

## Avatar 1271

### Chapter 1271: All-Star Armory

Han Wenqing's answer surprised the reporters somewhat. These bitter enemies of ten years had never yielded to each other on stage, but their relationship off-stage wasn't quite what the reporters had imagined it to be.

The mutual respect between heroes? The reporters weren't too interested in such a dry topic, but when Han Wenqing said that Ye Xiu's results in the Challenger League were worthy of pride, thinking about it a little, he was right. Leading a team full of players who had been scraped together from god-knows-where at the last minute, he had defeated Excellent Era and emerged victorious from the Challenger League. Why wouldn't such miraculous results be something to be proud of?

In that case, to say it was a fruitful experience was in fact completely correct?

The reporters thought about it and suddenly realized that Ye Xiu and Han Wenqing seemed to resonate on some kind of level, could it be because they were both practical and realistic people?

Practical and realistic?

When this phrase popped up in their minds, the reporters all shuddered. Calling Han Wenqing practical and realistic was fine, but Ye Xiu? The reporters refused to entertain this notion any further, they were completely unwilling to accept such an idea.

The All Star Weekend was hosted at Tyranny's stadium, but in the All-Star Competition on the last day, Tyranny's two players didn't have too prominent a role. Zhang Xinjie's Cleric was sent off to fight in the group arena, while Han Wenqing was the second to be eliminated from the team competition. As such, the fans of Team Tyranny, who were onsite, were a little dissatisfied. In the All-Star Weekend, most of the time, everyone would do their best to bolster the reputation of the host team's players, letting them perform more beautifully and becoming the MVP of the All-Star Competition. But this time, the title of All-Star Competition MVP was instead stolen away by Wang Jiexi. The Magician style that he showed off during the competition had defeated Tang Hao and Sun Xiang in quick succession, and he was unquestionably the most brilliant star in the competition.

In sharp contrast to his beautiful performance was Tang Hao's miserable one. Evidently, in this All-Star Competition, it was impossible for everyone to be happy and satisfied. Even so, the curtains finally fell on this event.

The teams each regrouped and went home, and the media wantonly reported on the various magnificent scenes produced over these three days. But to the pro players, these three days were simply not worth focusing on, because this event and the true goal that they were pursuing were completely unrelated.

As everyone returned home, each team immediately started preparing for Round 18 of the regular season.

In Round 18, the intense matches of strong teams facing each other were everywhere.

The home and away teams respectively were as such; Team Tiny Herb against Team Misty Rain, Team Blue Rain against Team Void, Team Tyranny against Team Hundred Blossoms, Team Samsara against Team Thunderclap, and finally Team Happy against Team Wind Howl.

This kind of round presented a truly difficult decision for the broadcasters, and after weighing their decisions over and over again, they finally decided to show the match between Team Samsara and Team Thunderclap. Thunderclap's performance in the team competitions this season had been discussed with great enthusiasm, but Samsara? They were far too strong, making everyone somewhat numb to their formidable strength. Team Samsara had won every single one of their 17 rounds, an achievement even more exceptional than Team Thunderclap's.

Team Thunderclap's consecutive victories in the team competition were unfortunately halted in Round 16 by Team Happy. Even so, people didn't lose faith in Thunderclap because of this. When this team that relied on precise execution of their strategies met Samsara's lineup with 4 All-Stars, what kind of a battle would ensue? This match was thus selected to be the one broadcasted live, as it would evidently attract more than enough viewers.

The players were busily preparing for their upcoming matches and the television stations were busy selecting which match to broadcast, but the big team's managements were currently collating the opinions of the team members, carefully considering whether or not any adjustments needed to be made in the winter transfer window. What about the Alliance? After this All-Star weekend, they had released a new list: the All-Star Armory.

No matter whether it was in-game or in the pro scene, of all the equipment on a character, the one that drew the most attention was without a doubt the weapon. And now, the Alliance had compiled a list of all the weapons of each character in the pro circle, letting players vote in order to decide on this "All-Star Armory".

To those in the know, this was probably in order to do a survey before making products based on these weapons, but no matter what, the players were undoubtedly excited about this. The moment the list came out, the votes poured in non-stop, and the Alliance made a new rule: the Armory rankings would reset every month, and the results would be tallied at the end of the year.

After a few days, the All-Star Armory had already seen some clear distinctions in its rankings. The weapon in first place was the Myriad Manifestation Umbrella of Team Happy's Lord Grim.

The Silver lettering showed that this was a piece of self-made equipment, but having a Level 70 weapon on the list was exceedingly irksome. Glory's update had been around for a year already, and weapons were always the number one priority of equipment research. To this date, the number of self-made weapons that hadn't reached level 75 was exceedingly small, not to mention the number one rank in the All-Star Armory.

It couldn't be helped; the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella's novelty was far too eye-catching. In the All-Star voting, Ye Xiu was ranked lower than Zhou Zekai, but in this Armory, the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella had outranked Cloud Piercer's Wildfire and Shattered Frost by a few ranks.

This result had made many people exceptionally gloomy.

It was just as those in the know had said, this All-Star Armory could be said to be a survey of the players' interest in weapon-based merchandise, but now, the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella's popularity had far exceeded that of other weapons, making the merchandise manufacturers very jittery.

Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, it wouldn't be enough to just make an umbrella and call it a day. The biggest characteristic of the weapon was its transformations, if it didn't transform, how could this weapon be popular?

This kind of thing that could transform, dismantle, and reform could be created in-game by ignoring some of the rules of science here and there. But to make it a real piece of merchandise and fully replicate its transforming ability, how much meticulous design and planning would be required? How complicated would the assembly of such a product be? How long would it take to manufacture? Finally, how much would it cost to make?

A high cost of production would mean a high price tag. The Myriad Manifestations Umbrella would have a price tag far more demonic than other merchandise, and it was so demonic that those professionals who understood the market for merchandise all felt that this was too crazy.

The Myriad Manifestations Umbrella could not be fully replicated, but not fully replicating it would definitely impact sales, making many people feel very regretful.

This Ye Xiu, why was he always such a pain? In the past, he hadn't allowed Excellent Era to make too much of a profit off of merchandise based on him. Now, he had easily created an extremely popular and famous weapon, but at the end of the day, it was unreplicable. This guy, was he deliberately suffocating these businesses? All of those in the business who had known Ye Xiu in the past were now bitterly complaining inside. But no matter what, the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella was extremely popular. Making two or three of the forms was something worth trying out, and so the producers of this weapon merchandise took the initiative to get in touch with Happy.

These matters were all handled by Chen Guo. Over the past half a year, she had gotten familiar with managing the team, allowing Ye Xiu to single-mindedly focus on the competitive aspect, so he wouldn't have to expend too much effort on other things. At present, aside from these collaborations, the winter transfer window opening was also something that would create a lot of work for the teams.

Team Happy's line of thinking during this transfer window was very simple; don't buy and don't sell. In effect, they wouldn't take part. But while not buying would allow them to avoid a few disturbances, not selling couldn't stop other teams from making inquiries.

With the impressive results that Happy had, their value of their members had also seen a significant increase. On top of that, they were a grassroots team new to the Alliance. After half a year of interaction, everyone knew that Happy's financial prowess wasn't anything impressive, and that their conditions were a little more arduous. As such, in a lot of people's eyes, Happy was like a poor child holding a brick of gold. While they couldn't snatch the entire thing away, they could spend some money to take at least a chunk of it, right?

Qiao Yifan, Steamed Bun, Mo Fan and even Ye Xiu had all been given offers by various people. But at the end of the day, the buyers all ran into a wall and had no choice but to turn back. Chen Guo didn't show

the slightest intention of letting go of any of their players, making everyone unable to see a hope in negotiating a deal.

Very quickly, on the 10th of January, Round 18 would begin. In the past ten days, there were some teams that had closed some deals, but the winter transfer window was always a small event. A transfer in core players, like in season eight, where Excellent Era managed to dig out Sun Xiang, was very rare.

In this season, some teams had stable results, while others were more unstable, but seemingly no team had a big enough conflict between their core players and normal players that they needed to use the winter transfer window to resolve it. The teams with the greatest rumors of making a transfer were Team Misty Rain and Team Wind Howl. Team Misty Rain's new playstyle this season had not created any breakthroughs for them thus far, and with 86 points, they sat at tenth place in the rankings, which was their worst results in the past few years. In a situation where their playstyle had yet to bear fruit after half a season, many people guessed that Team Misty Rain would make some adjustments to their roster.

As for Team Wind Howl, they had accumulated 112 points and sat at sixth place, which was a seemingly decent result, but it fell short of their expectations. They were a team that was aiming for the championship title, but this season, they had lost most of their matches against strong teams, causing them to begin to doubt themselves somewhat.

Upon Fang Rui's departure, the position of second-in-command had fallen to Liu Hao, who had willingly transferred in, which had somewhat disrupted the structure of Wind Howl's core. The Criminal Duo of a Brawler and Thief was what they had relied on for many years, and after Fang Rui's departure, they hadn't given up on their Thief, instead spending money to invite Team Blue Rain's Thief Player, Lin Feng, giving him the All-Star character, Doubtful Demon.

But at the end of the day, Liu Hao's Spellblade had taken a higher position, even snatching a place in the All-Star rankings, making his standing in the team very clear. And Lin Feng? He held an All-Star account in his hands, but was still far from making the list of All-Stars. In comparison with Hundred Blossoms, Zou Yuan had relied purely on the fans attachment to his account, but he still managed to send himself and Dazzling Hundred Blossoms into All-Stars. It was evident that Lin Feng's performance was not particularly outstanding, although Doubtful Demon's standing was far inferior to that of Dazzling Hundred Blossom's.

Would Team Wind Howl make any adjustments to their roster? Everyone was making their own conjectures, and some fans even appealed for them to ask Fang Rui to come back. But this kind of idea could only be a fanboy's wishful thinking. Fang Rui went to Team Happy, even going so far as to put in the effort to change classes. Now, when his class change had finally begun to show results, and when Happy was still a step higher than Wind Howl in rank, they wanted him to go back to Wind Howl and revert to playing a Thief? These people, they were probably counting on Fang Rui to have some kind of undying love for Wind Howl...

Would such a situation occur?

Surprisingly, there were really reporters who went online to ask Fang Rui this question.

"I will go back," Fang Rui replied.

The reporter was completely stunned, then ecstatic, this news was truly too explosive. Fang Rui, he was actually willing to return to Wind Howl?

"On the 10th of January, I will return," Fang Rui even gave a concrete timing afterwards.

When the reporter looked at it, he suddenly understood, Fang Rui would return, but as an opponent, although...

"Great Fang Rui, the 10th of January is Happy's home game!" the reporter reminded him.

"Is it? How stupid of me, what a waste of my beautiful lines! After playing at All-Stars, I can't even count now!" Fang Rui shouted.

#### Chapter 1272: Meeting Force With Force

January 10 finally arrived. Neither Misty Rain nor Wind Howl made any transfers before this day. Wind Howl's original team travelled to City H one day ahead of time to warm up and get used to the set-up. Wind Howl's vice-captain Liu Hao received a good welcome from City H. It could be seen that the Excellent Era fans were still supportive of this former Excellent Era player. In the pre-match interview, Liu Hao expressed his deepest condolences towards Excellent Era's disbandment and wished New Excellent Era good luck. He also talked about New Excellent Era's current situation in the Challenger League very precisely and clearly, immediately touching the feelings of many Excellent Era fans.

As for the upcoming match, Liu Hao didn't talk too much about it. Wind Howl's captain, Tang Hao, didn't accept the pre-match interview. After the All-Stars Weekend, there were rumors that Tang Hao was feeling down because of his performance at All-Stars. These rumors were rather surprising. Who would have thought that this God would actually care so much about All-Stars?

"Our captain? His condition is great. He didn't accept the interview because he wants to fully focus on this match. Wind Howl has performed well in our previous two matches. We want this momentum to continue! Happy's performance this season has already told us that they aren't a weak team, so we also need to prepare for them seriously," Liu Hao said about Tang Hao.

Wind Howl's Liu Hao and Guo Yang originated from City H, but they didn't have too much to do with Happy. When Happy beat Excellent Era in the Challenger League, the two of them had already left Excellent Era.

However, Wind Howl and Happy were only 5 points apart on the rankings. After this match, the placings might change. Fang Rui, a former Wind Howl player, was another focus point in this match. Many people wanted to see Fang Rui take revenge. After all, his departure from Wind Howl had been quite sad. Everyone saw that Wind Howl had let go of Fang Rui to construct a new team.

Tonight, Happy's home ground, the Xiaoshan Stadium, was a full-house. Happy's outstanding record had conquered more and more City H Glory players. Just by looking at the number of seats filled, you wouldn't be able to tell that Happy was a new team in the Alliance. Skill was what mattered in competition. This logic wasn't wrong.

The match was about to begin. First up was the individual competition. Happy's home crowd immediately roared with all their strength, "SEVENTEEN!"

17!

If Ye Xiu won this individual round, his win streak would be at 17. He had always been the first to go up in the individual competition, so before the lineup even came out, Happy's fans were already cheering.

Happy's fans didn't shout for nothing. Ye Xiu stood up from his seat and waved his hands towards the crowd. Amidst the energetic cheers and applause, he went onto the stage.

Ye Xiu had always been a symbol in this city's Glory community. After his return, his overwhelming record-breaking win streak and the unmasking of his mysteriousness amassed countless fans. The majority of these fans were on the older side. Among them, quite a few had already left the Glory scene, but Ye Xiu's return aroused their former passion and nostalgia for the game. In the Glory game, many old accounts that hadn't logged in for a long time started playing again.

Ye Xiu was the symbol of that generation. That generation's players couldn't feel the same passion from chasing the new Gods like Zhou Zekai, Sun Xiang, and Tang Hao. But now, their passion had been reignited on the stage.

Ye Xiu walked onto the stage. Who would Team Wind Howl send out as their first player?

The current consensus by numerous analysts was that Ye Xiu's fixed ordering in the individual competition was a way to gain the upper hand in the morale battle.

Ye Xiu always appeared first. He never hid. Then, how could the opponents respond?

Send out a strong player to fight? If that player lost, the team's morale would take a hit. If the team sent out a weak player, it would be like Tian Ji's horse race, but breaking the team's momentum right at the start of the match might not achieve such ideal effects.

As a result, Happy's move was difficult to deal with. We're going to put our strongest player up first and we'll wait for you to beat him. Do you dare? Ye Xiu's win streak seemed to be taunting them.

A weak team wouldn't dare to take up this challenge and usually just threw away this round. But some teams really would try to fight this morale battle. After all, if they really could beat Ye Xiu, it would be a huge blow to Happy's morale and a huge boost to their own team's morale. Happy's move was a double-edged sword. However, Ye Xiu was confident in waving this double-edged sword around. In the past 16 rounds, he had only injured and never been injured.

What will Wind Howl do?

This ambitions of this team were very high. The ambitions of this team's captain were very high. The ambitions of this team's rookies were very high. It was unlikely for them to throw away the first match. Who would they send up? Their captain Tang Hao? Would they send their core player to fight Ye Xiu and give up on the group arena? Speaking of which, no team had made this arrangement yet. Would Wind Howl do it?

Some looked towards Wind Howl's seats. Some stared at the screen. On Wind Howl's lineup display, the name of their first player slowly flipped into view.

Tang Hao!

They really sent out Tang Hao. Sure enough, Wind Howl was the first to take the gamble\*, directly bringing out their captain and core player to fight against Ye Xiu.

Wind Howl's loyal fans, who came all this way to support their team, cheered for their team's aggressiveness and pride. However, their shouts were quickly drowned out by the boos and laughs by the home crowd.

If we aren't remembering wrong, didn't your captain Tang Hao just get destroyed by our captain at All-Stars?

Happy's fans had the lung power. Even though All-Stars was just a showmatch, who cared? Just find an example and spout it as the truth.

What could Wind Howl do? Explain patiently that All-Stars didn't count? Perhaps that might work in a forum, but in this stadium's atmosphere, words alone didn't hold enough power. They could only feign ignorance. However, Happy's taunts were quite painful to listen to.

The one in the most pain would be Tang Hao, though. At All-Stars, even though the public didn't care, he definitely did care. Now, because of the taunts from Happy, he cared even more. His two fists were clenched tightly. These two hands had helped him win everything, taking down all those voices he didn't want to hear. This time, he had decided to use these two hands again, to silence the Happy fans.

"Victory will be Wind Howl's!"

As soon as the match began, Tang Hao immediately declared that he would win, and Demon Subduer rushed straight towards the center. At All-Stars, no one had moved strategically, so Tang Hao didn't either. What's more, when Ye Xiu chose 1v1 stages, he never picked anything complicated. His maps were always the simple and direct.

The two characters met decisively at the center of the map. Lord Grim had a longer range. His Myriad Manifestations Umbrella's gun form turned into a Gatling Gun and sprayed a rain of bullets. Tang Hao didn't retreat. Demon Subduer tore right through the bullet rain. It was just a Gatling Gun; it wasn't enough to hold him back.

Gatling Gun finished firing in the blink of an eye, and Demon Subduer had forcibly pulled the distance closer. Lord Grim still had plenty of skills though. His character retreated, while firing Anti-Tank Missiles. Three missiles formed a triangle, shooting out from the gun in parallel like a fan.

However, these still couldn't stop Demon Subduer's rush. Demon Subduer weaved between two missiles precisely and swiftly. This little technique was nothing in front of top Gods.

And at this moment, Lord Grim had finally entered Demon Subduer's attack range. Demon Subduer raised his hands and threw a handful of sand. You could take the hit, but you had to turn your gaze away from it. However, Lord Grim had an umbrella in his hands. With a whoosh, it opened and blocked the sand.

This response was within Tang Hao's expectations. The purpose of a direct Sand Toss was for that instant where the opponent's sight was no longer on him. Whether it was turning around or blocking

with a shield, the outcome was the same. Demon Subduer threw the Paralysis Needle he had prepared. If the needle hit a target, it would paralyze the target. Brawlers were filled with these dirty little tricks.

Paralysis Needle was thrown practically the instant Lord Grim's umbrella opened. Tang Hao was banking on Ye Xiu closing his umbrella after blocking the Sand Toss. In that case, the Paralysis Needle couldn't be dodged and it would strike Lord Grim.

But after the Sand Toss was blocked, Lord Grim didn't retract his umbrella. His umbrella stayed wide open. The precisely timed Paralysis Needle stabbed the umbrella canopy and fell down without even making a sound.

Tang Hao was gloomy. Seeing that the umbrella wasn't going to be closed any time soon, he might as well use it as a cover. Demon Subduer rushed forward, holding a Brick in his hands. The Brick would be thrown as soon as he reached him.

Lord Grim didn't retract his umbrella, but he rushed forward as well.

Charge! A Knight skill. The shield was a Knight equipment, and it didn't stop this skill from being used. Using Charge with a shield would carry the same momentum, but it lacked the damage. Tang Hao didn't dare disregard it. A Shield Charge dealt no damage, but shields had Shield Attack. At All-Stars, Ye Xiu had used this trick and even Huang Shaotian fell for it. Tang Hao remembered that scene and didn't dare borrow the shield as a cover anymore. He hastily shifted diagonally and pulled the distance between them a bit. He raised his arms and threw a Brick.

But in this instant, Tang Hao clearly saw that the Lord Grim behind the umbrella was looking towards the side, staring right at him.

My opponent knows!

By the time Tang Hao realized this, the Brick had already been thrown by Demon Subduer. Then, he saw Lord Grim draw his sword from the umbrella handle with a Sword Draw. A sword light flashed out in front of him. Dodge? Demon Subduer had just stepped towards him. Which way should he dodge?

Forward? Backwards? Left? Right?

The sword light covered all of his options!

Hit!

Demon Subduer's blood sprayed into the air.

Chapter 1273: Completely Crushed

The attack landed in such a simple manner.

Splattering blood and cutting down Tang Hao's rising spirit.

Demon Subduer's Brick was easily dodged, while he himself took a hit. How could Ye Xiu only attack just once? After Sword Draw, the Myriad Manifestation Umbrella's shield form retracted, and its numerous other forms were displayed as all sorts of skills struck Demon Subduer.



Unspecialized characters fight fast!

Unwittingly, the crowd had started gasping at Lord Grim's combo. Even though they had no idea what exactly Ye Xiu was doing in his combo game, they could see Demon Subduer being hit by a bunch of different low-leveled skills. From this, they knew that Lord Grim's combo had started.

So far, 16 players had lost to these swift attacks. Among these players included nervous rookies, talented rookies, matchups tactically chosen to be thrown away, and strong players who wanted to give him a try. There were also former Gods like Zhang Jiale and Sun Zheping.

However, it was the first time Ye Xiu had encountered a team's core player.

And what was the outcome?

The people carrying hopes for Tang Hao were quickly disappointed.

He... was no different from anyone else!

Victory belongs to Wind Howl?

Tang Hao's declaration before the match now just seemed like empty words. The powerlessness he was showing right now indicated that he was being completely overwhelmed.

What's going on? This isn't All-Stars.

Quite a few people wondered. They felt like this wasn't Tang Hao's true strength.

Tang Hao also thought that this wasn't his true strength, but the problem was that he wasn't able to display it.

After Ye Xiu took first blood, Tang Hao had felt a bit defeated. His fighting spirit and willpower had taken a small blow, but they were still there. He was waiting for an opportunity to counterattack, waiting for an opening.

But... there were no openings.

It was just four words, but what level of fundamentals did that require?

No matter how haughty Tang Hao was. No matter how confident he was that he could beat anyone. He didn't dare believe that he could play on stage without exposing any openings.

No one could do it. At least that was what Tang Hao thought up until today. But right now, facing this opponent, he couldn't find even the slightest opening.

How is this possible?

Am I just not perceptive enough?

Tang Hao didn't believe a person couldn't have any openings, so he started doubting his observational abilities. His confidence had already started to waver.

Tang Hao didn't know whether this doubt had sprouted starting from today, or from that day at All-Stars. He only knew that he didn't want to lose, yet he couldn't find any ways to win.

Keep fighting like this?

Seeing Demon Subduer's health dropping, Tang Hao started to panic.

What if I really can't find any openings? Could I be taken out in one go by a near full health Ye Xiu? In Ye Xiu's sixteen victories, no one had lost this miserably, no? Could it be that I'm worse than even them?

"Impossible!!!" Tang Hao roared. No one could hear him though. Voice communication was only enabled at All-Stars. In regular season matches, the competitive rules were back to normal.

With this roar, Tang Hao sprung forward. He ignored Lord Grim's next attack, activating Reinforce Iron Bones, and forced his way over!

Instant defeat.

Tang Hao's choice wasn't some sort of magical road out; it looked more like a trapped beast's final struggle. Ye Xiu saw a hundred different ways to deal with it. He simply chose one of them and knocked down Demon Subduer.

The crowd erupted into loud boos. Tang Hao's struggle looked like there was zero brain behind it. You want to break through an unspecialized's combo like that?

"Too naive!" Happy's fans shouted loudly.

The sound couldn't reach Tang Hao's ears, but he knew better than anyone else what he was doing.

If once isn't enough, then again!

Tang Hao rushed forward again like a brute, continue to charge at him without any thought.

You look as if you've got a hundred ways to deal with me? Fine, then I'll try them out one by one. Let's see just how many you've got.

Tang Hao continued to go for it, but the crowd's laughter was gradually dying down.

Tang Hao's playing looked pathetic, so much so that it didn't look like he deserved his God status. However, when there was no way out, being able to lower oneself and daring to try such humiliating choices showed just how pure Tang Hao's pursuit for victory was. Many people thought his All-Stars performance was disgraceful, but right now, his actions showed he didn't care about that.

He wasn't playing for honor, he was playing to win.

Unfortunately, victory wasn't as simple as just letting go of everything. No one knew just how many ways Ye Xiu had to deal with this situation, but everyone could see how Tang Hao's countless attempts ended with him being beaten back. The crowd stopped laughing. Ye Xiu didn't let up at all.

Tang Hao might have the energy to keep trying, but Demon Subduer didn't have unlimited health.

Again and again, he was unable to break through Lord Grim's offense. All he faced was an even stronger retaliation. Finally, Demon Subduer's health fell to zero.

I lost!

But he wasn't as humiliated or embarrassed as he'd been at All-Stars.

Wang Jiexi's Magician playstyle had been too abrupt and too unexpected. Tang Hao had been caught unprepared. He was probably more resentful about being cheated by this sort of surprise move. But right now, he wasn't facing anything surprising. He wasn't caught off guard. He was being completely suppressed in a real fight. It was because his opponent was better than him.

So there was someone this skilled?

When Demon Subduer fell, Tang Hao didn't feel humiliated, but rather humbled.

"I'll win next time!" He was still as stubborn as ever. He seemed to have forgotten that his declaration of victory had been shut down.

"We'll see next time," Ye Xiu replied.

The crowd let out a sigh of relief.

Sigh of relief? Why did they let out a sigh of relief? Everyone suddenly started feeling a bit strange. Tang Hao was just thrashing around without any brain. How could he win like that? Why were they worried for Ye Xiu?

When Ye Xiu came down from the stage, the crowd clapped and cheered, but there was a trace of hesitation mixed in.

As for Tang Hao? He was the loser, and one who lost miserably, but his steps were firm. Everyone looked at him with complicated feelings. They couldn't say why though.

Ye Xiu walked down from the stage and returned to his seat.

"Beautiful playing! You really taught that guy a lesson!" Chen Guo went over to Ye Xiu and praised him. She didn't like Tang Hao. Watching Tang Hao get destroyed by Ye Xiu felt amazing.

"It was well done," Fang Rui nodded. "But it wasn't easy, no?"

"What?" Chen Guo was puzzled. When she looked at Ye Xiu, she discovered that he didn't look too happy about his win. Even though Ye Xiu wasn't the type to show his emotions easily, his expression wasn't very relaxed despite winning. Chen Guo realized her perspective of the match was too shallow. She looked at Su Mucheng, and from Su Mucheng's gaze towards Ye Xiu, she could see... worry.

"It wasn't easy," Ye Xiu said.

"Why?" Chen Guo asked.

"Boss... do you really think completely suppressing a player of Tang Hao's caliber is easy?" Fang Rui said.

"Ah?"

"The reason he could do it was because he was going all out the entire time! That's very exhausting," Fang Rui said.

Chen Guo now understood that Ye Xiu had used up much more energy than normal to achieve such a beautiful win. Beat Tang Hao? It wasn't just that. He had completely suppressed him.

"Why did he have to do that?" Chen Guo was feeling worried. Isn't a win just good enough? Why did he have to pay such a price to win so thoroughly? Was that necessary? Chen Guo felt distressed.

"Why? Because I didn't want to lose!" Ye Xiu said.

Not lose?

Chen Guo was stumped. Ye Xiu meant that if he hadn't completely suppressed Tang Hao, if Tang Hao had an opportunity to counterattack, he might have lost to Tang Hao?

Chen Guo looked at Fang Rui, Su Mucheng, everyone.

Everyone was quiet. No one called Ye Xiu's words into question.

Chen Guo couldn't say anything else.

"You... rest well!" She could only say these words.

The match continued. Even though she was worried about Ye Xiu, the match was going well. In the individual competition, Happy sent out Mo Fan and Su Mucheng, who won their matches, making the score 3-0.

The entire crowd had forgotten the weird feeling felt from the first individual round and started chanting 10-0. The points in the individual competition were the most scattered, so these points were often the biggest barriers to a 10-0. However, Happy had swept the individual competition and were on their way to 10-0! So far, whenever Happy won every round in the individual competition, they had always gotten a 10-0!

Hearing the crowd's cheers, Chen Guo unexpectedly didn't share the same excitement as the crowd. She didn't forget the exhaustion Ye Xiu felt after the first round and suddenly felt a bad premonition.

The group arena began. Happy's first player was Fang Rui and his Qi Master, Boundless Sea.

The entire crowd applauded.

Even though Fang Rui had switched to a Qi Master, he was as dirty as ever. His playstyle might not be well-liked and might be spurned by the Qi Master community, but among Happy's supporters, a lot of people still admired him. For a newly joined team, everyone cared more about winning. As for a good win record and beautiful playing, those goals could be left for those powerhouses who were consistently solid! Happy's fan base was more practical. Victory was greater than anything else.

A dirty win was still a win, no?

Amidst the cheers, Fang Rui went onto the stage and into the player booth. His opponent was Team Wind Howl's Zhao Yuzhe.

"Senior, it seems like you're doing well at Happy!" At the start of the match, Zhao Yuzhe took the initiative to message Fang Rui.

Chapter 1274: Familiar People

"hehehehehehehe"

The response that Zhao Yuzhe received was seven consecutive "hes." Coming from the master of playing dirty, this sent a chill down everyone's spines. They instantly felt that not only would Zhao Yuzhe lose, he would lose miserably.

"What is senior laughing about?" After Fang Rui's seven "hes," Zhao Yuzhe's reaction was fairly calm. He wouldn't feel any chill from Fang Rui's dirty playing. From the very start, he had never thought highly of this senior. But for a Thief to play dirty, that was excusable, as this class relied on playing dirty to reach full potential. But now that he had switched to Qi Master, yet he was still this dirty, that wasn't because of the class, that was because of the person himself. This person was dirty, so whatever class he played was dirty.

"I'm laughing at you!" Fang Rui answered.

"Laughing at me about what?" Zhao Yuzhe asked.

"Laughing that you still have the time to chat. I'm already behind you right now, don't you know?" said Fang Rui.

"Haha, senior is as funny as always." Zhao Yuzhe of course wouldn't be tricked by something like this. Although he was chatting with Fang Rui in the channel, he was very careful with his character's controls. He was rotating his camera often, doing his best not to leave any blind spots.

As long as you closely watched the opponent's movements, then there was nothing to fear from dirty playing. That was what Zhao Yuzhe believed. Back when they were teammates, during practice matches within the team, his win rate against Fang Rui had been relatively high.

The group arena map was Forest Corridor, a relatively complex map for 1v1 matches, suitable for the dirty playstyle. But for an Elementalist, a class that required casting to launch attacks, extra cover wasn't a bad thing.

Neither character charged directly towards the center. Both were steadily approaching using all sorts of cover. The crowd was also gradually affected by this kind of atmosphere. The shouts became quieter, quieter, until it was almost completely silent, and then, the two characters met!

Boom!

Zhao Yuzhe was the first to attack. Elementalist Beautiful Light waved his staff and launched a Fireball. This sort of low-level spell could be cast almost instantaneously for a pro character. For an Elementalist's equipment, cast speed was one of the most important attributes to boost.

Boundless Sea, who had been trying to take a roundabout path to flank him, had actually been directly seen through by Zhao Yuzhe. The stadium was filled with sighs of regret. Boundless Sea rolled and dodged, and with a flip of his palm, he pushed out a Qi Bullet.

He sure has a few tricks, huh?

The light of the Qi Bullet directly covered Zhao Yuzhe's view. He laughed coldly and cleanly used a Teleport.

Using this sort of skill to dodge a Qi Bullet was indeed a bit wasteful, but Zhao Yuzhe was clear that Fang Rui only used the Qi Bullet as a cover. The true attack would come after. A Teleport would allow him to avoid both the interference of the Qi Bullet and the follow-up attack, wasn't that convenient?

Beautiful Light raised his staff, preparing to fire another spell, but he suddenly saw the air around him rippling in an unusual pattern.

Qi Blade!

Pu!

Zhao Yuzhe had no time to react, and Beautiful Light's cast was brutally cut short by this attack. But what really shocked Zhao Yuzhe was the sheer accuracy of this attack. Had the opponent predicted early on that he would come to this position? And if that was the case... how could a Qi Blade be the only attack?

Of course it wasn't!

With that Thief posture that looked particularly ugly on a Qi Master, Boundless Sea flew toward him. In the midst of his leaping, he slapped his palms against the ground, using a Landmine Quake after that Qi Blade.

The Qi spread rapidly along the ground. Beautiful Light, having just been hit by that Qi Blade, didn't have the chance to escape the range. He was shaken by the Qi, and sent staggering and falling over. Boundless Sea activated Qi Flowing Cloud, instantly arriving in front of Beautiful Light, Pulse Break: Break Intelligence, Flash Burst, then a Qigong Blast, and at the very end there was even a Sky Piercing Strike!

The Qi Master's fierce attacks surged toward him, instantly landing on Beautiful Light's body. The rippling Qi energy lifted his robe, and Beautiful Light looked like a giant balloon as he floated upward. No blood spilled, but his slipping health let everyone know that even if these weren't bloody attacks, the damage they brought was no inferior to any hacking and slashing attack.

"How about it? A pleasant surprise?" Fang Rui began his trash talk attack in the channel.

Surprise, sure. But pleasant? Zhao Yuzhe of course didn't feel that at all.

"Don't just think that you understand me well! Teammates are mutual, I'm no stranger to your fighting either. The only difference is that, as your senior, I was kinder," Fang Rui said.

As your senior I was kinder?

What did that mean? That in their previous practice fights, he hadn't been using his full strength?

No! How was that possible!!

Zhao Yuzhe didn't believe it. He instantly adjusted Beautiful Light's condition, prepared to launch a counterattack, but... where was Boundless Sea?

The target had vanished.

Zhao Yuzhe was shaken. He immediately used an Electric Ring, creating a coil of lightning around him. No matter from which angle the opponent wanted to approach, he would first be zapped by this lightning. Even though this low-level skill didn't cause much damage, it could serve as some protection.

"Electric Ring? Aren't you forgetting something?" Boundless Sea had vanished from Zhao Yuzhe's sight, but Fang Rui's messages were still constantly appearing in the match channel before his eyes.

"I'm... not a Thief anymore!" Fang Rui said. Boundless Sea suddenly appeared, but he was... above Beautiful Light.

Thieves had the most fearsome tool at their disposal for launching close-range sneak attacks: Stealth. Electric Ring? It was undoubtedly a useful countermeasure towards Stealth. When Zhao Yuzhe couldn't find Boundless Sea, he instantly activated Electric Ring, because... he thought that Boundless Sea would use Stealth to quietly get in close range? Had he subconsciously treated Fang Rui as the King of Thieves like when he had been in Wind Howl?

But he was no longer a Thief. He could no longer use Stealth or such techniques to sneakily come into close range.

Where was Boundless Sea?

Zhao Yuzhe spun around in a full 360-degree circle several times, finally stopping at that fallen willow tree in the 2 o'clock direction.

He'd overlooked something?

Zhao Yuzhe suddenly raised his camera view and saw above his head the near-invisible, silent glittering.

Spirit Reaches to the Rainbow!

The level 55 Qi Master Awakening skill. Qi was pushed through the whole body, and what was blasted out was no longer just Qi, but the Qi Master himself as well.

Boundless Sea, like a heavy bomb, fell from the sky. Qi collected around his whole body, thick and radiant, slicing through the air like a rainbow, falling straight down and crashing into Beautiful Light.

Boom!

The Qi around Boundless Sea exploded when he hit Beautiful Light. It wasn't as bright as the surging fireworks of a Launcher's cannonfire, nor was it as elegant as the light of an Elementalist's spells. Even the light of the rainbow around his body faded in that instant of impact. But because this was the case, the damage caused by this attack was incredibly apparent.

The surrounding plants, the rocks, the mud, were all bent out of shape from the pressure of the Qi, some directly breaking. As for Beautiful Light, the direct target of this attack, even less needed to be said. Spirit Rainbow Blast was an attack that could be charged up, and while Fang Rui was chattering away at Fang Rui, the audience could see clearly that Boundless Sea had gotten into position early and begun charging.

"I'm not done yet!" Fang Rui yelled. Spirit Rainbow Blast was only a starting attack; more would follow. But compared to most combos, which would save the powerful attack for the end, Fang Rui used a

powerful attack to blast the opponent first. Afterward, if there was an opening he'd continue, otherwise even just one powerful attack was worth it.

Zhao Yuzhe had clearly been thrown off by the powerful attack. This was a good chance for Fang Rui to seize the opening, and he didn't hesitate as he blasted another series of Qi Master attacks, which appeared gentle, but hit so hard that Zhao Yuzhe even felt pain on his real body.

How did things end up like this?

Zhao Yuzhe didn't understand. He hadn't dared to say his victory was guaranteed, but he had originally had a lot of confidence. But why? Why was he battered so harshly that he had no way of parrying? He couldn't predict the opponent's movements, but his own choice of position, his reactions, all seemed to be within Fang Rui's calculations.

Was it really like Fang Rui had said? Fang Rui understood him extremely well, but he had never taken advantage of this point before?

How could that be possible?

Zhao Yuzhe didn't believe it. He wasn't convinced. Beautiful Light stood up again, rushed forward... and in the end, lost the match brutally.

"You actually hid your strength even from your teammates?" In the last moment before he fell, Zhao Yuzhe shouted, full of venom.

"Hehe, dirty, no?" This was Fang Rui's answer.

In the first battle of the group arena, Fang Rui's Boundless Sea used only ten percent of his health to defeat Zhao Yuzhe's Beautiful Light. The crowd was filled with joking and laughter, and they threw all sorts of ridicule at Zhao Yuzhe as he walked out of the competitor booth.

"Is Fang Rui really so evil to actually hide his true strength even from his teammates?" But some people were still wondering about this question, including Chen Guo.

"Of course not. That kid just doesn't understand," said Ye Xiu.

"What doesn't he understand?" Chen Guo said.

"He doesn't understand that understanding your teammate and understanding your opponent are two different things. Before, Fang Rui treated him as a teammate, and now, he treated him as an opponent. As for him... he probably only knows how to understand people from the position of an opponent!" Ye Xiu said.

"Oh..." Chen Guo nodded, beginning to understand.

At this time, Wind Howl's second player of the group arena stood up.

Lin Feng.

Lin Feng, a transfer from Blue Rain to Wind Howl. Immediately upon his arrival, he obtained the top Thief character, Doubtful Demon. Lin Feng's luck was quite good. But he hadn't grasped this opportunity very well, and on the final All-Star rankings this year, there was no Thief representative.



And now, Lin Feng was challenging Doubtful Demon's old owner. He, who hadn't completed the inheritance of this character very well, what kind of answer would he give in this battle?

"Hahaha, my luck today is really good! First it's my familiar old teammate, and now it's my familiar old character. I can already hear the cheers of victory." When the battle started, Fang Rui was already beginning his trash talk. But, his old teammate, and the character he'd fought with for so many years, for them to suddenly become opponents, this... was this really good luck that could make the heart happy? No one would believe this.

Chapter 1275: The Battle Thief

The second battle of the group arena began, and neither character took the conventional path. Fang Rui's Qi Master continued to play dirty, while Lin Feng's Thief directly charged forward. Indeed, a Thief charged forward. In most people's eyes, this was not the conventional thing to do. However, this was the speciality of Lin Feng's thief. His playstyle was the less commonly seen style for Thieves, the so-called Battle Thief playstyle.

Wind Howl's style, after taking in Tang Hao and discovering the potential of rookie Zhao Yuzhe, had changed greatly. Under the powerful push of these two players, the dirty playstyle that had existed in this team for a long time suddenly became more and more unsuitable. Because of this, even the one called the master of playing dirty, Fang Rui, had been forced to leave.

Wind Howl hadn't given up on their All-Star Thief character Doubtful Demon because of this, but clearly they weren't going to find another dirty-playing Thief player here, otherwise what was the point in having Fang Rui leave? If talking about playing dirty, Fang Rui was already called the master.

And so they took in Lin Feng from Blue Rain, a rare Battle Thief player in the pro circle. Wind Howl hoped to change the Thief's style to let this All-Star character continue to demonstrate its power. But after half a season, Doubtful Demon vanished from the ranks of the All-Stars, proving that his ability hadn't been displayed as effectively as they'd hoped. When the winter transfer window opened, Lin Feng and Doubtful Demon were surrounded by many rumors. At this time, if he still wanted to stay in the team, he had to prove himself. If he could defeat the opponent in front of him now, Doubtful Demon's former owner, who was expelled for not fitting with Wind Howl's new style, that would be the best proof that Wind Howl's choice was worth it.

And Wind Howl chose Lin Feng exactly because his Thief style wasn't like others. So, when facing Fang Rui, he charged forward even more determined than usual. He wanted to more clearly display the new Battle Thief style of Doubtful Demon under his hand.

The so-called Battle Thief involved a focus on the Thief's direct attacking skills, supplemented by the trapping skills, resulting in instantaneous explosions of high damage output. As of now, it was a rare playstyle in both the professional circle and in-game. And Lin Feng could already be considered the leader of this style. In Blue Rain, although he wasn't a first-string player, he still had stable chances to appear onstage, and his performances deserved praise. But when he arrived at Wind Howl and obtained the number one Thief, when he had to bear higher hopes from the team, he seemed to have lost himself a bit.

I have to prove myself!

Lin Feng controlled Doubtful Demon to move toward the center of the map. When he found no trace of Boundless Sea, he knew that the opponent was playing dirty again, and would appear from who-knows-where. After watching the previous battle, Lin Feng's camera observed not just the four directions around him but also the high points from which attacks could be fired. He carefully controlled Doubtful Demon to move around, searching for a position where he wouldn't have to defend from too many directions.

"A Doubtful Demon that's instantly discovered, what an eyesore!" In the match channel, a message from Fang Rui suddenly popped up.

Is he here?

Lin Feng hurriedly turned his view, left and right, in front and behind, above, but he didn't discover anything.

"Your Shadow Trap at position 124, 119, thought I wouldn't see it?" Fang Rui said.

Lin Feng's heart grew cold. When he'd had Doubtful Demon place down that trap, he'd been especially careful to observe his surroundings. But this Boundless Sea had still been hiding somewhere and managed to discover it? A trap that had been discovered had no purpose anymore...

But the audience was even more shocked.

Because they, with the omniscient view, knew clearly that Boundless Sea right now was already quietly watching Doubtful Demon. But, when Doubtful Demon had placed that Shadow Trap, Boundless Sea was still taking the roundabout path. He hadn't seen it at all.

This was a guess! But he'd guessed so accurately.

Fang Rui understood the map, understood the Thief class, and it looked like he understood Lin Feng as well...

If the trap had been seen by the opponent, then the intention was also seen through, thought Lin Feng. He could only make adjustments. But more importantly, where was Boundless Sea right now? He still hadn't discovered him, but to have seen Doubtful Demon planting that trap...

Over there!

The slight rustling of the grass didn't escape Lin Feng's notice. Doubtful Demon used an Assassin's Shining Cut to fly forward through the grass, but when the character arrived, he didn't see Boundless Sea.

"Too gullible! Battle Thieves are just that simple-minded!" As Fang Rui mocked him with a somewhat personal attack, Boundless Sea shot an attack from the side of the road and Sky Piercing Strike instantly enveloped Doubtful Demon.

But, nothing happened!

He hadn't suffered damage, nor had he been jostled by the rippling Qi energy. Doubtful Demon turned and charged toward Boundless Sea, as though the Sky Piercing Strike simply didn't exist.

"Maxed out Escape?" Fang Rui commented.

Escape, a Thief skill. It granted a certain probability to completely nullify the effects of the opponent's next attack, and at max level this probability reached 100%. For professional players, if this skill was to be leveled up, it would be leveled up to the maximum, because only then could it be reliably used in a match. A probability under 100% was an opening.

In Fang Rui's hands, Doubtful Demon hadn't learned this skill. But now that Lin Feng had changed Doubtful Demon to a Battle Thief, he had clearly added the points to this skill to max it out.

Before the Sky Piercing Strike landed, Doubtful Demon had already activated Escape, so this attack was forcibly negated, and now Lin Feng cleanly rushed to attack.

"An expected choice!" Fang Rui was still nagging, but Boundless Sea had already easily avoided Doubtful Demon. He'd expected Doubtful Demon's skill choice, and so he'd had ample preparation for this current situation.

Boundless Sea, who'd activated Qi Flowing Cloud to easily avoid Doubtful Demon's attack, pushed out his palm to send the Qi that had gathered flying toward Doubtful Demon.

Flash Burst!

Directly using such a powerful attack was a common technique of Fang Rui's dirty playing Qi Master, very different from the classical Qi Master style. Most Qi Masters played in a very standard way, using small attacks for a bit of damage and containment, and once they'd grasped the rhythm, they'd unleash a powerful attack.

And for Fang Rui, he used his dirty playing to create the opportunity to use such a powerful attack.

Dirty tactics, dirty movement, dirty attack timing.

This Flash Burst was the result of combining all of the previous dirty playing methods. Under countless exclamations from the crowd of "too dirty," this palm hit Doubtful Demon.

The Qi spread around Doubtful Demon damaged him like crazy. Evidently, Fang Rui didn't hold back even as he attacked this character that had been with him for five years. One brutal blow after another landed, and it seemed that the dirty Boundless Sea wasn't dirty at all right now, as he used standard Qi Master attacks and techniques to teach Doubtful Demon a direct and harsh lesson. But the instant that this flurry of attacks ended, Boundless Sea immediately scurried away again, in his usual dirty playing fashion.

After adjusting himself, Lin Feng once again lost all trace of Boundless Sea, but this time he wasn't as calm as he was before. Doubtful Demon moved around quickly, changing his position often. As he searched for Boundless Sea, he ensured that he wouldn't be exposed in one position for too long.

And so he quickly found Boundless Sea. Or, more accurately, Fang Rui voluntarily made Boundless Sea appear in front of him.

A sudden, completely unexpected appearance, it would stun anyone. But coming from Fang Rui, the stadium was once again filled with shouts of "too dirty!"

Yes, a very dirty appearance, so dirty that Lin Feng was completely unprepared.

Countercurrent!

Boundless Sea used the lowest level knock-up attack, the most long-ranged knock-up skill among all classes.

Doubtful Demon was unwillingly sent into the air by the Qi waves that Boundless Sea sent out, and naturally he became a perfect target for midair attacks. The skills to escape these attacks wouldn't have very short cooldowns, and they hadn't restored yet, so Lin Feng could only himself search for ways to escape the opponent's attacks... But Fang Rui was truly too familiar with Thieves, even if this was a Battle Thief.

Lin Feng struggled to steady his heart as he carefully observed, and finally, he discovered that Boundless Sea had already completely finished his series of attacks.

Lin Feng's heart sank into helplessness.

Fang Rui was the previous user of Doubtful Demon, the one whom he had replaced in Wind Howl. If he could win this match, then for Lin Feng it would be a powerful way to cement his place in the team. But who knew that Lin Feng suffered so much psychological pressure from Fang Rui? Lin Feng wasn't Tang Hao, nor was he Zhao Yuzhe. The person he was facing now was, to him, the king amongst them Thieves!

Lin Feng was a player from Season 7. He'd ultimately chosen to become an unusual type of Thief, a Battle Thief.

He had never explained to anyone his reason for choosing Battle Thief.

In reality, he chose to play as a Battle Thief only because he felt that he needed to open a different path. He felt that, in the standard Thief style, Fang Rui had already achieved the ultimate level, and he himself had no way of surpassing that. But even though he had taken an uncommon path with his Thief, he still hadn't been able to reach a position to rival Fang Rui.

And now, Fang Rui changed classes to Qi Master. He was no longer that King amongst Thieves, and because of this Lin Feng could relax significantly. But after being completely smothered by Fang Rui twice now, Lin Feng had no way of relaxing. He discovered that even though Fang Rui was no longer the King of Thieves, he could still deal with any Thief player with ease, no matter whether it was a dirty-playing, trap-laying Thief, or a Battle Thief like him...

There was no way to win. After recognizing this point, Lin Feng lost all his fighting spirit. This wasn't an on-the-spot realization, but a conclusion he'd reached years before when comparing himself to this King of Thieves. And now, even if Fang Rui had changed classes, this conclusion hadn't changed.

"Doubtful Demon turned into this because of you, it's really too ugly." As Fang Rui sent a final message, Boundless Sea sent a final attack. Lin Feng, this Battle Thief player, couldn't reach the height of a king, but Wind Howl didn't need a dirty playing Thief. And thus this king character among Thieves finally fell.

## Chapter 1276: Behind You

Happy progressed one level further in the group arena. It seemed that Fang Rui had achieved these two victories very easily, so easily that it was almost scary. After two battles, Boundless Sea had only lost 17% of his health!

This... was the pace to a 1v3!

The crowd took a while to process this, but when Wind Howl's Lin Feng exited the player booth and left the stage with his head lowered, the crowd finally recovered and suddenly exploded with cheers.

He still had 83% health left, and Wind Howl's core God Tang Hao had already appeared in the individual competition. There was a big chance for a 1v3 in this group arena today!

The crowd looked toward Wind Howl's player area. Who would be Wind Howl's group arena anchor?

After several moments, the shouting in the stadium seemed to quiet down a bit, as Wind Howl's anchor stood up: Liu Hao.

Liu Hao had entered the All-Stars this season, meaning that his popularity wasn't bad. More importantly, this was City H, and one year prior this was still Liu Hao's home stadium. Much of the crowd today had come here in the past and watched his matches in person. Seeing Liu Hao come onstage, everyone hesitated. Yesterday's teammate becoming today's opponent, this was what players had to face. Yesterday's idol becoming today's obstacle, this was what fans had to face.

At this sort of time, the crowd's mood would become very complex, and the hopes for a 1v3 were pulled back. This was the cruelty of the professional league, occasionally leaping out to bite.

Liu Hao's steps were firm as he walked toward the stage, and he even paid tribute to the crowd, waving his hand toward them. As an away team player, this was practically asking for contempt, but Liu Hao evidently knew that his relationship with this crowd was different. His attitude actually won over quite a bit of the crowd. Toward this away team player, the home crowd actually gave him some applause.

But Liu Hao was nowhere near as confident as he appeared.

They'd already lost two players, and they'd only taken down 17% of the opponent's health. If Wind Howl wanted to win, he would have to accomplish a 1v3...

Liu Hao didn't have such dreams. In his view, this was already a group arena that Wind Howl had no way of winning. To him, what he absolutely needed to do was defeat Fang Rui, at least prevent the other side from completing a 1v3. Otherwise, it would simply be far too embarrassing for both him and Wind Howl as a whole.

But this opponent still had 83% health...

Liu Hao's mood was a bit heavy. As soon as he entered the player booth, that air of confidence and elegance he'd projected for the crowd instantly vanished. He carefully examined the state of the keyboard, mouse, and other such things, before finally logging on.

The third battle of the group arena began. Happy still had Fang Rui, but Wind Howl was already on their third and final player.

"Now that I'm here, if I don't 1v3, everyone will be so disappointed!" When the battle began, Fang Rui already boldly expressed this.

"Haha, what a nice imagination!" Liu Hao replied.

"But you're even more screwed. You'll have to 1v3 if you want to win this group arena, right?" Fang Rui said.

Liu Hao couldn't say anything. Just now, he had wanted to use his words to draw the crowd's attention to the question of whether or not Fang Rui could 1v3. With this, if he won and blocked Fang Rui's 1v3, he could be put in the role of a victor. Wind Howl would still lose the group arena, but everyone would put the blame on the first two players for not doing well, and he, who stopped Fang Rui's 1v3, would still have a bit of the air of a hero.

But who would've expected Fang Rui to be so quick with his words? With one sentence, he exposed the truth of the difficult situation he was in.

Just defeat Fang Rui? That was far from enough. Right now, he was the one who actually bore the heavy responsibility of completing a 1v3. Liu Hao's plan of diverting the crowd's attention hadn't even been implemented before Fang Rui shattered it.

"How about it? 1v3, have any confidence? I can say that I sure do!" Fang Rui was still chatting away. Not only had Liu Hao's goal of redirection failed, Fang Rui was forcing everyone's attention onto this issue of 1v3 like crazy. He had confidence? Of course he did, 83% challenging 100%, any player in this position would be extremely motivated. But Liu Hao? 100% against 283%? His heart was broken.

"1v3? In your dreams!" Liu Hao was helpless. He could only continue to present himself as someone who would stop a 1v3, and not someone who had to carry out a 1v3.

"Hehe, I should say in YOUR dreams! Or is it that you don't even have these dreams? If that's the case, I say, stop wasting time and just GG!" Fang Rui said.

Now that their conversation had reached this point, it was practically grinding away Liu Hao's spine. This was Happy's home stadium, but there were a number of diehard Wind Howl fans following along with the team. They couldn't bear to see such mockery anymore. In such a situation, they could understand if Liu Hao lost the match, but ultimately everyone still had a sliver of hope for a miracle. Seeing Fang Rui's attack now, Wind Howl's fans instantly exploded. They hoped that their vice-captain Liu Hao, upon whom the team had heavily relied this season, would fight back for them, initiate a powerful counterattack 1v3 in this Happy stadium, and humiliate the opponents.

"1v3!!!" Wind Howl's diehard fans became fired up, cheering and yelling encouragement for their vice-captain. But instantly, their shouts overlapped with the "1v3" shouts from the Happy fans. Wind Howl's shouts were a bit more vigorous and exuberant, as they wished so desperately to see this humiliation. But with their shouts, Happy's fans couldn't sit still. The battle was already at this point and they still wanted to see a 1v3? Ridiculous! And so, Happy's shouts of "1v3" reached a new peak, attacking the Wind Howl fans. There were more of them, and so they quickly smothered the away team fans. But

Wind Howl refused to yield. Even if their sound was drowned out, it wouldn't stop them from continuing to shout.

This was their trust and hope in Liu Hao and Wind Howl!

Liu Hao, sitting in the player booth, had no idea. If he did know, he probably wouldn't be moved, he would probably start crying from the the motivation of these fans.

1v3? Can't everyone be logical here? How was he supposed to 1v3 under these conditions? The opponent's first player still had 83% health!

Liu Hao didn't know, and so he didn't think that much right now. He only prepared to defeat Fang Rui, at least stop Happy from 1v3ing, and then he would definitely be understood by the fans. He had no idea that, because of Fang Rui's trash talk, Wind Howl's fans had already expressed even higher expectations for him.

As the two of them bickered through the chat, they were already approaching. Fang Rui continued to play dirty, and there was no sign of Boundless Sea. After watching two matches, Liu Hao had already grasped a few key points of Fang Rui's usage of this map. Right now, he paid close attention as he moved his character, choosing positions carefully. For now, he hadn't found Boundless Sea, but Fang Rui also couldn't find a good chance to attack. The two were at a stalemate.

"What's wrong, still not attacking? Can't find an opportunity? If you continue to hide like this, watch out for a yellow card!" Liu Hao also began a trash talk offensive.

"I'm right behind you!" Fang Rui said.

"Haha." Liu Hao wasn't that naive.

"I really am right behind you!" Fang Rui still said.

"..."

"Behind you!"

"Behind you!"

Fang Rui suddenly channeled Huang Shaotian and actually continued to spam these two words nonstop in the chat. Liu Hao was irritated, but the more irritated he was, the more he didn't dare to turn his character around. The more Fang Rui yelled this, the more he felt that the danger would come from anywhere but behind him. Liu Hao carefully controlled his character to move, looking left and right. But there was no sign of Boundless Sea, only Boundless Sea's spam.

"Behind you!"

"Behind you!"

Liu Hao suddenly felt nervous.

This guy, with his nonstop spamming, was he actually going to launch a sneak attack from behind, but using reverse psychology to make him too scared to look behind him?

I'll take a look! Just one glance, fast, nothing will happen!

Liu Hao once again carefully checked in front of him and to the left and right, and then with a sudden flick of his mouse, his camera view quickly spun around, scanning the surroundings behind him. No Boundless Sea. Liu Hao let out a breath, and his view quickly returned to the original position.

Spirit Reaches to the Rainbow!

At this moment, Boundless Sea attacked. His position had indeed been right behind Liu Hao's character. How could such a fast glance be enough to check behind all the possible spots of cover? Fang Rui, as soon as Liu Hao finished glancing around and let himself relax, launched his charged Spirit Reaches to the Rainbow!

Qi energy was silent, but the charged Spirit Reaches to the Rainbow carried the character with it. The sound of the air colliding and splitting around him instantly resounded.

Liu Hao instantly smelled that something was wrong. He didn't even bothering turning around again, he just directly had his character roll and dodge. With his fluctuating mood, going from tense to relax to suddenly tense again, his controls would naturally be unsteady. Fang Rui seized this one moment. The Spirit Reaches to the Rainbow carried the qi and the character blasting forward. The rolling Spellblade, Liu Hao's character Absent Sun, was directly hit by this attack.

It was very rare to see blood from a Qi Master attack!

Bright red sprayed from Absent Sun's mouth. This was typically the sign of heavy internal injuries. The attack didn't stop there - Fang Rui continued with his familiar flurry of brutal and powerful attacks, and Absent Sun's initial 17% lead was quickly erased.

The cheers of the Happy fans reached a new high.

For the fans to put in the effort, they had to see the player's results. Only a beautiful performance could ultimately ignite the fans' support. Fang Rui slaughtered his way toward a 1v3. Liu Hao? Everyone saw how he was sent spinning in circles from Fang Rui's trash talk attack. Not openly mocking him too much was already a sign of his special relationship to this crowd.

But even if the fans were nostalgic, Fang Rui was already continuing his trash talking.

"I said so many times that I was behind you, why didn't you believe me? How many times do you want me to say it? Give me a number!" Fang Rui continued to enrich the contents of the chat channel.

Chapter 1277: The Greatest Margin in History

Fang Rui's trash talk was brazenly thrown into the public chat, but his character Boundless Sea? After completing this combo of attacks and discovering that Liu Hao had adjusted fairly quickly, he didn't continue with the opportunity and instantly tried to retreat.

"Don't run!" Liu Hao very heroically yelled this in the chat to show that he hadn't been beaten senseless by Fang Rui. As soon as his Spellblade Absent Sun stood steady on the ground, he sent out an



Earthquake Sword. Unfortunately, Boundless Sea had already rolled away, hiding himself behind a giant boulder over there.

The opponent was the master of playing dirty, so of course Liu Hao didn't dare have Absent Sun directly chase him. His character moved horizontally first, pulling enough of a distance between them before charging towards that direction.

As expected, Boundless Sea was indeed gathering qi behind that boulder, but when he saw that Liu Hao was prepared, he could only helplessly give up the attack.

"So careful! Scared?" Fang Rui said in the chat.

"If you're a man then stop running!" Liu Hao shouted.

"Can't. I'm very scared of you." Fang Rui's reply seemed quite refreshing, but anyone could tell that this was a joke. Words that might otherwise be welcoming to hear sounded mocking from him. And Fang Rui's actions followed his words; as he spoke, he had Boundless Sea move away. He clearly had no intentions of fighting Liu Hao directly.

But even though he ran away, he didn't run too far away. He continued to circle around the boulder, as though prepared to go around and around with Liu Hao.

This sort of technique was a bit cheap, but coming from a dirty player, everyone thought it was very reasonable. Liu Hao was sorely tempted to use a Wave Formation to cover that whole area, but he also feared that while he was casting, Boundless Sea would suddenly jump out and ambush him. After deliberating for a while, Absent Sun came forward, but he didn't chase. He only crept a bit closer to the rock, checking his left and the right, his hand on his short sword, ready to act at a moment's notice. Liu Hao was prepared to sit here and wait for his target. Whether Fang Rui continued to circle around clockwise, or suddenly reverse and go counterclockwise, he would just wait here.

But he waited and waited, and there was no trace of Boundless Sea. Fang Rui's trash talk popped up in the match channel yet again. "Huh, what's going on, how come you're not chasing me? Didn't you tell me not to run?"

Liu Hao felt like spitting blood. This guy, did he just leave after circling around the boulder? And now, had he already circled around behind him?

Liu Hao was just about to turn around in a hurry, but in that instant, he was suddenly alert. He had been carefully watching his left and the right. He felt that in this short span of time, there was no way that Fang Rui could have controlled Boundless Sea to circle behind him without his noticing.

He almost fooled me!

Liu Hao huffed a breath. But he couldn't guess Fang Rui's plans right now. Was he trying to use his words to paralyze him, and actually taking a very long path to circle around him? Or was he still hiding behind that boulder, prepared to launch an attack on him?

Liu Hao couldn't wait around like this forever. He had Absent Sun move back away from the boulder, using the same strategy as before to pull apart the distance, and then, use this increased field of view to check behind the boulder.

He immediately saw that indeed, Boundless Sea was hiding right behind the boulder, his hands cupped before him, gathering qi again, waiting to sneak attack!

This bastard!

Liu Hao was furious. This was an exact repeat of what had just happened before! Good thing he stayed calm, otherwise who knew what could have happened.

Fang Rui? His same strategy was once again broken by the opponent. He simply tossed a "Huh, you found me again" into the chat, and then twisted and continue to circle clockwise around the boulder.

Liu Hao was about to go crazy. Who the fuck designed this map! Throwing this stupid goddamned rock right here! It gives opportunities to these kinds of guys, and the quality of matches goes way down!

Of course Liu Hao thought this way, but the live audience was swimming in a sea of amusement. Perhaps this match wasn't thrilling or intense to draw people in, but they burst into laughter watching this teasing situation.

And now, Fang Rui was doing the same thing for the third time. How would Liu Hao respond!

Absent Sun raised his short sword and began to cast. Electric Wave Formation!

Fang Rui's Boundless Sea had circled around behind the boulder, meaning that he, too, could only guess at Liu Hao's actions. Only in the final instant of a Wave Formation cast was there any sound, and this time, Liu Hao bet that the opponent wouldn't anticipate this.

His bet was correct!

Fang Rui's Boundless Sea didn't reveal himself. The accumulated electricity on Absent Sun's sword ultimately condensed into spheres on the surface of the boulder before him.

By the time the zapping sounds were audible, the electric sphere were already formed. With a flash, they were released, flowing all around. If there was a target, they would automatically lock on; if not, they would wander about freely. Liu Hao was, after all, a Spellblade who had entered the All-Stars. Even if he didn't see the target, from the flow of electricity he could draw many conclusions.

No target!

Liu Hao was shocked. This meant that Boundless Sea wasn't in range for the Wave Formation, then his position now, it must be...

Liu Hao's mind quickly outlined the range of Electric Wave Formation. His gaze settled on the scenery in front of him, and Absent Sun rushed forward.

His view widened as he pulled away, and indeed there was no sign of Boundless Sea, but there...

Behind the boulder, there was a crack just large enough to fit one person, looking like a collection of shadows. Liu Hao's pupil contracted. As an expert Spellblade, he was very clear on the quirks of all the Spellblade's skills. If there was such a crack in range of an Electric Wave Formation, there was a high chance that a character could hide there and avoid damage.

Liu Hao wasn't entirely unfamiliar with this map, but did this boulder really hide such a detail? Liu Hao wasn't sure. But now, he saw this, and immediately guessed that Boundless Sea must be right there.

Unfortunately, it was already too late.

This time, he hadn't made any preparations or calculated out any space before having Absent Sun charge forward to check behind the boulder. Seeing that crack, in the time it took for his brain to click-click-click and flash through these thoughts, Fang Rui's Boundless Sea had already attacked.

Liu Hao had guessed correctly. Boundless Sea was right there.

Landmine Quake!

Only Fang Rui's hands exposed themselves from the crack, and by the time they were exposed they'd already slapped against the ground. Qi spread along the earth, and Absent Sun had no time to dodge and was sent flying into the air. Boundless Sea no longer played dirty, shooting out like an arrow, his body like wind, carrying qi and slamming into Absent Sun's body.

Another combo of powerful attacks.

Absent Sun's health slid downwards, and the Happy fans in the crowd whooshed alive with applause.

"1v3!" they continued to scream, and Wind Howl's fans had already shut their mouths. The vice-captain in whom they'd trusted and believed didn't seem to stand much of a chance against this dirty-playing Fang Rui. This was entirely like the first and second battles, with Fang Rui firmly in control of the battle rhythm. If this continued, it wouldn't even be a question of victory, it would be... this time, by how large of a margin would Fang Rui win this 1v3?

Up until now, Boundless Sea hadn't even lost any health yet in this third battle, while Absent Sun's health had plummeted. Boundless Sea's 83% health was now in the lead. And completing a 1v3 also often involved the problem of running out of mana, but it seemed that Boundless Sea was fine on that end as well. Fang Rui's attacks were simply too efficient. When he attacked, his attacks were always effective, so his mana usage was very efficient. He had plenty of mana left to finish this battle.

But for the audience, all they cared about was victory, they couldn't care about such details right now. Those in the live crowd, those watching online, they watched as Fang Rui went back and forth with his harassment, ultimately grinding Liu Hao's Absent Sun to death. Liu Hao did display some of the skill befitting an All-Star, taking away 15% of Boundless Sea's health, a better performance than the previous two Wind Howl players, but that was all.

1v3 completed, 32% health lost. This was the final answer Fang Rui gave. The stadium hollered and cheered, not resting even as Fang Rui came down offstage and returned to his seat in Happy's player area.

1v3. Happy's Tang Rou had once wanted to do this, and failed, but now, her teammate Fang Rui accomplished it. Many of the reporters at the stadium were so excited they couldn't even sit still. They could hardly wait for the match to finish, they wanted desperately to interview right there. But of course they knew that this was impossible, so most reporters calmed down, flipping through their data and making preparations for the interviews post-match. In the midst of this, Chang Xian of Esports Home,

after looking through every single 1v3 in ten years of group arena matches, he finally confirmed that Fang Rui had set a new record.

The record for the greatest margin in a 1v3 victory.

32% health lost. This result beat out the previous record set by Wang Jiexi in Season 4, 52% health lost, by a solid 20%.

It had to be emphasized was that Fang Rui was the first to appear in the group arena. With 32% health, he defeated three opponents at 100% health.

And Wang Jiexi at the time had been third in the group arena, the anchor. Even though the total reversal had been more exciting, no matter what, he was inferior both in terms of how much health he knocked away and in terms of how much he had remaining.

Fang Rui's record here was solid gold. It would be very, very difficult to surpass.

And the method he used to set this record was also worth remembering. He hadn't used an overwhelming advantage to slaughter the opponents all the way until the end. These three battles had all taken some time, they'd been played rather slowly. Fang Rui played dirty to create an abnormal efficiency. This sort of attack efficiency wasn't something that could be replicated by those hard-hitting players. When they directly collided with their opponents, there was inevitably some exchange, and the health that they ultimately sacrificed wouldn't be so low.

Playing dirty, the style that had received so many cold gazes, finally entered the history books with this record.

History's greatest margin of victory for a 1v3, was created by playing dirty!

This was Fang Rui's victory, and a victory for the dirty playstyle he'd persisted in using even after changing classes to Qi Master.

Chapter 1278: Mid-Match Break Wind Howl

A historic record! The majority of people who cared about this record were reporters. The viewers cared more about the feeling of a 10-0. Happy just needed to win the upcoming team competition.

The 1v3 chants in the group arena were replaced by 10-0s. The loyal fans who followed Wind Howl all the way to their away game were in low spirits. Liu Hao being dominated by Fang Rui wasn't a small blow to them. They had originally been hoping for Liu Hao to turn the tables with an astonishing 1v3 and show them their team's might! But they couldn't see any sort of fighting spirit in their vice-captain. Liu Hao looked completely lost facing Fang Rui's dirty tricks.

Wind Howl's fans were quiet, very quiet.

Seeing the excited cheers from Happy's fans, they felt an unpleasant taste in their mouths. This exhilaration should have belonged to them! Because Fang Rui... didn't he used to be part of Team Wind Howl? Despite having switched classes to a Qi Master, his style was still very familiar to Wind Howl's loyal fans.

This was someone who had used to bring them joy, and now?

The Wind Howl banners created by the fans always flew in the air whether it was Wind Howl's home or away game, but right now, it seemed to be thrown aside, drooping in disappointment. Wind Howl's flag bearer looked dispirited. The others weren't worried about him though, because they knew that Fang Rui had been this person's favorite player. Fang Rui had been hard for him, and now, seeing Fang Rui complete a 1v3 against Wind Howl produced a feeling he couldn't describe with words.

How would the upcoming team competition go?

Team Wind Howl's loyal fans were unexpectedly feeling doubtful towards their own team.

Their captain and core, Tang Hao. The new generation Zhao Yuzhe who they had high hopes for. Lin Feng who they wanted to inherit Doubtful Demon. The super value Liu Hao who the team had gotten at an amazing price... in the individual competition and group arena, they seemed to have been crushed by opponents on an entirely different level than them. With these people making up the team, how could they hope to beat Happy?

Wind Howl's teamwork wasn't anything too praiseworthy! Wind Howl's own fans knew this point better than anyone else. As for Happy? Starting from Round 9, their team had yet to lose a single round. Was Happy a team their Wind Howl could beat?

The fans were doubtful, doubtful that their team could win this match, doubtful of their team's claim to be the champions this season. Wind Howl's win record this season wasn't as stable as last season's! Didn't the team say they would form an all-new team more compatible than before after letting Fang Rui go? An all-new team? Wind Howl could see it. The team had given up on the dirty style. The dirty tricks from before had turned into a more aggressive offensive.

Perhaps this style was more like a champion's. Apart from Blue Rain's deviation from the norm, the other champion teams had all given off this sort of grand aura. Wind Howl was trying hard to construct this aura, but did it really fit them?

The former Criminal Partners had never considered themselves as the strongest duo in the Alliance, but the fans always felt steady with them there. No matter how much of a crisis the team was in, they would always be confident about their team. But now? The team's win record was worse than last season's. The team was still within the playoffs zone, but how could they not be nervous about why? The current Wind Howl made them feel like there was something missing. This sort of mystery feeling really didn't feel good!

Wind Howl's most loyal fans were pacing back and forth. Wind Howl's players were also in low spirits.

In the individual competition, their core player Tang Hao was crushed by Ye Xiu and then their other two players lost as well.

In the group arena, the team sent three strong players, but their former teammate Fang Rui took all of them down with just two thirds of his health.

How humiliating. The player you let go just casually cleaned up three players you had cultivated with the utmost care. Right now, the first thoughts that came to their mind were classic idioms like "have eyes but cannot see" or "buying a wooden box and returning the pearls"...

Team Wind Howl's players felt this embarrassment the most. What should they do? Beating their opponents would obviously be the greatest retaliation. However, Wind Howl's players had been beaten one after the other. It seemed like they couldn't break free from their losses. Only the remaining second-string players on the side busily circling around and around.

"What's going on? Have you guys gone stupid from losing?" Finally, someone spoke up.

Ruan Yongbin.

Wind Howl's Cleric.

Healers were never replaced in any team, so their status in the team was always relatively high. In addition to healers being rarely transferred, healers almost always held seniority.

Ruan Yongbin had been a part of Team Wind Howl for nearly six years. He had joined the team alongside Fang Rui. When Fang Rui left, Ruan Yongbin became Team Wind Howl's most senior member. He was the type of player who obeyed orders and didn't like to talk too much. However, seeing how the team's morale had been shaken and how the main players all looked like they had been swatted down like flies, he couldn't resist it anymore and finally spoke out.

Healers were only needed in the team competition, so the outcome of the individual rounds never impacted them as much as the others. They could always maintain a rational mind and watch from afar the morale of their teammates rise up and down in the individual rounds. As a result, for the most important team competition, a level-headed healer could always act as a stabilizing force for the team.

But unfortunately, Ruan Yongbin spoke too rarely in Wind Howl. He didn't fully utilize the special existence brought by his class's speciality. Everyone looked at him when he suddenly spoke out. Their eyes were completely filled with confusion. They didn't look like they had been enlightened in any way.

"The team competition hasn't been fought yet! Half the points are waiting to be taken by us. We can do this!" Ruan Yongbin tried his best to say words that he wasn't use to. Anyone could say this though. The logic was obvious. What was needed was a wake up call to break apart the doubt formed in the players during the individual rounds. However, Ruan Yongbin's wake up call didn't have enough power behind it. He was talking, and everyone was looking at him, but... morale? Their morale hadn't been ignited. Only Liu Hao clapped his hands and squeezed out a smile: "Yongbin, you're right! The match isn't over yet. We still have five points to take. Why does everyone look like we've already lost?"

Liu Hao was the vice-captain. His popularity among the fans this season wasn't bad. His relations with other people in the team weren't bad either. His words were clearly more effective than Ruan Yongbin's. Ruan Yongbin let out a sigh of relief and looked at Liu Hao with gratitude. He was glad that their vice-captain could maintain a level-head and look at the match with reason.

Liu Hao had a smile filled with reason on the surface, but inside, he was feeling extremely annoyed. After walking off stage, he saw the expressions of his teammates and the silence from Wind Howl's loyal fans and knew his performance had disgusted quite a few people. However, Liu Hao's strength was his practically cruel ability to fake it. He could cover his true feelings well and then push the most suitable attitude for the situation onto the surface.

As a result, he had been depressed and silent along with the other players. But when Ruan Yongbin spoke out while the others didn't respond, he could force himself and wake himself up. He acted like a vice-captain and started encouraging the others following Ruan Yongbin's example.

"Look, our fans, our fans who traveled so far to support us are feeling bitter and in low spirits! How could we disappoint them? Everyone, hurry up and get your spirits up. Let's get our Wind Howl's banner flying into the air again! We lost quite a few points, but it's just five points. Next, if we win just this upcoming team competition, we can win five points. Then, the score will be 5 to 5. Is that a loss? No! If the away team wins five points, shouldn't that be considered a win? Right now, we still have a chance to win!" Liu Hao put up his thumbs and emphasize that they just needed to win this team competition.

"What bullshit!" Wind Howl's captain, Tang Hao, suddenly interrupted Liu Hao very rudely.

"Let alone five points, if we can win even one more point, we can't give it up!" Tang Hao grit his teeth.

"Captain Tang is right, we can't back down even if it was just one point," Liu Hao didn't appear to be unhappy with Tang Hao interrupting him. Instead, he immediately agreed with Tang Hao. Tang Hao had raised the team's morale to the peak.

"Let's go beat them!" Tang Hao shouted, "Don't tell me you're willing to let a certain someone slap our faces!"

It was obvious who he was pointing to. Taking a former hero of Wind Howl and pinning him as the enemy was a bit ugly. When an old veteran of the team like Ruan Yongbin heard these words, his expression turned unnatural. Ling Jingyan and Fang Rui had left the team peacefully, but how could those inside the team not understand? This had nothing to do with what was right or wrong. It was the choice for the team to grow. For this choice, the team should feel sympathy for those that had been given up. Team Wind Howl shouldn't have these negative feelings towards them.

Fang Rui had won the group arena and had embarrassed Wind Howl, but this was competition. There was only victory. Nothing else mattered. It wasn't like they could hope that Fang Rui would throw the match for them.

Tang Hao unadorned despise made Ruan Yongbin feel quite unhappy. But what about the other players? Zhao Yuzhe? Lin Feng? They had just been humiliated by Fang Rui. Tang Hao's out-of-line attitude had ignited their fighting spirits.

Chapter 1279: Cowards

"Win!" With Tang Hao's final shout, although the mentality of Wind Howl's players weren't yet in unison, their low morale had reignited to a certain extent.

"It seems to be quite lively over there at Wind Howl." At Happy's side, the players were finishing up their strategy prep for the team competition. Chen Guo liked to listen on the side, but every time she listened, she would feel dizzy and her attention would run astray. Trying to follow their discussion on strategy was hard. The poor Chen Guo could only look around and noticed Wind Howl suddenly fire up, yelling and shouting fervently.

Everyone in Happy had noticed the shouts from over there too, and when they looked at them, they just happened to meet gazes with Wind Howl. Compared to Happy's relaxed and casual glance, Wind Howl seemed to be focused on a certain individual.

"Hm, it looks like our last minute changes were very necessary," Ye Xiu said.

The others looked towards Fang Rui. Happy's changes in the team competition were on Fang Rui. Today, he was the main character.

"No problem." Fang Rui gave two thumbs up to everyone.

"Then... let's get ready!" Ye Xiu nodded his head and said.

After the break was over, the referee called for them, and the players participating in the team competition started walking towards the stage.

Team Happy: Ye Xiu, Su Mucheng, Fang Rui, Qiao Yifan, An Wenyi, and their sixth player, Steamed Bun.

Team Wind Howl: Tang Hao, Liu Hao, Zhao Yuzhe, Lin Feng, Ruan Yonbgin, and their sixth player, Guo Yang.

Team Wind Howl's roster had undergone a transformation within these past two years. Just looking at the current line up, apart from Ruan Yongbin, no one else in the team had played on the team for three years yet. From this perspective, Zhao Yuzhe was actually the most experienced among them. Tang Hao and Guo Yang had only been a part of the team for two years. Liu Hao and Lin Feng had joined the team last summer. After this season, they would complete their first full year with the team.

An entirely new player roster meant a change in Wind Howl's original tactical style, which included their class composition. Both Brawler and Thief were still important, but their stable Knight position gradually fell to a secondary position this season. Liu Hao's Spellblade entered the team. Guo Yang's Qi Master joined the team last season and his position hadn't been too stable until this season, where he finally became a part of the main roster. Guo Yang rejecting Ye Xiu's invite to join Happy didn't seem to be a bad choice. He had at least established a firm position for himself in Team Wind Howl.

Of the total twelve players between the two teams, three of the classes were repeats.

The Brawlers, Tang Hao and Steamed Bun. The Qi Masters, Fang Rui and Guo Yang. The Clerics, An Wenyi and Ruan Yongbin.

But because Steamed Bun and Guo Yang were the sixth players, the starting lineup only had Clerics as repeats. As a healer class, two Clerics weren't anything rare.

The two teams walked onto the stage and greeted one another. The Wind Howl players, who lost in the individual rounds, clearly wanted revenge. The smell of gunpowder was heavy. The referee watched the two team's players closely. After confirming that neither side said anything out of bounds or made any violent physical contact, he gestured for the players to go to their player booths. The team competition was about to start.

Wind Howl's loyal fans had lost all hope, but after noticing how their team had suddenly spirited up, their energy returned too. Wind Howl's banner began flying around in the Xiaoshan Stadium again. The



needs of the fans were quite simple. They didn't need to see any crazy results. Just their attitude alone was enough to make them feel like their support wasn't wasted.

After the countdown, the two teams loaded into the map, and the team competition began.

The map was the Peili Town Market.

Peili Town was a small town in the Glory continent. And this marketplace had been taken straight out of this small town as a map. In reality, around ninety percent of the Glory PvP maps were taken from places on the Glory continent. The map's design already existed, so when taking the map, only its usage needed to be evaluated.

The Peili Town Market was considered a city map. Streets, different height buildings, and indoor and outdoor playable areas were common in these maps. The Peili Town Market had relatively fewer outdoor areas. Just the market plaza took up nearly half the map. This plaza wasn't just an empty field, and the market naturally had all sorts of booths and goods scattered around. The durability of these goods were rather low though, so the entire market could be seen as destructible.

The starting five characters of the two teams spawned at opposing corners.

Happy - Unspecialized Lord Grim, Launcher Dancing Rain, Qi Master Boundless Sea, Ghostblade One Inch Ash, Cleric Little Cold Hands.

Wind Howl - Brawler Demon Subduer, Spellblade Absent Sun, Elementalist Beautiful Light, Thief Doubtful Demon, and Cleric Soul Healer.

As soon as the match began, Wind Howl displayed their reinstated spirits. The entire team went into formation and ran straight for the center of the map.

The Wind Howl fans nowadays were no stranger to this scene, but in the past, when the Criminal Partners were there, Wind Howl rarely chose such a direct opening. However, the current Wind Howl would almost always rush at their opponents to crush them no matter who their opponents were.

In truth, the fans had also liked this sort of bearing in the beginning. Who didn't like to see their team destroy the opponents? In the first five rounds this season, Wind Howl had crushed everything in their path, dominating their opponents each round. However, their opponents these five rounds were Conquering Cloud, Radiant, Lightly, Bright Green, and Miracle... not a single one of them were strong teams. Wind Howl's beautiful opening was somewhat stifled by their schedule.

In Round 6, Wind Howl faced Samsara. Their momentum suddenly hit an iron wall.

Then, in Round 7, they were decimated in the team competition by Tyranny.

Round 8, wrecked by Blue Rain in the team competition.

Round 9, wiped out by 301 in the team competition.

Round 10, Wind Howl faced Seaside and swallowed them up.

Of these ten rounds, Wind Howl immediately became the bad name among strong teams. They won against weak teams, but as soon as they met against anyone strong, they crumbled...

Luckily, in Round 11 and Round 12, Wind Howl beat Misty Rain and Void, proving themselves. But in Round 13, Hundred Blossoms washed them. In Round 14, Thunderclap stomped on them again. Round 15, they suffered an embarrassing defeat to Royal Style. Round 16 and Round 17, they matched against Heavenly Swords and Parade, and Wind Howl once again stood back up.

Wind Howl was among the top eight because they were clearly superior to the weaker teams, not losing points they shouldn't be losing. However, as soon as they faced anyone even a tiny bit strong, their team instantly collapsed. Were they a strong team? Right now, this title had been knocked off of Wind Howl. Players were calling them cowards, their knees turning soft as soon as they encountered a strong team.

This round, they had run into a strong opponent after bullying two weak teams. It was time to prove that they weren't cowards. But right now, the team had been swept clean in the individual rounds. If they lost the team competition, they would have zero points. It wasn't possible to go any lower than that.

Even so, Team Wind Howl displayed their usual tyrannical and dominating bearing. The five characters formed a standard offensive formation and headed straight for the center, the Peili Town Market Plaza.

With the plaza taking up half of the map, all sorts of booths and goods were scattered and smashed apart. Even the player cameras became messy.

Zhao Yuzhe received an order and immediately had his Beautiful Light jump towards a pile of bags to the side. With a few hops, he reached the top, and before he could look down carefully, gunshots rang.

The gunshots were loud and clear. Wind Howl instantly figured out the general location of the gunfire and immediately pushed towards that direction, including Beautiful Light, who had jumped onto the pile of bags to lure in the attacks.

Zhao Yuzhe's offensive prowess was exceptional. As soon as the gunshots rang, he quickly adjusted his character's line of sight and instantly Teleported in that direction. He escaped and pushed forward. The one being attacked instead became the attacker.

"How fierce!" At this moment, the dirty master Fang Rui's trash talk popped up mysteriously in the chat.

Wind Howl's offensive had considered the surroundings too. Seeing the sudden trash talk, the five characters split the work and surveyed the surroundings to ascertain Fang Rui's position.

However, he wasn't there... there was only one person in their sights, Ye Xiu's Lord Grim.

An ambush!

In this situation, anyone would have thought that. Lord Grim was just bait. Happy's other characters were probably lying in wait in this complicated terrain.

However, Wind Howl didn't retreat. Continue forward!

To be able to set up such an ambush this quickly meant they didn't bring their healer.

It was a very logical deduction. Wind Howl had rushed here very fast, but if Happy could set up an ambush before they arrived, it could only mean that Happy had let go of the healer, who would slow down the team.

An ambush without a healer? What's there to be scared of!

Wind Howl's captain Tang Hao thought like this, so their momentum didn't falter. Liu Hao had his misgivings though. He had wanted them to slow down a bit and be more cautious, but seeing Tang Hao's firmness, he didn't much more of it and followed along with his captain's pace. But at this moment, a spinning blaze of fire fell towards the center of Wind Howl's formation.

Heat-Seeking Missile!

"Dodge!" Liu Hao typed a warning instinctively. His Absent Sun scrambled for his life towards outside of this Heat-Seeking Missile's range. Tang Hao's Demon Subduer raised his arms and threw a Brick, which looked weak, in comparison to the missile. However, a Brick was still much bigger than a bullet, so it was much easier to hit a target with it. And as it turned out, the Heat-Seeking Missile was smacked aside by the Brick.

None of the other Wind Howl players had moved. Only Liu Hao's Absent Sun had sped out of there. Seeing the danger averted, his face turned burning hot, though he didn't forget to call out in the public chat: "Our captain is mighty."

"If you've got the time to spout useless words, why don't you use it on moving your character instead?" The praise that he had typed into the public chat was only met with Ye Xiu's disdain.

Chapter 1280: Not Focused Enough

Liu Hao's eyes twitched a few times, and even a few old fans of Team Excellent Era felt some déjà vu at that moment.

Ye Xiu, Liu Hao, this pair of old teammates had already become enemies, but their back-and-forth in the public chat was reminiscent of their time back in Excellent Era.

Liu Hao would never forget the icy contempt that Ye Xiu showed towards his well-meaning compliment.

To Liu Hao, calling out a beautiful play by a teammate was a way of boosting the morale of the team, but Ye Xiu maintained that his praise was too excessive.

Praise was also a form of encouragement, who would feel that such things were excessive? On top of that, it wasn't as if he didn't have any situational awareness. He'd never left an opening because of it, so wasn't it fine?

But even if this was the case, Ye Xiu still maintained that he wasn't focused enough.

Yes, not focused enough, this was the flaw that Ye Xiu always pointed out when it came to Liu Hao. From the time he became a player in Team Excellent Era, to the time when he became vice-captain of Excellent Era.

"If you've got the time to spout useless words, why don't you use it on moving your character instead"

When he saw this line, Liu Hao was infuriated. He hadn't delayed his inputs at all due to these few words that he'd typed, what did Ye Xiu expect from him?

Liu Hao exploded with fury, and Absent Sun pounced towards Lord Grim more violently than anyone else. He was originally someone who could control his emotions well, but deep in every person's heart, they had certain inviolable taboos. These words that Ye Xiu said had effectively stabbed at a scar that had lasted many years. In the past, he could only brood about it silently, but now, he could finally use his actions on the battlefield to speak for himself. He wanted to tell Ye Xiu: controlling or not controlling your character for a moment isn't anything important!

Earthquake Sword!

Absent Sun swept out with his sword, directly destroying a merchant's stall in front of him. Upon clearing this path for himself, Absent Sun trampled on the wreckage and charged forwards.

Demon Subduer and Doubtful Demon, the two strongest characters in Wind Howl, followed behind Absent Sun and advanced through the trail of wreckage.

Once upon a time, they had been called the Criminal Partners, but now, this name was on the verge of becoming history. In the Alliance's voting for Best Partner, these two characters that had fought side-by-side for so many years weren't even grouped together. Being partners wasn't something that could be achieved simply by being in the same team, if not, the Best Partner selection would be selecting an entire team of five people at once.

Partnership wasn't something that the Alliance had ever clearly defined, but going by the results of previous years, these "partners" were usually the pair of core players in a team who had the most rapport, and their teamwork had to be extremely outstanding.

In today's Wind Howl, Demon Subduer was a core character, just as before, and he was just as outstanding as before, but Doubtful Demon's place in the team had gotten weaker and weaker. Brawler and Thief, this pair was no longer the centerpiece to Wind Howl's playstyle. Nowadays, who stood beside Demon Subduer as his greatest helper?

Fire Wave Formation!

Absent Sun slashed out again, directly cutting a path through the obstacles in his way. After sending out consecutive skills, Absent Sun's movements slowed down. Demon Subduer overtook him from the side, stepped in the middle of the flames of Fire Wave Formation and charged forward.

An extremely beautiful covering play.

Anyone would admit as much.

The timing of Fire Wave Formation and the charge of Demon Subduer was coordinated beautifully, and the enveloping blaze gave Demon Subduer a temporary layer of protection. At this time, anyone who wanted to attack him from close range would first have to suffer the damage of Fire Wave Formation.

But if it was from a long range.....

Boom boom boom!

Three shots sounded out, and Su Mucheng's Dancing Rain once again joined the fray.

When the Heat-Seeking Missile had been sent out earlier, everyone in Wind Howl had more or less figured out her position. She was very far away, and as such, was unsuitable as a breakthrough point, so everyone continued to focus on Lord Grim. As for Su Mucheng's continued harassment from afar, Wind Howl could be said to have foreseen it. When the cannon shots rang out, Zhao Yuzhe's Beautiful Light had already pointed with his staff, instantly creating an Ice Wall at the side of the Fire Wave Formation.

The brilliant combination of fire and ice gave Demon Subduer complete protection from all sides. The Anti-Tank Missiles that Dancing Rain fired over were a low-level skill, without enough power to shatter the Ice Wall, and if Su Mucheng were to use another skill, Demon Subduer's charge would have been completed.

Following the flames of Fire Wave Formation, Demon Subduer had rushed close to Lord Grim, and reached the effective range for a Brawler's control skills.

Sand Toss!

Demon Subduer flicked his wrist and threw the skill out.

Lord Grim simply opened his umbrella to block the attack.

Screensaver!

When Lord Grim opened the Myriad Manifestation Umbrella, everyone immediately thought of this point. The Myriad Manifestation Umbrella's Shield Form was so large it was borderline criminal, to the point where it could not only hide attacks, but could even hide another player who could attack from the side.

Tang Hao had obviously seen that there was no one at Lord Grim's side at the time, but he still didn't dare to attack head-on. Instead, he moved horizontally and adjusted his angle of attack, leaving the head-on assault to Liu Hao.

Liu Hao quickly grasped his intent, and Absent Sun walked forwards a few steps before attacking. As he directly faced Lord Grim's open umbrella, he sent out an Ice Wave Formation without any hesitation. He was able to maintain a more mid-ranged distance when fighting, so he didn't have to worry as much about what kind of tricks Ye Xiu was hiding behind that umbrella.

At this time, Lin Feng's Doubtful Demon had already activated Stealth, creeping behind enemy lines. Even though he was a Battle Thief, he wouldn't completely abandon the sneaky skills of a Thief.

What about Zhao Yuzhe? At this time, he had spotted a cargo crate and was controlling Beautiful Light to jump on top of it. When looking down from an elevation, he would have a wider field of view and a larger area which he could attack.

When he'd jumped halfway and his field of view had expanded a little, he spotted a Ghostblade behind a pile of cargo sacks, the Taichi in his hands already charged with a Phantom Ghost's power.

"Careful, there's a Phantom Demon!" Zhao Yuzhe shouted as Beautiful Light casted a Piercing Lightning towards him.

But at this time, Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash had already completed the cast for his ghost boundary and an Ice Boundary instantly formed, protecting Lord Grim. Of the three characters from Wind Howl that had charged up, two were already inside the Ice Boundary.

Tang Hao's reactions were swift, directly using a Powerful Knee Strike to leap out of the Ice Boundary. On the other hand, Lin Feng was humiliated; after leaving Stealth, Doubtful Demon's movements were slowed, and he was unable to escape the sudden Ice Boundary in time, immediately being frozen into a large ice block.

One Inch Ash had successfully casted his Ice Boundary, but he couldn't avoid Beautiful Light's Piercing Lightning in time.

Piercing Lightning hit, and as it did damage, it also informed everyone in Wind Howl of the Phantom Demon's whereabouts. Just as Zhao Yuzhe was preparing to attack once again, there was already cannon fire incoming. Su Mucheng's Dancing Rain had gotten control over a high vantage point and started to interrupt his attacks.

In the team competition, the players would all suppress each other and interrupt attacks, so there was rarely a situation in which a player could capitalize on one successful attack and complete a combo, unlike in the individual competitions.

Beautiful Light's attack was interrupted, but Tang Hao's Demon Subduer had already started rushing over to the spot where One Inch Ash was concealing himself, while Liu Hao's Absent Sun continued his assault on Lord Grim.

In terms of their positioning, Absent Sun was actually closer to One Inch Ash than Demon Subduer was. But at that time, Lord Grim was under the protection of the Ice Boundary. While the Brawler did have ways to attack at a medium range, if he was unable to attack at close range, the control that he could exert was insufficient. It was incomparable to the Spellblade, which was specialized in mid-range fighting, and so Tang Hao abandoned the closer target to seek the one that was farther away, attacking One Inch Ash while leaving Lord Grim to Liu Hao.

Doubtful Demon was frozen by the Ice Boundary, Demon Subduer had gone to attack the hiding One Inch Ash, Beautiful Light had been suppressed by Dancing Rain's firepower..... As he looked at Lord Grim, not far away from him, Liu Hao suddenly had a bad premonition. He could smell the prelude to a violent storm!

The Myriad Manifestation Umbrella... dipped down very slightly.

Was it about to come!

Liu Hao opened his eyes wide. For now, disregarding what attack Lord Grim was going to use, he sent out a Wave Formation, but immediately afterwards, an arrow of blood spurted out from Absent Sun's neck. Absent Sun was then lifted from the ground and thrown into the Ice Boundary.

Fling was a grab skill, and there was no way to prevent the character from being thrown. Absent Sun was thrown into the Ice Boundary and his speed immediately dropped. As he raised his camera upwards, he saw Lord Grim, who had appeared behind him.

Shadow Clone Technique?

Liu Hao had already realized it at this point, but if it was Shadow Clone Technique, it required hand seals to be cast. Lord Grim was holding the Myriad Manifestation Umbrella in front of him the whole time, how did he manage to form the hand seals?

Liu Hao only held his suspicions for a moment, before immediately thinking of the time when the Myriad Manifestation Umbrella dipped down very slightly.

That motion wasn't the hand seals. Instead, Lord Grim had momentarily let go of the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, finishing the hand seals in the blink of an eye before grabbing the umbrella again...

To be able to instantly think of this after the situation had occurred, Liu Hao could be considered to be very skilled. Ye Xiu also immediately praised Liu Hao, "Your ability to read the match is extremely outstanding, but you're always unable to put one hundred percent of your attention into the match. There are far too many other things you're concerned about..."

It was these cliché line again!

Liu Hao was infuriated, but his character was in danger and he really had no ability to type something out to fight Ye Xiu verbally. The Spellblade clearly had a stronger Spirit stat than the Thief, so his Absent Sun had only been slowed upon entering the Ice Boundary and not frozen solid unlike Doubtful Demon. He had to think of a plan to quickly escape the boundary, but with Lord Grim eyeing him so closely, would he have the opportunity to do so?

At the end of the day, Lord Grim suddenly turned his head.

Liu Hao froze.

Crap!

He suddenly realized, Cleric, their Cleric! After the sudden attack earlier, they had been ambushed by Happy in the east. The west was completely barren and had eluded all of their attention. Cleric, they had completely forgotten to protect their own Cleric.

But... where was he?

Liu Hao froze again. Ruan Yongbin's Soul Healer should not have been far behind them, but how come they couldn't even see a shadow of his figure now?

Had he hidden somewhere? That guy was really dirty!

Liu Hao thought about it, this Wind Howl, they truly deserved to be called a dirty team, this attitude had affected everyone on the team, aside from their new players. Ruan Yongbin, he might only be a Cleric, but he still had a dirty playstyle. The only thing was, the master of dirty play who had influenced everyone in Wind Howl was now on Happy! Where was Fang Rui? Where was Boundless Sea?

Liu Hao suddenly realized, aside from trash talking once at the start, this guy had never appeared at all.

"!!!"

Just as he thought that, in Wind Howl's team chat, a cry for help from their Cleric suddenly appeared....

