, all teams from the Human Alliance received the same message about the isolation, the ray of hope was suddenly visible.

“Surround the AI! Prepare to warp to Section Nine.”

The Alliance fleet that had been on edge was finally able to have a weight lifted off their shoulders, yet just as they were about to sail into transfer portals--

“Missiles, watch out!”

“Wh-....”

“Enemy attack!”

The Alliance fleets exposed under the transfer portals were suddenly surrounded by AI mechs.

Lu Bixing’s body tensed up.

“What’s going on?” he heard someone called desperately, “Didn’t we successfully isolate the main AI already!?”

## Ch 193 - Wrong From the Start

But…how was that possible?

If Woolf’s main body wasn’t here in Section Nine, where could it possibly be?

Did it have multiple main bodies?

No, that wasn’t right either. They had already considered the possibility of multiple main processors when they first developed their strategy, and the experiment results confirmed that there was only one main processor.

The truth was that the single-processor theory was the only logical explanation to their current situation. A massive AI processor was not something that could be easily replicated by tossing it into a 3D printer. Even for someone like Chief Woolf, to be able to build a powerful AI of this scale behind the entire world’s back when he was alive was already a sign of the remarkable control the man had over the Union; would someone like this possibly risk mass-producing these AIs? As for the AI itself, it had only been a little over a month since it began operating. The First Galaxy had already been in chaos before the AI awakened, therefore it should not have been able to find time to build a backup body for itself.

So, where had they gone wrong?

“Your logic is correct, the model is correct, and the calculations are also accurate.” As the core of the Third Squadron’s technology team, Thomas quickly scanned all the data the Alliance sent over with a sharp and precise eye.

Lu Bixing shifted his gaze towards him uneasily, his heart sinking as he heard Thomas said “correct”.

“Watch out!”

Before Lu Bixing could ask any questions, the pursuing AI fleets charged toward them from behind. The high-energy particle beams clashed against the mech’s shields. Lu Bixing’s mech was no longer a heavy mech that could withstand a small collision; the violent shaking of the shield caused the gravity system inside the mech to malfunction temporarily.

Lu Bixing tripped over himself and crashed right into Thomas’s projection. “Then what’s the problem?”

“Prime Minister, a real-life issue isn’t a word problem on a test,” Thomas said. “Any variables outside of set requirements can become an issue...for example, consider that your private channels with multi-layer protection have already been hacked, and the AIs can manipulate the data in your system to make it seem like it was all wrong. Another example would be the model interstellar map of the First Galaxy you all used; can you confirm that the map is accurate? What if there was a secret transfer portal that even the top commanding generals of the Union were unaware of? Or perhaps you were all….”

Thomas’ projection blurred for a second under the brief signal disruption of the particle cannon. Lu Bixing had managed to keep his soul inside his body with the number six relaxant, but at this moment he felt as if his brain had shut down.

“.....You were all wrong, and the main processor didn’t exist the way you all had imagined. It’s true that historically speaking, super AIs from the old Sideral Era mostly kept their processors on land or space stations, but does that guarantee that it will be the same in NSE? What if the processor was nothing like you had imagined and didn’t exist on a space station? Have you considered that maybe it’s a culture of smaller processors that exists on multiple space stations? Why couldn’t it exist in a non-traditional way? If that’s the case, then the model was completely built on a false presumption, Minister!”

The small mech couldn’t withstand such a violent attack from the enemies. It was like a trapped mouse dancing between flames while the soldiers inside the mech were bouncing around like the paper shreds inside a kaleidoscope. If it wasn’t for decades of harsh training, these galactic soldiers would have already had their heads blown up.

Lu Bixing bounced around inside his protection airbag like a ball while a soldier ran up before him and screamed, attempting to put a space suit on him.

“Prime Minister, what….buzz….what should we do next?”

Lu Bixing couldn’t speak up.

He didn’t know what to do. Nobody knew what to do.

Whether it was using the wormhole to create a delay, using himself as bait to lock in on Woolf’s main processor, everything had been a gamble for that narrow trail of survival.

Everyone was dancing on the tip of a blade, who could possibly have time to think up a plan B?

If they could pinpoint exactly where their model was wrong or what they had missed, perhaps it could have been possible to find a solution by combining all of the brains in the Human Alliance. Perhaps they could patch up their mistake and turn the tables around.

But just as Thomas had said, their thought process, model, and logic were completely correct. The problem existed beyond their imagined problem, which meant that opened up an infinite amount of possibilities.

The separated Human Alliance were like prey being trapped within their barricades; any move would be a pointless struggle.

Even if Lu Bixing could miraculously figure out a way to overcome the immediate danger and reunite everyone, how could he possibly locate the main processor after?

And even if there was a god in the world that could no longer stand seeing the extinction of mankind and benevolently could drop a ‘Super AI System Manual’ in his hands, where would he find the time to execute the new plan?

How long had it been since the Great Swords invaded the Eighth Galaxy?

Seven days? Nine days? Ten days?

Could Lin Jingheng wait another ten days for him?

Could the Eighth Galaxy wait another ten days for him?

Relaxant number six silently flowed through his veins and kept him from the brink of breakdown.

With the help of the drug, Lu Bixing thought calmly and clearly, “What if I never gave up on the Nuwa Project back then?”

The Nuwa Project was extremely dangerous with over a 90% death rate for its test subjects; many people would die during the process of genetic modification. Those people who refused to take the risk would simply remain average humans, and as time went by, social hierarchy would begin to develop as resources were redistributed. The evolved humans and normal humans would stop allowing intermarriages, perhaps even forbid the exchange of their genes in order to preserve genetic purity….many awful things would happen in the world.

Yet removing all of the negative social impacts, he would have a team of superhumans.

The superhumans were much tougher in the field of mental network attacks, were wittier and had heightened senses. They wouldn’t need to rest or sleep since their bodies would be modified to the point that they would surpass even the most elite galactic soldiers of their time.

The technicians would never know fatigue and work around the clock, helping to create a new technological breakthrough in the Eighth Galaxy. New technologies, weapons, economy...the possibilities were endless.

He was already labeled a criminal, so what if he had been more determined back then and had pushed forward alone like Lin Jingshu to continue the Nuwa Project? Would that mean the internal warfare would not have happened and the Eighth Galaxy’s military might would have been much more than what they were right now?

Then...would it mean that they wouldn’t have to fight with fear right now against these AIs that could annihilate them at any minute?

Perhaps it was as Thomas said, he had been wrong from the start.

Perhaps the world didn’t need someone as indecisive and soft like him leading the way.

The Eighth Galaxy---

The AI fleet pushed forward once more.

“Watch out, sir,” Zhanlu suddenly sent a message to Lin Jingheng through the mental network. “They’re getting too close.”

Lin Jingheng froze momentarily.

Just as Zhanlu finished, the Eighth Galaxy sent out a few supply ships.

The supply ships were mostly automated and designed with low cost and high efficiency in mind. Nobody would have imagined that one day they would face against AIs on their homeground, and these ships would one day become easy prey. At that moment, these automated supply ships suddenly lost control and began crashing into their homebase like mad dogs. It wouldn’t have been an issue if it was food and medical supplies, but among them were also arms and weapons!

“Out of the way!”

All of the supply ships that had been affected self-destructed; a few mechs that couldn’t escape in time were caught in the explosion. The Eighth Galaxy Galactic Forces suffered an internal attack and felt as if their stomach had also blown up.

Lin Jingheng crashed violently into the wall inside the mech that lost its artificial gravity, the ring box from his pocket dropped out and fell right through the gap within the protection airbag. He couldn’t catch it in time and let the box roll out of his palm.

“Goddamn, just how long until their shitty anti-missile system is ready?”

Of course, at a time like this, Lin Jingheng had not a spare moment to waste on the small box. He didn’t reorganize the team and steered the mech right into the AI fleet. The small mech’s speed was accelerated up to the maximum, welling up almost enough energy to activate an emergency warp. As the leading mech Longyuan immediately locked in on the Eighth Galaxy’s commanding ship, all other small AI mechs began to close in and lock on it--

“Liu!”

Liu Yuanzhong immediately noticed when the commanding ship moved and had already prepared to support his commander from the side. While Longyuan’s attention was taken in by the commanding ship, he quickly sailed in from the other side of the barricade. The Sixth Squadron’s swift moves cleaned up a whole row of the AI fleets attempting to close in on the commanding ship while the missiles from the AI fleet began chasing after Lin Jingheng’s mech. Three rounds of chase and run virtually formed a lock on the frontlines.

Zhanlu: “Watch out, they may use particle cannons to disrupt your airway.”

As the last word dropped, another fleet of AI mechs sailed forward. A whole row of particle cannons crashed onto the small mech’s shield, which redirected towards the missiles coming from behind from the collision.

That was when Lin Jingheng suddenly detached his armory and pushed it out toward the enemy--his armory was already depleted. The almost-empty armory was pushed right in between the incoming missiles and particle cannon wave, and just as it all crashed together, the armory blew up like a blooming sunflower in space. The main mech body that had left the firing zone remained safe inside the eye of the storm, fleeing without breaking a sweat from the immense energy explosion.

The Sixth Squadron took this opportunity to push Longyuan into a corner, blowing up this arrogant AI into a beehive.

Liu Yuanzhong managed to catch it all as he trapped the super AI, legs numbed: “Marshal, I was so scared I’m crying!”

Lin Jingheng didn’t have time to pamper poor crying Captain Liu. The heavy mechs of the Galactic Forces were heavily damaged. Most of the mechs on the battlefield right now were all highly mobile small mechs, which also meant they couldn’t carry large amounts of weapons or energy. Supply ships needed to follow up, and now that the commanding ship’s armory was depleted, they were all in desperate need to replenish their supplies.

That last wave of emergency supplies had been taken down by the AIs, which made their situation even more grave.

“Marshal, I…”

Before Lee could finish, Zhanlu had already made the report within the mental network: “The First Squadron is contracting their line of defense, they are low in supplies.”

Zhanlu’s analysis was also the analysis of the AIs; Lin Jingheng didn’t wait for Lee to finish and ordered instantly: “Bayer, send in backup!”

The AI fleets suddenly pressed forward at full-speed, so Bayer didn’t manage to catch up. The First Squadron was low on ammo and was immediately blown off to the side.

The defense had been broken!

The First Galaxy.

Inside the communication channel, everyone was calling for the Prime Minister. Lu Bixing attempted to push away the space suit and the soldier beside him. “I….”

He used some force with this gesture, the notebook from his jacket pocket dropping out as he did. Inside the mech with unstable gravity, the notebook floated in mid-air; Lu Bixing quickly reached to grab it, but accidentally ripped out a few pages from the notebook instead.

Lu Bixing frantically fished the notebook back in his arms; his heart ached that this national treasure was damaged. Yet the next instant, his gaze fell onto the few pages he ripped out--they happened to be the record of the last battle with AI King Hertz.

“....We will need to close up Wolto and trap King Hertz at this time. We must ensure that this is carried out, Hubert, the fate of humanity lies in your hands. No matter what happens later, even if Hertz doesn’t disappear, you must never open up Pandora’s Box…..”

When they were baiting King Hertz, the person in charge of closing up Wolto was Chief Woolf himself.

A ray of light seemed to flow from the gaps of the ripped pages into his head--

Woolf personally closed up Wolto.

Woolf personally closed up the First Galaxy.

A young Woolf had once said that an unlimited framework AI was doomed to become our enemy.

*“The fate of humanity lies in your hands.”*

Before they left, General Nagus’ anxious words, “Will my Third Galaxy be able to wait for me to return?”

Without the main fleets, would those unprotected galaxies across the universe even last six years by themselves?

Humanity…

If it doesn’t disappear, you must not open Pandora’s Box.

Lu Bixing’s head shot up as he said,“Give me the interstellar map of the Section Nine military zone.”

The map on his personal device zoomed in immediately on Section Nine---it was the area closest to the direction of the Second Galaxy, so all transfer portals and military stations were listed on the map.

Thomas asked, “What’s up, Prime Minister?”

“Our experimentation confirmed that the main processor is in section nine.” Lu Bixing’s head turned quickly as he organized his thoughts. “Old Bu had already cleaned up the outermost ring of transfer portals, but Woolf’s processor wasn’t successfully isolated, this means that even though the processor exists within section nine, it was not within the isolation zone….”

Thomas was puzzled, “What do you mean, General Bu blew up the wrong portals? Wait, no…those were all locked-on automatically based on the maps, he couldn’t have missed.”

“The outermost layer of transfer portals in the military zone wasn’t just the ones we’ve locked on, there are more here.”

“Wait,” Harris interrupted, “that portal is a key portal that connects the First and Second Galaxy; didn’t it get blown up already when we were battling against the Freedom Corps?”

“The transfer portal had been blown up and lost its functionality, but it still exists on the transfer network.”

“Prime Minister, do you know the energy scale of a single transfer portal?” Poisson frowned. “Especially key portals here that connect important points-- if we can get it fixed and rebuilt in a year after we blow it up, how could the Eighth Galaxy possibly close up for a hundred years and only use wormholes to travel?”

“Transfer portals connect timespace but are also a part of a long-distance communication networks.” Lu Bixing had already sent the coordinates to all pilots in the Alliance. “But the energy requirements for each function are not on the same level, am I right?”

Poisson froze.

Lu Bixing: “Follow me, unless you all have other ideas?”

This was quite true. Everyone here were lost lambs without a direction, so they would follow anyone that could stand up and point a direction for them.

“Let’s gamble this once,” Lu Bixing said in a soft tone.

Harris heard it and said, “Gamble on what, Professor Lu?”

“Let’s bet that Chief Woolf, the man that closed up Wolto, opened up the New Sidereal Era, and stood ground for three hundred years--was not merely a sociopath who wanted to live forever in the form of an AI.” Lu Bixing mumbled as if he was talking to himself, “Removing Lin Jingshu did mean that the horrific biochip empire would never be realized, but the other galaxies would never be able to wait for a helping hand. The world changes every five years, six years is enough for humanity to be annihilated, I’m sure he must have thought of this--”

Harris: “Huh?”

Poisson didn’t hesitate and sent the order, “Third Squadron, shield the commanding ship!”

The remaining Third Squadron fleet sailed out and blocked off the pursuing AIs from behind while Lu Bixing took his escorts and made an emergency warp.

“Thanks, brother.”

They were like an arrow that shot out of its bow, from the depths of a marsh towards a strange destination.

The AI pursuers came wave after wave behind him.

“The First Galaxy troops will pave the way for you, Prime Minister Lu.”

“We’re part of the Second Galaxy Central Militia, Prime Minister Lu, after you--”

The different fleets that made up the Alliance began to peel off like layers of clothing, yet they were also like layers of heavy armor that blocked off all pursuers.

After four consecutive emergency warps, Lu Bixing finally arrived at that blocked-off border at the edge of the First Galaxy.

“Alright, it’s just us now.” Harris let out a sigh and said, “So are we allowed to operate legally as an recognized religion after this, Professor Lu?”

Lu Bixing answered firmly: “Dream on, unless I step down.”

“Oh, alright.” The Grand Prophet shrugged his shoulders. “Then...the space pirates AUS will block the enemies for you, for life and nature.”

The AUS blocked off the last pursuers and Lu Bixing’s mech once again accelerated towards its destination.

He saw with his own eyes a massive space station at the remnants of the blown-up transfer portal.

In the Eighth Galaxy, supermech Chixiao ripped through the defense line of the Galactic Forces. Lin Jingheng didn’t have anything else on his mind as he rushed forward to face the supermech head-on.

Turan howled through the channel, “Marshal, you already detached your armory!”

Was he really going to die if it meant he could stop an AI?

Did he want the rest of his comrades to repeat what she had done many years ago to tell Lu Bixing….

Lin Jingheng had already sailed out of the transfer portal and was facing Chixiao.

Just then, a message from the Milky Way Galaxy arrived: “Reporting to Marshal Lin--”

“Interstellar anti-missile system final adjustment has been completed!”

## Ch 194 - Chief Lin Ge’er’s Statue

Lin Jingheng’s gaze shifted slightly the moment he heard that voice.

“Roger.” His voice was deep and hoarse. “Retreat.”

Chixiao forced open a road ahead with its heavy arms, like a bulldozer annihilating anything in its path. Lin Jingheng took the handful of escort mechs around him and sailed right into the transfer portal, ordering the rest of the Eighth Galaxy Forces to retreat at full speed.

The area right past this transfer portal would be proper territory of the Eighth Galaxy.

The galaxy was abundant in natural resources but was at least sixteen times the size of the First Galaxy with not very many natural planets, making the galaxy look more deserted than it was. Upon redevelopment, numerous space stations had been built along the galactic terminals and now shone like little gems beneath a desert. The lights from the space stations were vibrant and alive; they occasionally glowed in different colors that on closer inspection would shift across the military cameras on a mech. On the screen inside a mech, they were like fleeting lights that interconnected with each other, forming an invisible web across the stars.

The Eighth Galaxy Galactic Forces were like a flock of birds fleeing into the forest, sailing straight into the long terminals in an orderly formation.

The AI fleets pursuing them followed up without any hesitation.

They were the subordinates of super AI Woolf that carried powerful processors which could analyze the live battle. The AIs determined that the enemy did not have any power to fight back and were out of supplies to maintain the defense line outside of the galaxy, so the retreat and pursuit on both ends were logical.

But if the human Woolf had still been alive and witnessing the battlefield, perhaps he wouldn’t be so optimistic.

Because within the fifty years since Lin Jingheng had graduated the Black Orchid Academy and enlisted in the military, the man had never once retreated like a coward in a battle that took place in his own territory.

The first missile shot up in the air like an elegant lead dancer, opening the curtains up to greet the Eighth Galaxy in this unsolicited opening act--

Immediately following that, a line of missiles shot out from the space stations and major planets in the periphery of the Eighth Galaxy and clashed with the AI fleets that had entered their zone. The mechs that didn’t have time to react were forced out of their positions and blown up like celebratory fireworks.

This was the first activation of a planetary-grade anti-missile system--a concept born from the long-deserted planet Beijing-β.

Not only did it blow up their enemies, but it even stunned the Eighth Galaxy Forces.

“My…” Bayer wasn’t sure which god to pray to at this moment and choked up on his own words, then asked in shock, “What the heck is that?”

“Oh this, they’ve been working on it since the day the Eighth Galaxy closed up,” Turan reconnected onto the channel and answered. “I heard the last experiment results weren’t up to standards and they had no choice but to drag out this half-assed work-in-progress today, but I guess this is passable.”

Bayer: “This…this is considered ‘passable’ to you?”

“That’s only because you have no idea how many years this thing took.” Turan let out a sigh. “After Planet Alpenglow was blown up by the AUS, one little girl among Minister Lu’s students brought up this impossible idea with no promising future. It’s been years since then, and that massive project has contributed to nothing. I’ve even heard that these engineers do nothing except spend our money; the majority of the Eighth Galaxy’s limited funding was all given to them for research. I swear, if it wasn’t for Minister Lu backing them up and keeping the project going, I’m sure this would have been called off a long time ago.”

Lin Jingheng had already taken this short break to completely reload his armory and instal a new backup engine on his mech. He said, “Did I say we’ve made it to the point where we can sit back and enjoy the view?”

With his command, the exhausted Eighth Galaxy Forces quickly reorganized themselves and sailed out to the battlefield with new blades before the ashes of the explosion dispersed.

At the edge of the First Galaxy.

The moment they locked in on the space station, all soldiers on the mech---aside from Lu Buxing, who temporarily sealed up his emotions--lost their minds.

“It’s the main processor, we found it!”

“Minister Lu,” the pilot couldn’t suppress his excitement and asked, “should we blow it up right now?”

Lu Bixing’s gaze fixed on the space station from the camera on the mech as he spoke up calmly, “How much ammo and power do we have left?”

The pilot immediately gave some numbers.

They had already given up their heavy mech and urgently sliced their way through a dangerous barricade with their current ship, so it was natural that they didn’t have much in the way of resources left.

“Close in a bit more,” Lu Bixing ordered sternly. “Stay cautious; scan the space station and analyze if it contains an anti-missile system.”

His words were like a bowl of cold water that extinguished the excitement of all soldiers.

The on-land anti-missile systems in the Union were too cheaply made to function correctly; while they could block off a missile that accidentally fell off from space, they were worthless against a mass-scale missile attack.

But the problem right now was that the current team didn’t carry enough arms on their small mechs to launch such a grand-scale attack. Any sort of attempts to fire a missile would surely be blocked off, and if they could not hit the target with one shot, they could easily be stuck in a situation where they had no choice but to watch their target stand before their own eyes without a method to destroy it.

Moments later, the pilot took in a breath of air and said, “Prime Minister, there are heavily guarded anti-missile systems and shields installed on the space station. Thank god we didn’t…wait.”

“Hm?”

“We’ve detected an unidentified form of matter,” the pilot said in a low tone. “There’s something inside.”

Another soldier tensed up and said, “There are hidden arms and mechs inside?”

“No,” The pilot seemed to be a little suspicious, “the size is extremely large….”

His words were cut off by the alarm within the mech.

“Minister Lu,” the pilot said, “We’ve already entered the enemy’s anti-missile zone, it’s currently attempting to connect to a passkey. If it fails, it will deal with us as an invader.”

“Back up; all escort mechs retreat outside of the anti-missile zone.” There were no technicians around him so Lu Bixing had to take up the job himself. “What was the password the prophet from the AUS had said he used to activate AI Woolf? Who remembers? Wasn’t it….some sort of flower?”

“Minister, it’s ‘seed’.”

Lu Bixing hesitated a little before entering ‘seed’. The pilot held in his breath and the handful of escort mechs that had already backed out of the active firing zone were all on edge as they stared at him, preparing to take down the missiles aimed at their Prime Minister---

“Beep--” A soft sound tugged at everyone’s senses.

Incorrect password!

The atmosphere around suddenly grew eerie as Lu Bixing’s mech was immediately locked on by the station’s anti-missile system. The alarm inside the mech rang out wildly.

“Minister Lu, please back up, watch out!”

At that moment, a missile was already firing toward his mech. The pilot immediately prepared to intercept the missile and pull back the mech.

“Wait!”

Lu Bixing was unmoved by the disruption; a flash of light shone in his eyes as he suddenly felt an epiphany--

“King Hertz will not disappear, you must not open up Pandora’s Box.”

The moment right as the mech was about to leave the anti-missile zone, Lu Bixing quickly entered ‘Pandora’s Box’.

Password correct!

The pilot: “......”

“Give me access to the mental network,” Lu Bixing said, “let’s try and land on the station.”

The pilot from the other escort mech suddenly chimed in and asked, “Minister Lu, we…”

“You all wait outside of the atmosphere,” Lu Bixing responded. “If anything happens and the situation becomes dire, fire at the space station. If even one missile manages to pass through the anti-missile system, victory will be ours.”

“Minister Lu, this ‘if anything happens’ is not very reassuring.”

Lu Bixing gave him a smile and received the piloting permissions, carefully steering the mech towards the space station where the main processor was located.

It was an extremely large station that could almost be on scale with Old Fart’s station back in the Eighth Galaxy many years ago. Yet unlike the lively old station, there was not even a single ant on this station. It was completely silent, like a cold and lifeless machine empire.

Lu Bixing felt fortunate that he’d missed a round of fire the closer he sailed towards the space station because he could finally see the structure of it--this was virtually a mechanical monster. Countless black holes from the cannons that had fired the missiles pointed out towards the artificial atmosphere; the density of those cannons sent fear into the hearts of even the most well-trained galactic soldiers.

If they had stayed outside of the atmosphere and fired at the space station, they would have in turn been shot into beehives by these cannons.

The mech felt the artificial gravity on the space station and slowly landed following the terminal, quietly parking on the launching dock. Nobody on the mech dared to walk out and began analyzing their surroundings from inside the mech.

The area around was surprisingly friendly--the air pressure and oxygen were enough to maintain human life with no signs of toxins in the gases. The gravity was about 0.9 times that of Wolto; no robots or surveillance cameras were found on the station.

“Prime Minister, allow me to go down to check the surroundings…sir, wait!”

Before the soldier could finish, Lu Bixing had already jumped off the mech in a spacesuit--he was still connected to the mental network of the mech and used it to scan the station, in which he saw a sign to the ‘control room’.

The heart of the entire First Galaxy pumped in silence; the massive radiator on the station shook the ground slightly, like an ancient demigod resting within its nest. Lu Bixing followed the road signs into an elevator that took him up about a hundred meters. The doors of the elevator opened up into a narrow passage with a small door at the very end of the walkway. On the small door was a realistic carving of a tulip.

Engineer 001’s hacking skills were getting rusty but were still there; Lu Bixing took a little more time than usual but successfully opened up the digital lock to the small door. The door opened from the center to reveal a few people inside the room.

The soldiers that followed Lu Bixing quickly surrounded their Prime Minister out of caution.

“Don’t worry.” Lu Bixing gave a pat on the tense shoulders of one soldier and said, “There is no breathing or heartbeats; I can hear it.”

He pulled out his personal device as he spoke, the light from the device flashing through the few silhouettes inside the room--they were life-sized 3D printed statues.

A soldier spoke up softly, “That’s Chief Lin Ge’er’s statue.”

That statue stood by the wall and held a notebook in his hand. His head was slightly tilted, a hint of a smile frozen on his face as he looked to a certain direction. Lu Bixing met the eyes of the statue for a moment and then followed the gaze of the statue to see a wall with words written on it.

“If after every tempest come such calms, may the winds blow till they have wakened death.[[1]](#footnote-1)”

“All...hail the pledge of freedom.” The soldier read the line of words in a strange tone, “Hubert Woolf?”

This was a pledge that everyone spoke of in the NSE age as if it was universal truth; yet reading it now in a place like this seemed nothing but ironic and creepy.

Lu Bixing walked over, his fingers glossing lightly over Woolf’s signature--the engraving was a little rough and uneven, almost as if it was hand-carved.

The next moment, a light clicking sound rang out. Lu Bixing pulled his hand back in alarm; the wall engraved with the words before him suddenly broke down, the thin layer of wooden decoration on the outside peeling off like a dead snake skin to reveal a massive digital screen behind it. A plain dialogue box popped up right before the large interstellar map of the Union that read: Do you wish to activate the sleeping transfer portal?

The entire group of people were awestruck.

“A sleeping transfer portal? But isn’t this….what does this mean?”

“Minister Lu, the unknown high-density matter beneath the space station, could it be….”

Lu Bixing said, “Activate the mech, let’s prepare to retreat.”

A soldier ran back immediately. Lu Bixing turned around and exchanged another glance at the smiling Lin Ge’er, suddenly realizing something.

“Activate the transfer portal.”

“....Confirmed.”

A sound like a deep sigh rang out from the space station, a countdown appearing on the massive screen inside the room.

“Retreat.” Lu Bixing’s pupils contracted under the bright light. “Hurry!”

They ran out and down the narrow passage, and without waiting for the elevator to enter, Lu Bixing broke the glass wall with his biochip-enhanced strength. The mech down below floated up just in time and sent out a capturing net to fish the Prime Minister and his soldiers back toward the mech, then accelerated out toward the atmosphere.

The violent sound of wind blew past Lu Bixing’s ears; he struggled to open his eyes and saw the entire space station from space.

That awesome artificial station was too large to be fully captured by the naked eye, yet the ground of the station was already shaking up. The main processor of AI Woolf seemed to have sensed something, the anti-missile system on the space station suddenly activated and attempted to clean up all the intruders. Within an instant, the capture net retracted back inside the mech and barely sailed past a missile.

Sirens rang out inside the mech to indicate a never-before-seen energy level.

“Prime Minister, what exactly is this thing?”

Lu Bixing didn’t have time to answer as he used the mental network to accelerate the mech out of the atmosphere with the last fuel remaining. The escort mechs on standby outside didn’t understand what happened but followed the command ship frantically--

Just as they were about to escape the anti-missile zone of the space station, the entire station self-destructed.

Virtually all functions inside the mech malfunctioned temporarily. The high energy created by the explosion swept through space, even timespace distorted slightly at the explosion. Space debris, broken metal, missile shells, space waste, the fearsome main body of the AI….everything was consumed and annihilated in this Big Bang-like explosion of a universe. The mech that had lost its balance and gravity system was like an out-of-control piece of space debris tossing everyone around inside its body.

The mechs sailed at high speed toward that massive spiral in space.

Just as they were about to be consumed by the spiral, the surroundings of the space station calmed down. Those small mechs that no longer had pilots floated aimlessly around space, while the computers inside began to reboot.

A new transfer portal appeared on the interstellar map, right at an important point connecting the First and Second galaxies.

## Ch 195 - Is It Over? Did We Win?

The First Galaxy.

All the fearsome AI fleets lost control within a moment like a group of lost flies, flying around aimlessly around the galaxy.

The exhausted and despairing Human Alliance stared at this scene blankly. The fighters hadn’t relaxed from the high-intensity battle and the attacks hadn't stopped since they opened fire. Some of the AI mechs that were too close to firing range ended up getting caught and were shot down almost instantly.

Anakin was the first to fathom the sudden shift in the battle and pursued an AI mech while connected to his own mental network.

“Captain, watch out! You….”

Before the soldier could finish, the mech that Anakin was tailgating suddenly stopped running, circling its pursuer like a silly dog for a few moments before detaching its armory obediently.

“Mental network hacking successful.” Anakin said quietly, “The super AI controlling them has vanished.”

The communication channel was dead silent; from seeing hope to despair and now to this sudden surprise, the emotional roller coaster felt like a massive lucid dream.

After what felt like an eternity, someone finally spoke up and broke the silence, “We did it?”

“Is it over? We won?”

“The main processor has been annihilated…”

“The main processor had been annihilated!”

“Send a request to the transfer portals and set up long-distance communication networks--” A soldier from the Fourth Squadron spoke up. The individual was a young vaccuocerebral born in the Eighth Galaxy with a witty mind, barely at the age to enlist legally and who had followed Captain Anakin as an escort. The voice of the lucky child who had been forgotten by the era rang clearly throughout the massive communication network, passed through the debris, the silent universe, the battered-up interstellar terminals, and into everyone’s ears. “Comrades from all galaxies, victory is ours!”

They had once gathered in the Heart of the Rose and had each other’s backs on the battlefield.

They had also once turned on each other several days later, allowing those sly and evil AIs to pass through their line of defense.

Many lives had been sacrificed, but many more survived. After tribulations against all odds, they had finally truly become comrades from all galaxies.

Nagus sat down while all the damage reports from his subordinates flooded in, but he couldn’t take it all in. His back arched forward as his soulless eyes stared into space for a while before he finally came back to his senses. A dumb smile appeared on his face, the grin growing wider until he felt his soul return to his body, turning the grin bitter.

“Alright, reorganize,” he mumbled, “we still have six years of…..”

“General, look at the interstellar map!”

Nagus lifted his head and stared at the map for a moment before standing up abruptly.

A new transfer portal had appeared!

At the border between the First and Second galaxies where an intergalactic portal used to be, a god from ancient myths seemed to have passed by and lit a lamp in the starry sky; the glow of the portal shined on the map.

“General Nagus, we can go home now!”

Nagus stared dumbfounded for a long while; for some reason he felt himself choking up and lifted a hand to wipe his face instinctively, only to find that tears had already covered his face.

The old General wiped away his tears and shook his head, as if he couldn’t fathom how he could possibly start crying in such a manner in public.

A single planet moved away silently into its natural orbit, letting the light of the First Galaxy sun shine onto the Alliance fleet. The glow swept through the broken mechs until it passed through another smaller planet, creating an ethereal halo above the galactic fleet.

This time, the Human Alliance didn’t need an order to gather up as they all sailed toward that new transfer portal.

The Eighth Galaxy.

Under the support of the full-scale anti-missile system, the replenished Galactic Force returned to the battlefield for another round of restless counterattacks. Supermech Chunjun was successfully knocked down.

Now, the only supermech left on the field was Xuanyuan.

All of the AI mechs were controlled by the Great Swords, so it was starting to become difficult for Xuanyuan to control the entire fleet by itself.

The AI mechs began to contract around Xuanyuan and formed a heavy shield around the supermech.

“Zhanlu,” Lee asked, “what’s your advice?”

“If I were Xuanyuan, the next step of my action would depend on the order I receive from my master,” Zhanlu said in his usual robotic tone. “My chances of overturning the battle now are extremely slim and can almost be determined as a failed mission. Continuing the battle will only drain resources on my end, so I would normally consider giving up. However, if the order I received was to ‘take down the Eighth Galaxy at all costs, even resorting to unconventional means if necessary’, then I would…”

Zhanlu’s talking speed was coded permanently into his program-- he would always speak like this, even if the world was ending.

Bayer couldn’t wait for him to finish and was itching to shoot down that last supermech, his cannons already locked on Xuanyuan’s armory. He dispatched a small team from the Tenth Squadron, ready to perform a signature ‘invisible assassination’ plot on the battlefield. “No need to analyze. Liu Yuanzhong, Turan, back me up; I’ll sail right in and blow up this annoying heavy mech.”

Lin Jingheng: “Bayer, don’t rush in!”

The Captain was already speeding out toward the enemy when Zhanlu finally finished his last line: “...launch a suicide attack.”

The moment his last syllable dropped, the smaller mechs surrounding Xuanyuan began to spin violently in circles.

Liu Yuanzhong was peeved. “Goddamn it, again? Are the mechs in the First Galaxy mass-produced pawns!?”

Bayer couldn’t hit the brakes in time and was pulled into the swarm of mechs that were beginning to self-destruct. He cursed beneath his breath and dodged two AI mechs flying toward him. The rest of the AI mechs began to surround him desperately, opening fire on him without caring if their comrades were caught within firing range as well.

Bayer’s heart skipped a beat; he shot out a missile to intercept the enemy attack. Through his mental network, he scanned the surrounding AI mechs and noticed he was being trapped. His fired-up brain after days of intense battle finally cooled down as he thought: *I’m done for*.

The next moment, all of the cannons from the surrounding mechs pointed at him, Turan’s loud cursing rang out from the communication channel--

But the expected blowup didn’t occur. Bayer was surprised to find that all of these AI mechs stopped abruptly at the same time, then starting from the innermost layer of mechs surrounding Xuanyuan, all of the smaller mechs began to disperse.

“Shh--” Bayer interrupted Turan’s endless cursing, “I’m still alive, something’s up with that big guy.”

They saw supermech Xuanyuan slowly appear from the layers of small mechs. Its oval mech body was frozen silently in space, back facing the direction of the wormhole zone as if it was listening to something coming from the other side.

Bayer: “The fuck is going on?”

“Looks like this is the first scenario,” Lee said. “Zhanlu, are AIs like you always ready to give up so easily?”

“Yes. I’m sorry, Captain Lee,” Zhanlu apologized earnestly. “If you are not satisfied, I may suggest that you can adjust our factory settings when you develop AIs in the future and advance an AI’s ‘fight until you die’ function.”

Lee: “.....”

“Marshal, the enemy is requesting to communicate.”

“Take it in,” Lin Jingheng said.

Xuanyuan’s voice was very soft and smooth like springwater; rumors had it that supermech Xuanyuan’s audio and sound effects were top-notch even among its sibling AIs. “Hello, Commander Lin. I have received a message sent about four hours and ten minutes ago from the other side of the wormhole.”

Lin Jingheng frowned slightly as he lifted his head.

“My ‘master’ has disappeared.”

Turan: “Huh?”

“A high-functioning mech core like Xuanyuan isn’t capable of processing drastic real-time changes,” Lee spoke up lightly, “so he must still be an AI under framework limitations; that master they speak of is likely AI Woolf.”

“So that AI Woolf disappeared! Did Minister Lu and his crew really find the main body?”

Lin Jingheng silenced the chitchat inside the channel and asked Xuanyuan: “And?”

Xuanyuan said gently, “So I would like to surrender.”

The entire Eighth Galaxy was watching this intense battle live on their screens; under the eyes of billions, the AI Troops all disarmed themselves--

The hellish seven days had finally passed.

Inside the Milky Way City Command Post, a messenger soldier ran through the hallways like a gust of wind. Whether the soldier was simply too excited or couldn’t see clearly, he crashed head-on into the glass door at the ground level of the government building.

At the same time in the First Galaxy. Space debris mister Lu Bixing crashed his head against the walls of his mech and woke up after falling unconscious for a short while.

He noticed there were a mess of soldiers around him. That desperate escape away from the former space station earlier had used up all the energy reserves on the mechs; the gravity system inside had completely broken down and now people floated unconsciously in mid-air.

The aftereffects of relaxant number six finally kicked in; Lu Bixing felt like something had pulled his soul out of his body. He could only open his eyes; the rest of his body still curled up inside the space suit. His head was empty; the few pages he had accidentally pulled from Chief Lin’s notebook were floating like little satellites around him.

Some sounds began to ring inside the communication channel. It must be the AUS fleet that was closest to him arriving. Due to the damaged equipment, old Harris’s voice sounded far away and almost off-tune, “Professor Lu! Minister Lu! Are you still alive!?”

NSC 291 August 7 (Independent Year 13, August 28), 23:00 Woltorian time.

It had been twenty-six hours since AI Woolf’s main processor had disappeared. The Human Alliance regrouped and met up at the edge of the First Galaxy. It took about four hours for the news of the AI Fleets in the Eighth Galaxy’s surrender to make its way to the First Galaxy. Lu Bixing’s knees felt like they had completely given up ever since hearing this news.

“So what you’re saying is that Woolf’s main processor was actually built on a hidden backup transfer portal.” Harris had broken one of his arms, which was now being treated by robotic arms sticking out from a medical capsule. The two men sat like hospital patients and talked through the communication channel while on their beds.

“When we arrived, we detected something of high-energy density and large scale within the space station,” Lu Bixing spoke slowly, letting out a hint of fatigue through his words. “It must be the sealed up transfer portal. To give an example, it’s like a vacuum-sealed item that was placed inside a small box. The space station itself is the box; when you freed the AI from the City of Angels, it first ordered its AI fleets to isolate the First Galaxy and then moved itself to overtake one of the important portals leading outside of the galaxy.”

Harris asked, “This is Woolf---I meant the human one, did he set this up?”

“Yes and no.” Lu Bixing shook his head. “I’m guessing this was a self-defense system built into the super AI.”

Harris thought about it and said, “The super AI must overtake a transfer portal if it wants to control the entire First Galaxy. It couldn’t possibly create a clone of itself within such a short time, but it also needed to protect itself from our pursuit through the transfer portals. In that case, the best hiding space was among these already-destroyed transfer portals.”

This backup portal didn’t have enough energy to fulfil the needs for warping, but once it connected to an existing transfer network, it could still manage long-distance communication functions. The Human Alliance couldn’t possibly precisely narrow in on the coordinates of the main body, only relying on Lu Bixing’s initial theory to search areas one by one. Following that train of thought, these portals that had already been destroyed would most definitely be overlooked.

Harris let out a sigh. “Woolf knew what Woolf would do...uh, how do I say this, it’s kind of strange.”

“Chief Woolf knew what the AI he created would do,” Lu Bixing clarified for him. “The main processor and backup transfer portal are one and the same. If we wanted to reconnect the passage between the First Galaxy and the other galaxies and activate the sealed transfer portal, it would be inevitable that the station containing the portal would explode from overload. That would also mean the main processor of the AI would be destroyed. If the portal didn’t get activated, this super AI would have to be stuck within this isolated First Galaxy with us.”

Harris responded dryly: “This…well, this certainly is…hard to comment on.”

Lu Bixing exchanged a glance with him in agreement.

In the less than three centuries since the founding of the Union, mankind had been trapped by Eden. They had trudged down the wrong path since the beginning, only to finally reach a breaking point that could not be undone. The Eden Committee single-handedly controlled the world, the Military Council went into a decline, every other political faction rendered useless. Old Woolf stood up during this time, dragged the already-shattered Pledge of Freedom into one last gamble of his life--he invited space pirates into their utopia and destroyed Eden from its roots. He overturned the entire Interstellar Union from the inside out and reaffirmed his absolute authority within the Union.

Yet a turbulent world always bore its demons.

The Forbidden Fruit, Lin Jingheng, The Freedom Corps, biochips…the old Chief lit up the tips of a lead wire that tipped the grounds of the Parliament building and thrust everything out of control. He had the heart to clean up after his mess, but age had determined that his time was up.

He had lived alone in this world for too long; he had aged and grown weak, yearning only to return to that field of black tulips in his dreams.

“I don’t know what to say,” Harris let out a sigh, “what about you?”

“I won’t comment,” Lu Bixing fell into a long silence. “Our circumstances were different from the start, I can’t even tell what I’d become if I was in his shoes, because…”

Because his Lin Jingheng came back in the end.

“Sorry for the interruption, Prime Minister Lu,” Poisson suddenly chimed in and said, “The Central Militia are ready to leave, they want to say their farewells.”

The Second Galaxy.

The last homebase of the rebellion forces had also been found by the biochip humans. The people hiding in the refuge clung onto each other, waiting for that missile above their heads to drop.

They had struggled and fought back, unwilling to yield to their enemies throughout the battle. If they couldn’t live in freedom, they would die for freedom.

The remaining galactic soldiers in the base were finally backing down after waves of mental network disruption from the biochip fleets; they were finally at their last straw.

“I heard...they managed to save a biochip expert in the Third Galaxy. Now they’re working around the clock to restore the biochip disruption technologies.” The leader of the guarding troops was only a small team captain within the Central Militia. All of his comrades had died and he was forced to carry on their mission; the youth on his face still lingered as he carried the lives of his people on his shoulders. “What if one day they really managed to restore the biochip disruption technology?”

“Too bad, we won’t get to see that day anymore.”

“My fellow brothers and sisters, count up and report all of your remaining missiles. People who still have inventory, please gather up around me.” The leader spoke up with a cold expression, “Blow up the base.”

“Captain!”

“Do as he ordered. People who are still hiding inside and won’t accept the chip at this point have all prepared themselves for this moment. It’s more honorable to die here than to live as a slave under those pirates.” The young leader took in a deep breath and slowly held up his hand.

The fighters saved their last shot for their own kind behind tears.

The moment he was about to drop his hand--

“Wait, captain!”

The biochip troops closing in suddenly went out of control as if something disrupted the chip signal and in turn messed up their formation. Within moments, the biochip humans became headless flies running around aimlessly.

Immediately after, the high-energy alert rang out inside the mechs.

An unidentified fleet of mechs fired at the biochip human fleets from behind!

“That’s……”

The young captain’s body shook up.

“Backup! The Central Militia!”

“It’s our people!”

The military camera captured a massive explosion, the blinding lights and flames covering the screen like a sharp blade slicing through the darkness looming above the world--

## Ch 196 - Closing (Part 1)

“Quick, give me a matching tie.” Lu Bixing was frantically putting on his clothes. “We’re running out of time!”

Lin Jingheng gave a carefree acknowledgement as he walked into the closet while still talking to Turan on the line, “Still didn’t find it?”

“Turned it upside down, nothing,” Turan said. “You didn’t even notice your commanding ship had a hole in it back then; thank god the protection airbag filled in the gap on the wall when it released, I bet it rolled out at that time. Damn, boss, did you not hear the alarms? That was really dangerous.”

“There were too many alarms inside the mech at the time, my eardrums were about to explode, how do you expect me to have paid attention to everything?” Lin Jingheng pulled out the drawer where Lu Bixing kept all his ties and gasped aloud, feeling as if he was about to choke on his own indecisiveness--Mister Lu had four whole drawers filled with nothing but ties, all organized by color. The colorful patterns almost gave the commander a headache as he complained, “Lu Bixing, is that a neck below your head or a flagpole?”

Turan cackled like a madwoman on the other side, almost ready to ask the Marshal to turn on video call so she could have a tour of the Prime Minister’s bedroom. Thank goodness she managed to check herself at the last minute, bit her tongue and managed to save her head from being thrown under a guillotine.

“By the way, what even is in that little box you lost?” Turan cleared her throat and attempted to speak normally, “Why does it sound like a ring?”

Lin Jingheng snorted in response--that was a silent acknowledgement. He glanced at the time right now--December 1st, 7:00 A.M. Then, he pulled out the second drawer and took out the seventh tie from the first row inside and tossed it to Lu Bixing without even looking.

Before Turan could even speak up, Lu Bixing’s horrid cry rang out from the other side of the room, “Babe, I have to go into court today!”

Lin Jingheng turned and took a glance, noticing that random silk tie he’d tossed over was diamond-patterned with a cute little pumpkin print inside each diamond; it matched almost cutely with that single stand of cowlick that popped up from Lu Bixing’s head.

Either way, he looked nothing like a proper Prime Minister.

Lin Jingheng pressed his lips together slightly and leaned on the closet door, watching that ‘improper Prime Minister’ run around the bedroom to dress himself up. A faint smile lifted up the corner of his lips.

Turan swallowed all the words she was about to say and asked in shock, “M,mmmarshal, wh….what did he just call you?”

This ‘mmmmarshal’ complained that his subordinate didn’t do her job right and asked too many questions, so he hung up the call without hesitation.

Lu Bixing finally settled on a modest suit. He picked up his hairspray and swiftly sprayed his head without even checking the mirror, clearly a master of dressing himself, relying solely on muscle memory to clean up that bedhead of his.

Then, as if he finally remembered something, Lu Bixing pulled the natural grin on his face down and turned his head to ask, “How about this, do I look a bit more serious now?”

Lin Jingheng didn’t respond and slowly lit a cigarette, “What, are you nervous?”

“What a joke,” Lu Bixing gave a slightly stiff grin in response, “I was chased around a whole galaxy by AIs and wasn’t even scared, why would I be nervous now?”

Lin Jingheng pointed at him. “Listener and Hardin.”

Lu Bixing took in a deep breath and pulled back that forced smile.

Four months ago, the Human Alliance passed through harsh tribulations and finally blew up AI Woolf’s main processor; the AI fleets that invaded the Eighth Galaxy surrendered soon after.

The Silver Fourth Squadron formed by vaccubocerebrals followed the Central Militia out of the First Galaxy to deal with the biochip humans left within the other galaxies with their new chip disruption technologies. After this battle, the discrimination against vaccuocerebrals would completely disappear from human history and be rebranded as humanity’s grave mistake.

The entire First Galaxy’s military force--those mechs that were chasing after the Human Alliance under the control of the AIs--became free supplies for the Alliance. All of the Generals felt their stomachs churn in regret, saying that if they had known this would belong to them they should have saved a few mechs during the last battle.

Lu Bixing sent off the Alliance that had saved the world and then escorted the poor Woltorian refugees waiting in the Heart of the Rose to the City of Angels. Soon after, the former Union Troops and First Galaxy Patrol Fleets teamed up to conduct a galaxy-wide inspection in the First Galaxy to clean up all remaining AI and biochip toxins.

Lu Bixing himself then returned to the Eighth Galaxy with his escorts.

By the way, there was another little episode on the journey back. As expected of the universe’s beloved Marshal Lin who could always find himself in astronomically impossible and unlucky situations--because the man insisted on waiting by the entrance of the wormhole to personally greet Lu Bixing, fate played a game and left Lu Bixing’s crew inside the terminal for a whole twenty-eight days. It was almost a record travel time; if the technicians hadn’t confirmed that there were still signals coming out of the wormhole, Lin Jingheng might have physically attempted to tear up the wormhole and drag the young man out.

After a chaotic period of time, things had finally begun to settle.

Lu Bixing was also ready to fulfill the promise he made to the people of the Eighth Galaxy before he left--to accept a public trial on the matter of the Nuwa Project and illegally conducting biochip experiments.

To the young man, fighting for his life in the First Galaxy was his obligation, but to face a trial in the Eighth Galaxy certainly wasn’t as easy as it sounded…he had poured a decade of his life into rebuilding this place; his life’s greatest happiness and grievances were all engraved beneath the cement grounds of Milky Way City.

“He...Lu….Uh, my father,” Lu Bixing suddenly spoke up and asked, “How was it when he was summoned to court for a trial back in Wolto?”

“That man spent his whole life fighting for the Union, so he believed that the Union would give him justice. He also believed that the people he had once protected would never betray him,” Lin Jingheng paused slightly, then continued in a gentle tone, “but his whole life was a pendulum of great success and failure. A lot of things in life are not determined by the eventual cause and effects of an individual’s actions, many are bonded to luck. A genius among people may become a legend two hundred years into the future, but if they were unfortunate to be born in an era too early, they would only become a thunderstorm that overturned the whole world until everything perished into ashes. No matter how beautiful the flower, they can’t bloom outside the right season.”

Lu Bixing stared at him in surprise; he had never expected to hear the word ‘luck’ come out of Lin Jingheng’s mouth in this lifetime.

Thin white mist rose up between his fingers, dying those grey eyes that always seemed to be carrying some sort of hatred behind them. The man leaned on the wooden closet door, his gaze surprisingly tranquil and long.

Lu Bixing suddenly realized that this man had also changed a lot over the silent two decades.

“Let’s go, I’ll head out with you.” Lin Jingheng said, “Don’t worry, your fortune arrived at the perfect time.”

The citizens of the Eighth Galaxy did not have the clouded vision caused by Eden. They had all just crawled out of the most treacherous of times and hadn’t even had time to create a false delusion of a peaceful world for themselves. Both their eyes and hearts were clear. Building the interstellar anti-missile system, blocking off the AI invasion into the galaxy, fighting for equality for vaccuocerebrals…the Eighth Galaxy had just taken its first step into prosperity. Lu Bixing’s work and contributions were still shining vibrantly in the eyes of people that followed him. This was his best season with no fear for any storms or rain.

The Supreme Court of the Eighth Galaxy was located not far away from the central plaza of Milky Way City. There was still time before the trial began, but people had already gathered by the front door. All journalists and media sent more than their usual reporting robots: the whole street was crowded with tourists and other people. Commander Lu Xin’s statue that was normally quiet in the corner suddenly had a flood of people sitting by his feet; the soldiers and security guards couldn’t stop the incoming crowd and decided to retreat.

“The Rainbow Virus was the deepest wound to the Eighth Galaxy in the past…”

“But Prime Minister Lu was a patient with no autonomy of his body when his body was in the process of being modified by the virus. All associated parties at the time have died and cannot be summoned to court…”

“Then, when the Nuwa Project launched the second time…”

“The second launch of the Nuwa Project was initiated by the extremist faction of the AUS. The mutated Rainbow Virus and biochips used in their research were bounties received during wartime; according to the Wartime Special Ordinance, all persons of section manager ranks and higher from departments of engineering, security, and military strategy have the right to mobilize all enemy supplies obtained during battle in order to better prepare for the warfront. Prime Minister Lu has the authority to use any resources under their jurisdiction at the time. While the procedure for mobilizing was not through proper means, the subjective reality was that the experiment itself did not threaten public security nor did it objectively cause any irreversible harm to the people; we believe that this should be treated as a case of improper procedural conduct.”

“But the human experiment…”

“The Human Rights Protection Bill has a clause that specifically bans human experiments, which defines ‘illegal human experimentation’ as use of force, manipulation, or other unethical means to conduct unconventional human body experimentation on third parties, causing psychological and biological damage to the experiment body--clearly, Prime Minister Lu’s experimentation did not include any third parties.”

“Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to remind everyone that the street right outside of the Supreme Court is called Rainbow Street. It used to be a slum city filled with dirt and trash; it was also the place where the mutated Rainbow Virus first broke out on our planet. That place had once been filled with a horrible pandemic, fear, hunger, and poverty; now please take a look down at the smooth grounds and wide streets beneath your feets, then above your heads at the clean airways and awesome skyscrapers--”

Lin Jingheng relaxed his shoulders in the audience section, learning back into the soft chair and said to Doctor Hardin beside him, “So how is it, can you take the chip out of him?”

“I should be able to,” Doctor Hardin said. “A modified body is the basis and already meets the requirements for safe levels of mutation. Of course, mutations are limitless and the chip’s job is to merely guide the mutation into the ideal form of evolution. I see that his physical condition and health is already way past stable now, so we should be able to attempt to remove the chip within a few years.”

Lin Jingheng looked at him from the corner of his eyes and said, “Sounds like it’s completely different fundamentally from those hierarchical chips the Freedom Corps use.”

Doctor Hardin didn’t suspect this question and explained thoroughly, “Indeed, Minister Lu received his portion of the data from the AUS, which was the original copy left by Laura, so it was naturally different from the Freedom Corps…”

Lin Jingheng didn’t wait for the old man to finish and said, “Then why did you call right as we returned and purposely mention that those Freedom Corps chips gave you some bullshit new ideas about his chip?”

The doctor froze.

Lin Jingheng rested his head on his arm on the armrest as he watched this poor old man turn into a helpless frog meeting the gaze of a deadly snake, “Hm?”

Doctor Hardin panicked slightly at the stare, “I….I….was just…”

Yet Lin Jingheng smiled suddenly and dropped the question. He gave a casual pat to the old doctor’s shoulder and walked out of the court before a verdict was officially given.

Chief Lin Ge’er’s notebook had a section of mundane conversations. Three hundred years ago, a young bookworm Hardin, who was filled with impossible ideas, told his friend and brother that a perverse creation could only be defeated by an even more perverse creation.

Woolf disagreed and said that a super AI with unlimited framework was doomed to become an enemy of mankind--they must be destroyed.

What the chief didn’t record in the notebook was what Woolf said after that: “If one day we have no choice but to go down this demonic path and use something like that to achieve a certain goal, we must destroy it immediately after we accomplish the goal. We have to destroy it before it has time to clone its main processor because we are simply borrowing the hands of a devil. The longer we attempt to create the facade of a peaceful world between humans and AIs, the deeper we sink, damning ourselves even more in the end.”

“I was...I just wanted to try it,” Doctor Hardin said from behind Lin Jingheng, “I don’t know if he still remembered what he had said before nor was I sure if I should tell you all. It….it has been three hundred years already, we’ve already grown to become completely different people. This was a war with too much to wager, I was scared that this could cloud your judgement….”

Lin Jingheng waved at him from afar.

Doctor Hardin stopped and stared in slight disbelief. Many things had changed, but many things also remained the same. Some memories faded or transformed into a different monster, while others seemed to have been engraved in time.

## Ch 197 - Closing (Part 2)

This public trial became a hot topic among city dwellers due to its complicated procedure and the scale of the case, taking a whole three days before a verdict was decided--the court determined that as the Prime Minister, Lu Bixing’s personal experimentation on the biochip and using the Rainbow Virus in said experiment was considered a misconduct.

He violated procedural rules, but was not guilty.

When Lu Bixing walked out of the court, the main entrance was already flooded with reporting robots and other journalists, all shoving forward in hopes to crash right into the young man. The Prime Minister used his enhanced vision to see that behind this physical barricade, Lin Jingheng sat cross-legged under Lu Xin’s statue to wait for him, unwilling to go near the crowd of people.

“Alright, alright, line up in order,” Lu Bixing took half a step back, “Feel free to ask any questions while the executive office is busy right now, I still have some time to run free and talk nonsense all I want.”

The crowd of journalists laughed as someone started off with a relatively tame question, “Minister Lu, I remember that our company took a photo of you many years ago. The photo was of you holding up Minister Edward’s wheelchair with your bare hands right in front of the hospital, was that the effect of the biochip?”

“Yeah,” Lu Bixing confessed, “But I hope all sports industry personnel and the public stay calm, I promise I won’t enter any sports competition in my life--aside from maybe a beauty pageant.”

“Prime Minister Lu, what are your plans on dealing with the Nuwa Project? From what I understand, you have already destroyed a portion of the research data. The remaining data left by Doctor Laura Gordon and the AUS from both times have been sealed away by the authorities--is the government not considering pushing this type of artificial evolution to the people?”

Lu Bixing’s expression grew stern as he answered, “From the looks of it right now, there are very few success cases from the Nuwa Project. The fact that I managed to survive until this day is merely luck, and I don’t believe this is something that is suitable to be introduced to the masses. It’s still too early to push forth human evolution with this method; besides, even Eden had trouble reaching out to a large portion of the population when it was still in use. The government has decided to temporarily seal up all related data because we cannot solve the safety and other technical concerns right now. Of course, the Rainbow Virus itself and its mutation both have research merits, so under the promise of safety for our researchers in the future, the government will begin hosting medical research facilities to continue that project. We hope that one day the research will be used to benefit mankind. As for the portion of data I’ve already destroyed, I will help restore them if necessary for purposes of research in the future.”

“Will there be associated laws and bills drafted for them?”

“Of course,” Lu Bixing said, “The agencies in charge of this are currently working overtime to draft proposals right now. We have many problems in the future to solve, such as AIs, biochip drugs, and interstellar smuggling. All of these will need to be addressed and have related laws drafted; they will require new solutions to be dealt with. The faster we walk, the more issues in society we must face and the more complex they become. The government’s job in the future is to guide, regulate, and support its people, not to swallow up greed and push for technological advancement. This isn’t easy, but I believe our Eighth Galaxy government will do our best to serve.”

“Then will you be taking out the chip inside your body, Minister Lu?”

Lu Bixing answered firmly, “Yes.”

A reporting robot picked up on the joke earlier and said, “To enter sports competitions?”

Lu Bixing laughed, “Even if I don’t have biochips, a modified human body is still considered cheating--but my main reason for taking the chip out is because my family may be worried.”

The crowd of reports didn’t catch the implications behind this for a moment and all turned to look at Lu Xin’s statue at the plaza when they heard ‘family’.

Commander Lu Xin was laughing under the daylight like a careless old man, as if he wasn’t worried about his own son.

Lin Jingheng was waiting for him in the plaza. He had been watching the livestream through the giant screen above him and half-heartedly listening to Lu Bixing run wild, yet this unexpected line caught him off guard as the commander almost choked on his own spit.

A reporter from an entertainment company somehow made their way to the front. Tired of listening into all the politics, they chimed in to ask about something more interesting, “Prime Minister Lu, can you elaborate on who this family member is? Did you forget to announce it to the public? The official records show that your marriage status is still single.”

A government reporter from the capitol planet wasn’t too happy about a serious topic being interrupted by something so invasive and attempted to bring the conversation back on track, “He must be referring to Marshal Lin; the Marshal and Prime Minister have a long history together and are very close, they’ve always been brothers. But on the topic of our Marshal, I do want to ask; since the Union has recognized the independence of the Eighth Galaxy, how do you see our galaxy in the future in relation to the rest of the galaxies?”

“Perhaps unified but in separate ways. After this battle, the Union’s control over the rest of the galaxies has virtually disappeared. The Eighth Galaxy will not be the first and only independent galaxy, but we have all united on the same warfront before. So no matter if it’s fighting against biochip drugs, scientific research or for economic development, all galaxies will be working very closely together. Aside from the wormhole terminal, we’re also looking to quickly reestablish the Eighth Galaxy’s transport network into other galaxies.” Lu Bixing first answered the political concern with patience before turning towards the Qiming reporter and gave a playful wink, “As for Jingheng, he’s from the Lin family and I’m from the Lu family, how could we be brothers?”

The Qiming reporter was awestruck for a moment; perhaps he wrote an entire brothers to enemies story in his mind within that split second in his head, his expression froze as he attempted to explain himself, “Well of course there are always…. brothers not by blood, even though...”

“Even though,” Lu Bixing followed up, “Marshal Lin Jingheng has notoriously strange tastes, is a neat freak, has a bad attitude, doesn’t know when to give leeway to people when necessary, is a huge klutz during times when he was supposed to be careful and detail-oriented--he even managed to lose the custom-ordered wedding rings he made, and I heard he planned on suing a certain AI for his mistakes--”

Lin Jingheng standing in the plaza: “......”

The entire reporter crowd: “.......”

“By the way, the pair of rings he lost was even directly copied from his grandparents, he virtually stole the original design from them without making even the slightest change. I’m not even sure if he’s trying to use it to propose or offer it to his grandmother. Thankfully, I secretly prepared a backup pair behind his back,” Lu Bixing laid his hands out in defeat. “But what can I do? If you all have time, please do me a favor and go interview the Galactic Forces, ask them when their Marshal is ready to make his public announcement.”

Lu Bixing gave Lin Jingheng a smile across the plaza.

That was when the entire group of reporters finally realized what the Prime Minister had revealed and virtually exploded on spot with this world-changing news.

“Alright, that’s enough updates on my private life. The executive office will later make an official announcement regarding this trial, so please be patient.” Lu Bixing walked past the crowd of people while dodging a robot that was about to crash into his head, “Hey, careful! You can’t ruin a man’s hairstyle; I still plan on making a living with my handsome face in the future!”

Someone in the crowd managed to capture the unspoken words behind that line and asked, “May I ask what that means, Minister Lu? Do you not plan on staying the Eighth Galaxy’s Executive Prime Minister anymore? Does it have something to do with this trial?”

Lu Bixing paused slightly, a faint smile appeared by the corner of his eyes as he said in a casual tone, “A little bit, but not too much related. In fact, when the Eighth Galaxy government was first established under warfare, Minister Edward had appointed me as a temporary wartime planning advisor. After the old man passed, the war continued in and out of the galaxy, so my job had simply extended for these past years as I took the seat of Prime Minister. Now that the Eighth Galaxy has finally settled in peace, the wartime ordinance should be ready to retire now, am I right?”

“Minister Lu….”

“We’re working on finalizing the election terms,” Lu Bixing said, “If things go smoothly we should be able to push out a complete procedure for election by the latter half of the year. I’ll also be working to pass on the job to my successor within the first half of the year.”

He strolled down the stairs and walked towards the statue as he spoke.

“My future plans? Hm...raise a dog? Hahaha, I really do want a pet dog but I never had time in the past. Maybe I’ll rest for a little while and then travel around for a bit, then come back and get back to my old job.”

“What was my old job? Oh, I was just a teacher. That textbook called Introduction to Mechs was something I wrote in the past, it’s now up to Edition 6. What? Royalties for writing a textbook? That’s way more than I make yearly as a Prime Minister.”

“As for all the gossip news about the Marshal, you all can ask him yourselves...you’re scared? Oh so that that’s why you’re all asking me now? Hey pretty girl, look up and see who’s right in front of you about fifty meters away…hey, wait, why is he running…”

Lin Jingheng was making his way towards Lu Bixing when he heard those reporters trying to scoop up some gossip, felt a little guilty inside and shooed them all away. Lu Bixing lowered his head and started laughing, his hand reached into his pocket and pulled out a small box--

Another year had passed, the scattered biochip human forces were pressed down by the might of the Central Militia. The first generation with little substance reliance were forced to remove the chips as they struggled to return to society.

In the Eighth Galaxy, the capital planet and First Galaxy collaborated in a digital calendar publication that could easily switch between the two calendars used across both galaxies. This was created to support citizens working on foreign trade and affairs, and an official announcement of developing foreign relations among galaxies.

Soon after, Eighth Galaxy Prime Minister Lu Bixing announced the end of wartime and his retirement as the Executive Prime Minister.

But Minister Lu’s dreams of having a dog didn’t get realized; the thirteenth month of the same year, the Eighth Galaxy hosted its very first democratic election. The government wasn’t fully prepared at the time and was missing one more candidate to host a fair election. The Government had no choice but to put Lu Bixing’s name on the ticket to create an even number, yet everyone underestimated the popularity of this former Prime Minister when the results came in--Lu Bixing won by a landslide and was re-elected as the Prime Minister for a term of five independent years.

The following years, with the Third Galaxy as lead, all major galaxies in the former Interstellar Union announced their independence. The Union no longer had power to control them and simply offered a peaceful transfer of power to these galaxies.

The remaining anti-humanity extremist groups in the AUS were all arrested under the help of Prophet Harris. This former pirate organization was left with innocent and peaceful followers, as well as the few soldiers who had supported the Human Alliance during the war--all receiving their deserved benefits and treatments across the galaxies.

The AUS organization remained under heavy restrictions by the law, but Harris later legally registered a business under the name “Hope Ecological Agriculture Limited Company”. The company aimed to provide the freshest and most environmentally friendly natural produce, their slogan was ‘for life and nature’--the old Prophet finally managed to realize his life-long dream of farming.

Independent Year 17, all galaxies sent a representative to the Heart of the Rose and signed the first Human Union Convention.

Another page of history turned.

Independent Year 19, Lu Bixing officially retired and peacefully handed the baton to a new generation of the government. On a space station near planet Beijing-β, he built a new Starry Sea Academy.

Of course, Lin Jingheng was still on the board of trustees.

Now, the turbulent stars had finally returned onto a peaceful track.

Mankind is born from faith and will die from faith.

Mankind will be reborn from the fallen ashes of faith.

-END-

1. Othello, Shakespere. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)