

Avatar 1281

Chapter 1281: Lost Direction

Liu Hao was skilled at reading the situation. He was the first to sense something abnormal: their Cleric, who had hidden himself, and that trash talker Fang Rui, who was nowhere to be seen.

A second later, a string of exclamation marks flashed into Team Wind Howl's chat.

"!!!!!"

The exclamation marks came from Soul Healer; this was Wind Howl's agreed upon rescue signal.

Wind Howl saw it and turned around, but no one was able to find Soul Healer's whereabouts.

Dirty!

Zhao Yuzhe immediately thought of this word. He hated this word. Even when the team had featured dirtiness as their style, he had never tried to understand it. He only felt thankful that Wind Howl ended up changing styles, discarding the word dirty. However, it hadn't been eliminated thoroughly enough. There were still hints of this word in their team.

For example, Ruan Yongbin had his character hide like a dirty thief. Zhao Yuzhe wanted to help him, but he couldn't find him...

Annoying annoying annoying!

Zhao Yuzhe was irritated at Ruan Yongbin's dirtiness. Their captain Tang Hao, Liu Hao, and Lin Feng weren't able to immediately locate Soul Healer either. Reading an agreed upon rescue signal was easy, but no one had any synergy with Ruan Yongbin's dirty style. They symbolized the new Wind Howl, while Ruan Yongbin was a Cleric player, left over from the old Wind Howl. Nearly all the other old players had been replaced, but who would have thought that the healer, a character with a different role than others, was unexpectedly going off beat from the rest of the team because of the old style. And Happy's Fang Rui had persisted with this old style, so he was able to accurately locate Ruan Yongbin's hiding spot.

Ruan Yongbin had been caught by Fang Rui, so he had sent a rescue signal. However, none of his teammates were able to find him. It looked like a hilariously stupid situation, but it let everyone realize just what kind of team the current Wind Howl was.

Outstanding players? Powerful characters?

Wind Howl possessed these, but whenever they encountered anyone strong, they just couldn't win. Why?

Now, everyone understood.

Team Wind Howl was still experiencing the hardships of going through a transformation. However, Wind Howl's deep-rooted style wasn't so easy to get rid of. Just letting go of the master of playing dirty, Fang

Rui, and changing their Doubtful Demon to a battle Thief weren't enough to complete this transformation.

Wind Howl wanted to give up on their roots. For a team, this was no different than demolishing an old building and constructing a new one. Last season, their determination hadn't been too clear. With Fang Rui at the head, the team had someone who played dirty as a part of their main roster, who was displaying the soul of the old team. With the support of the others in the team, Wind Howl had looked quite strong last season.

Then, Wind Howl's new core became Tang Hao. He didn't realize the strength of Fang Rui's supportive play. In contrast, he and Zhao Yuzhe detested this playstyle. He couldn't see the soul of the team and only emphasized his own strength. He wanted his own strength to be magnified a step further, and this dirty style wasn't the support he liked. He was the captain. He was the core. The team revolved around him, and he didn't like this dirty style support. As a result, even the master of playing dirty, Fang Rui, lost his spot on the team.

Fang Rui left, and Team Wind Howl added in a whole bunch of new players. These new players, who revolved around Tang Hao, weren't dirty at all. The rest, who were good at playing around a dirty style as a foundation, had been pushed to the second-string. What waited for them was either to leave like Fang Rui did, or to change their styles to the new one.

Letting go of playing dirty didn't necessarily spell their downfall. Many outstanding powerhouses in the Alliance didn't rely on playing dirty to win. But the problem was that once Wind Howl chose to abandon the style they had been familiar with, did their new playstyle have a clear direction?

An aggressive style centered around Tang Hao?

This seemed to be their plan, but how should they bring this plan into reality? How should the players work together? What responsibilities should each character have? When fighting, how should they coordinate their attacks?

Thinking back to Wind Howl's matches this season, everyone discovered that while Team Wind Howl had gotten rid of the old style, their new style had yet to be realized either. A new and mature tactical system hadn't been formed.

Facing weak teams, they could overwhelm their opponents through superior individual skill. However, when facing strong teams, without a clear tactical system, there were holes everywhere. Wind Howl's individual round results were quite good because their players and characters were strong. However, their team competition record was a disaster, all because their style hadn't fully matured yet.

They couldn't find Soul Healer?

Maybe they could blame it on not eliminating the dirty style thoroughly enough. However, it also showcased the mess Team Wind Howl was in. Champions? Right now, no one dared to bring this word up along with Wind Howl. Becoming the champions wasn't as simple as having individually strong characters and players.

Wind Howl was like a fly without a head. They couldn't find Soul Healer's position, but they could still ask in the chat. Ruan Yongbin saw the question and replied back with his coordinates. Rescue had finally

arrived. However, Happy had taken advantage of Wind Howl's confusion to attack wildly, smacking Wind Howl into a sorry state. Wind Howl had no idea what they should be doing.

Although, when Zhao Yuzhe, Lin Feng, and Liu Hao, the three who had been 1v3ed by Fang Rui in the group arena, saw Fang Rui's Boundless Sea, their target was very clear. But how dirty was Fang Rui? How could he give them a chance to surround him? Seeing that he was outnumbered, he didn't even try to be brave and scurried off into the marketplace to play cat and mouse with the three.

Fang Rui now had the attention of three of them, how was that okay? Liu Hao quickly noticed the imbalance. However, Zhao Yuzhe was still chasing after him. Liu Hao gave him a reminder and all he received was a "I can handle him alone".

Liu Hao didn't agree with this reply, but he didn't immediately point it out, because he knew Zhao Yuzhe's personality. Saying "just you alone isn't enough" would certainly infuriate him. It would definitely have the opposite effect.

Liu Hao chose to stay silent. He and Lin Feng would provide support in other parts of the battle. Shortly afterwards, Zhao Yuzhe was ambushed by Fang Rui. Happy had even coordinated with Fang Rui and shifted targets. As a result, Zhao Yuzhe was now the one typing "!!!!" The entire team hurried over to rescue him. Liu Hao had predicted this outcome though, so he came to the rescue promptly.

"Good!" Zhao Yuzhe felt very thankful for Liu Hao's prompt rescue. Everyone had also seen Liu Hao save the situation at a key moment.

But...

"It looks like you were ready for it!" Ye Xiu rushed over from the side. Lord Grim used several movement skills in a row to instantly move to Liu Hao's Absent Sun. Such a fast response, such... Ye Xiu had been ready too.

Dancing Rain's artillery barrage, One Inch Ash's ghost boundaries, and even Happy's healer Little Cold Hands appeared in Liu Hao's sight. In an instant, an offensive formation had formed. Their target: Absent Sun.

It was a trap!

Liu Hao didn't hesitate and immediately typed "!!!" He didn't think he could break through the premeditated formation set up by Happy so easily. However, even if his teammates rescued him, what then? Wind Howl had too many openings. Happy just needed to pick one and attack their openings again and again, while Wind Howl ran around rescuing one after the other. Apart from the opening, Wind Howl had never showed the initiative once.

"Fight!!!" Captain Tang Hao shouted. However, was Wind Howl's problem an issue that could be resolved through morale? Their individual players were good, but they weren't overwhelmingly strong to the point where they could just crush everything in their path through superior individual skill alone. What they lacked was teamwork.

Liu Hao's Absent Sun was the first to fall. To the viewers out there though, even in this losing situation, Liu Hao's performance had no lack of highlights. He had saved Wind Howl several times during crucial moments.

"If you could completely focus on the match, how would things have turned out?" But when he fell, Ye Xiu once again lectured him on that annoying old subject.

How am I supposed to focus more? Why are you so annoying, always blabbering? Do you really think that with your trash talk, people will think that I didn't perform well? Hilarious. Even though Wind Howl's going to lose, who could pick out anything wrong with my performance?

With one player dead, Wind Howl went into an even more passive state. From start to end, they had never taken the initiative even once. Wind Howl's loyal fans had seen their players march onto the stage in high spirits, but their opponents instantly tore them apart as if they were paper tigers.

If Wind Howl had lost an intense back and forth, even though the fans would still feel sad, they wouldn't feel downhearted. But Wind Howl seemed to have gone into the match full of confidence, yet they had never gained the upper hand from start to finish. The fans weren't able to find even a shred of hope.

The Wind Howl banner once again drooped down. That loyal fan responsible for the banner was reminiscing about the Team Wind Howl with the Criminal Partners. Even though that team hadn't placed as high on the rankings as the current Wind Howl, they had never made the fans lose all hope.

Matches needed to be won, but winning wasn't everything in a competition.

Team Wind Howl failed to win a single point nor did they perform well. All they seemed to have was high morale, but when they came onto the stage, they were like balloons and instantly burst apart.

How could this sort of team give us any sort of hope? Wind Howl's fans were suddenly at a loss. A team that currently qualified for the playoffs was unexpectedly making many people feel lost.

Chapter 1282: After Round 18

Wind Howl lost.

A thorough, bitter loss.

Even though their team competitions had always had the style of bullying the weak and fearing the strong, their individual round performances had always been quite good. They'd won two points against Samsara, four points against Tyranny, and three points against Blue Rain. Aside from Samsara, in which they'd been slightly weaker, against Tyranny and Blue Rain, Wind Howl had won the majority of the individual round points.

But when it came to the team competition? A team that lacked strategic focus was that much more vulnerable in front of powerful enemies. In the team competition, it was clear that passion and spirit weren't enough to win. And this time, Wind Howl hadn't even managed to win a victory in the individual rounds, either.

0-10. Wind Howl lost cleanly and completely. Amidst the jeers and laughter of the stadium filled with Happy fans, the six players from Wind Howl who'd played in the team competition were drooping like that team flag in the midst of their fans, never to fly again.

This was the first time this season Wind Howl had lost so badly. In fact, it had been several years since they'd earned zero points in a match. How long would it be before Wind Howl was never again swept like this? Wind Howl's members were stunned! In terms of length of time they'd been in the team, each player's was shorter than the next. Had they paid attention to Wind Howl's past before? They were the ones who hated and abandoned Wind Howl's long-standing dirty playstyle, and it seemed that they had never bothered to note this team's past and tradition.

Accepting the cheers of the crowd, Happy's players left the stage. 10-0, another 10-0, and the fact that they'd won this over a strong team like Wind Howl only made this achievement even more joyful. Their performance from start to finish had been exceptional. Ye Xiu came up and wiped out Tang Hao, Fang Rui scored a record-setting 1v3, and then they'd easily defeated their opponents in the team competition. Just as Wind Howl's diehard fans were beginning to doubt their team, Happy's fans were only swelling with belief toward their team.

In the post-match press conference, even Liu Hao didn't have the heart to try and please the media. Amidst all the doubts, Wind Howl gave a few words of official, meaningless talk, and then forcefully ended their press conference. Then, Happy's players came up, and Fang Rui was immediately the subject of attention. A record-setting 1v3 against his old mother team, wasn't this a thrilling topic? As soon as the group arena had finished, the reporters had frantically prepared all sorts of questions, and now they tossed them about heroically. During this press conference, Happy's other members were basically invisible.

Round 18 finished. Happy's victory over Wind Howl was the big highlight. This time Samsara, Happy's direct competitors in terms of 10-0 scores, lost to Happy. In their home game against Thunderclap, Samsara lost an individual round, and ultimately won the match 9-1. This match that had been chosen for the television broadcast finally allowed the broadcasters to feel no regrets about their choice. This was truly an extremely exciting match, especially the team competition at the end.

There was a great disparity in both players and characters. One reporter added up the value of the players and characters in each team's roster for comparison, and the power indicated by those numbers only made this match feel even more like they were trying to use an egg to crack a rock. But ultimately, the two teams had fought in the team competition for 33 minutes, which was extremely rare to see in a match against the powerful team that was Samsara. It could be seen that they'd faced many hit and runs.

Relying on their seemingly much-cheaper roster, Thunderclap played a careful and calculating death battle against Thunderclap.

Samsara's ultimate victory had been extremely difficult, and some people had even thought during the match that it was a good thing this was Samsara's home game. If it had been Thunderclap's, then Samsara's golden win streak might have finally been broken. After that, the strategy that Samsara had used to obtain victory was exactly the same strategy that Happy had used to defeat Thunderclap in Round 16.

In the end, Samsara's Sun Xiang had forcefully broken his way through countless obstacles, performing exceptionally well to drag down Xiao Shiqin. Even though his One Autumn Leaf didn't have the same crazy attack rhythm as the unspecialized Lord Grim, the offensive power of the other members of

Samsara was generally a step higher than that of Happy. Ultimately, Samsara had relied on this one opportunity to shatter Thunderclap's strategic plans.

This was raw power destroying refinement, and many people felt that it was a shame that Thunderclap lost. And after this destruction, the question of whether or not to open voice channels was once again brought up. Thunderclap, who had once taken advantage of the rule but then suffered twice, finally stood firmly with Blue Rain as a victim of the rule.

And this time, the opponents of the ban on voice comms made their point unusually clearly: the rules were killing the development of Glory.

After seeing that strategy had been completely destroyed by power, one could imagine, in the future why would anyone bother to study these sort of refined strategies? Because even if they developed them, they would be of no use. After several teams in a row successfully used these methods in battle, then the shotcallers of the more strategy-oriented teams would face all sorts of suppression, the goal simply being to prevent them from having the time to type words.

This is a slaughter of Glory strategy. If this continues, then all we will see in future battles are crude, brute-force competitions of raw handspeed. And Glory was more than just that!

The opponents of this rule let their voices resound, and all sides began paying more attention to this than before.

At first, Thunderclap had profited from this rule, but the two subsequent times, they had suffered from it. And they were also without a doubt a team that performed tactics to the peak level. Even before this season, Thunderclap was always this kind of team, but during that time they hadn't had this kind of unbelievable performance. But after Xiao Shiqin went and played around in the Challenger League, it was like the team had become gold-plated.

Even though they'd been defeated by Happy in Round 16, that hadn't seemed to waver their belief at all. Facing Samsara, this unbelievably powerful opponent, Xiao Shiqin once again prepared carefully. He continued to believe that their Team Thunderclap had the ability to defeat any opponent.

This determination moved many people, and Xiao Shiqin's popularity this season exploded. Even with a collection of nameless, ordinary players who were nothing compared to a powerhouse team, they'd still managed to obtain such shining results. This had never before happened in the history of the Alliance. Happy, the self-proclaimed grassroots team, in reality had three All-Star level players, two All-Star characters, and an evildoer unspecialized that no one in the Alliance could grow accustomed to. It'd been a long while since anyone thought of Happy as a grassroots team.

Even though Thunderclap still lost to Samsara, this loss carried a lot of weight. The debate over allowing voice comms grew more and more heated. Some people even demanded that they not wait until next season to change the rules - for something like this, if they could change it, they should change as soon as possible.

Of course, the Alliance couldn't just say they'd change and change it. After the first time this had come up, they'd been studying this problem nonstop. With a new wave of pressure from public opinion, they focused harder on this issue. And after the end of Round 18, the rankings saw new changes. Samsara's strong lead didn't change, but after Happy swept Wind Howl, their ranking rose again. They were now in

fifth place, with the same number of points as Tyranny. This round, Tyranny had played a home game, but lost 2-8 to Hundred Blossoms. Because of Zhang Jiale, these two teams had a rather strong conflict. Hundred Blossoms' away game victory this round caused the diehard team-following fans to become carried away in their elation. But the blood of Tyranny fans ran hot, and brawls broke out in Tyranny's stadium. Even though they'd been provoked by the excessive behavior of the Hundred Blossoms fans, it was the host side that generally had to take responsibility for these sort of entanglements.

Fortunately, no injuries had resulted, and the Alliance only gave Tyranny a serious warning. Tyranny suffered, and because of their failure this round, they'd slid down to fourth place, with 127 points like Happy.

Blue Rain and Tiny Herb had each taken down their opponents, and were currently in second and third place.

On Blue Rain's side, they'd faced quite a bit of disruption earlier after losing points to weaker teams. But judging from their recent performance, that had just been a temporary downturn. After adjusting, their scores instantly improved, and in just a few moves they had charged back to second place on the rankings.. Tiny Herb continued their beautiful win streak in the group arena. In this round, they only lost one individual round to Misty Rain, and won by a large margin of 9-1.

Misty Rain's situation was becoming more and more alarming. With 87 points, they were already 21 points away from the playoff zone, and right behind them, Miracle was quickly catching up to them with 83 points. And this new team, Miracle, was only improving with every battle. If Misty Rain was said to still have hope at making the playoffs, then Miracle, only 4 points behind them, also seemed to have this chance.

This had a great deal to do with the change in attitude of the three former Excellent Era players.

These three were originally very depressed about their fall, and they all hoped that they'd quickly find a new home. They all fought quite hard, but how much of it was for their team, that was unknown. But because of their hard work, Miracle actually managed to earn quite good results. Praise came in from all sides, causing them to become overjoyed.

They had come from a powerhouse, and there, they had only ever been side characters. Whenever the team had results, it was very rarely because of them. But now, in this Team Miracle, the three had gradually gained a true sense of owning this home. This team's scores were earned through their hard work; the heartfelt cheers of the fans were meant for them. This sort of fortune steadily let them feel satisfied, and they steadily set down the arrogance bred from their time in a powerhouse. In the private messages between the three of them, they began to recognize that being in Miracle was really quite good.

The three of them began to fight not only for themselves, but for the team. And so the new team's scores became more and more stable. Now, the season was half over, and they were actually in twelfth place.

If Happy weren't here stealing all the spotlight, then Team Miracle really would've lived up to their name, becoming the most miraculous new team in Glory history.

But even in this current situation, Miracle would no longer be overlooked by everyone.

After eighteen rounds, the media reported on the state of the Alliance after this round and the circulating topics. But just two days after the end of this round, a piece of particularly attention-grabbing news appeared in the headlines of all the major media.

Team Wind Howl, with an asking price of 15 million, was seeking to purchase Team Tyranny's Zhang Jiale.

Chapter 1283: Golden Body Broken

15 million!

Putting aside the target player for now, just this amount was enough to set off stormy waves. The news revealed was very clear that this price didn't include the character, only the player. Without a doubt, if this transfer was successfully completed, the value of professional Glory players would reach a new high.

It was worth noting that the current record for the most expensive player transfer was already set by Team Wind Howl. In the summer window between Seasons 8 and 9, Tang Hao transferred to Wind Howl, and that price of 10 million was currently the highest.

The winter transfer window was generally only for small adjustments and supplements, or if a team needed to fill a hole because of illness or other such special reasons. When Excellent Era obtained Sun Xiang in Season 8, that was a rarely-seen core player transfer. But that, too, was only because Ye Xiu had retired mid-season and Excellent Era was forced to fill the gap.

And now, Wind Howl directly pulled out a record-breaking transfer offer for Tyranny's Zhang Xinjie. It was clear that they had completely recognized the problems with the team and were eager to solve it.

Was Zhang Xinjie the magic treasure that would solve all of Wind Howl's problems?

When everyone thought about it, they realized that Wind Howl had made a fairly correct decision in choosing a player. After giving up on the dirty playstyle, Wind Howl was unable to establish a new tactical system. Bringing in a Master Tactician would undoubtedly help in this area. Wind Howl hoped to establish a new playstyle that involved strong offense, and since Zhang Xinjie came from Tyranny, he would entirely be able to adapt to such a style.

But in the end, relying on acquiring a new team member to solve a problem was a solution for when there was no other way. Choosing Zhang Xinjie seemed to be a correct choice, but the important point was that you couldn't just buy any transfer you wanted, especially if you were targeting the core player of the other team.

So Wind Howl didn't even bother probing carefully, they directly gave this record-breaking price of 15 million. Evidently they didn't have any win-win trade to offer, so they could only use money to open the way, and hope that they could strike a price that Tyranny had no way of rejecting.

Everyone's eyes were focused. All sorts of media came to investigate, and quickly confirmed that this news was true. Team Wind Howl indeed directly proposed an official transfer request to Team Tyranny.

But... Without even waiting to discuss any specifics, Tyranny had already given a lightning-fast answer, announcing their reply directly through the media: declined.

There'd been no official discussion, just a simple refusal. Tyranny's fans hadn't even had the time to become worried before the official response of the club was there to reassure them.

Tyranny's attitude seemed very resolute, but those who were familiar with transfer operations knew clearly that attitude sometimes was only a bargaining chip for the price. Tyranny's attitude showed that they wouldn't be moved by the price of 15 million, then, what about more?

Those looking forward to watch the excitement weren't disappointed. Less than an hour after Tyranny refused Wind Howl's price, Wind Howl followed up.

20 million!

Double the record set by Tang Hao for a solo player transfer. Everyone recognized once and for all Wind Howl's current insanity. This old team had never given people the impression of being a bold, rich, and ostentatious team. Yet as it turned out, they might be quiet when not moving, but when they moved, it was with the sound of thunder.

A team begging for a big-name player, this was entertaining for any team's fans to watch. Wind Howl's fans were still depressed over being swept by Happy, but they grew excited by Wind Howl's continuously bold strokes. Added to the fact that Zhang Xinjie was a good choice, this caused the Wind Howl fans to suddenly grow lively. Even as they waited in anticipation, they took the initiative to use their fan passion to send praises and welcomes to Zhang Xinjie. Everyone knew that in this transfer, the player's own opinion would have a great influence, especially for a big-name player like Zhang Xinjie.

In the end, this time Tyranny hadn't even made an official reply when Zhang Xinjie already made his own announcement, expressing that he had absolutely no intention of leaving Team Tyranny.

The passion of the Wind Howl fans had only just been ignited when it was immediately extinguished by this bucket of cold water. Completely thrown off, they could only blankly wait for their own team's next step.

Wind Howl's two public price offers had already made them the talk of the town, but of course in reality, a transfer was never worked out without a direct conversation between the two sides. Wind Howl was in private contact as well. 20 million wasn't their upper limit, this was just broadcast to increase the morale of the team and boost the hopes of the fans.

But afterward, in the private negotiations, Wind Howl again kicked a steel wall. Neither Tyranny as a team nor Zhang Xinjie as an individual showed any sign of wavering. In private, Wind Howl had already raised the price to 25 million and promised even better accommodations for Zhang Xinjie.

Refusal.

They continued to receive nothing but refusal, that sort of immovable refusal with no room for negotiation.

Wind Howl was helpless. Even as the outside world still anticipated Wind Howl to give an even higher price, in private, Wind Howl had hit the wall until their heads were bleeding. Their invitation toward

Zhang Xinjie had instantly become a farce of loud thunder with only a drizzle of rain. When Round 19 began, two small teams had already completed two transfers that didn't draw any attention at all, but Wind Howl? After those two days of noise, there was no more movement.

The acquisition of Zhang Xinjie was unsuccessful, but they had made too much noise with this. The fans' hopes had all been lifted, but in the end it didn't work out. It had to be said that Wind Howl had been too confident with this. They'd had excessive belief in the power of money to open the road. It seemed that they hadn't even considered that in response to these prices and conditions, Tyranny and Zhang Xinjie would still say no to them.

Wind Howl now needed a backup plan to appease the fans whose hopes had been lifted. But just looking at healers, who in the current professional scene could compare to Zhang Xinjie? Besides, Wind Howl had hoped to solve the team's problems from the basis. Just swapping out a healer player would be to no avail. Wind Howl understood clearly that their current problem wasn't that their healer Ruan Yongbin maintained the dirty playstyle. The key point was that, after giving up on the dirty playstyle, the team had been unable to find a mature strategy to use in their matches.

Wind Howl, unable to obtain Zhang Xinjie, seemed like a fly without a head. And in the upcoming Round 19 of the league matches, Wind Howl faced another strong team, Tiny Herb.

Tiny Herb had strong performances in the group arena all season, but their team competitions had caused some worry. After this match, however, everyone saw clearly that even if Tiny Herb's team performance wasn't the best, it was still more than enough to take care of Wind Howl. At least they weren't as fragmented as Wind Howl, who relied entirely on each individual players' instinct and judgment to fight matches.

9-1. Tiny Herb played their away game at Wind Howl and ultimately achieved a large victory. Even though Wind Howl had scooped up one more point than they had last round, this one point was far from enough to make anyone happy.

In the same round, Tyranny, who'd received Wind Howl's request for Zhang Xinjie, displayed their resolve, winning their away game at Void with a score of 8-2.

But in Round 19, the result that was most unexpected was that Samsara's golden win streak was broken.

The team that had completed this snipe was Hundred Blossoms. In their home game, they won 7-3 against Samsara, previously undefeated in the team competition.

Samsara's performance in this team competition was indeed not good that match. After the match, analysts pointed out that their long and slow match against Thunderclap last round had crushed Samsara's rhythm thus far, and in this match, they still hadn't been able to adjust their rhythm back to normal.

But no matter the reason, victory belonged to Hundred Blossoms. After 19 rounds, every team had faced each other exactly once, and only Hundred Blossoms had managed to defeat Samsara. This was something that the Hundred Blossoms fans could feel proud of. In all these years, this team had received much more mockery than praise, and they really didn't have many honors that they could claim as theirs and theirs alone.

Samsara's golden body was broken, and this of course became headline news. But Happy was now no longer a little invisible team that would easily be overlooked and forgotten. In this round, Happy had also met their first loss since Round 9, which also earned quite a bit of attention.

This round, Happy had played their away game at 301, ultimately losing 4-6. After winning 4 points in the individual battles, Happy's supporters were sure that this would be yet another big victory and were lamenting the fact that this wouldn't be another 10-0. But in the team competition, Happy actually lost.

Ever since Round 9, not only had Happy won every match, their winning scores had never dipped below 9-1. This was a point-scoring rhythm even more fearsome than Samsara's. If the Pro League was only from Rounds 9 to 18, then the championship would already belong to Happy.

It was true that Happy hadn't met any of the top powerhouses in their crazy win streak, but teams like Misty Rain, Void, Thunderclap, Wind Howl weren't opponents that could be casually defeated. The ferocious thing was that when Happy faced these four strong opponents, their scores had actually been even higher. Among these four matches, they'd earned three 10-0's.

Happy's results these ten rounds had been even more insane than Samsara's, and everyone recognized Happy's strength. But no one really treated them as some invincible fleet.

Because Happy always had a weak point, their healer. From the very beginning, people had realized that his skill wasn't enough. This wasn't any secret, this was something that even the newspapers reported.

The various teams would of course target such an obvious weakness. But they soon realized that Happy's protection of their healer was so extreme, it could be called frenzied.

Against Hundred Blossoms, against Misty Rain, then against Void... It was very apparent in these matches.

And then Thunderclap had made clear strategic plans to target this weakness, but in the end, because Xiao Shiqin was forced into a position where he couldn't give commands, his strategy was broken. If he'd been able to give voice commands, then in this battle, perhaps Happy would lose because of their Cleric's inability to keep up with the rhythm.

Happy's weakness was extremely apparent, but so many teams were unable to grasp it. And then in Round 19, against Team 301 Degrees, Happy's weak point was broken.

It was broken through brute force.

301's captain, the number one Assassin in Glory, Yang Cong used Life-Risking Strike to directly self-destruct and steal away An Wenyi's Little Cold Hands.

Chapter 1284: The Overlooked Sacrifice

Yang Cong was named the number one Assassin in the Alliance, but his Assassin style wasn't particularly liked. For Assassins, most people liked the thrill of a one-hit kill from Life-Risking Strike. But Yang Cong almost never used this skill, to the point that people wondered if his Scene Killer hadn't even added points to this skill and only used it to bluff.

But in the most recent All-Star Competition, Yang Cong's Scene Killer revealed the fangs of an instant-kill, defeating his opponent in just one strike. Even though that was just a show, Yang Cong at least let everyone know, he knew how to use Life-Risking Strike, the most thrilling of all the Assassin's skills.

The All-Star Weekend ended, and all the players returned to their normal competition conditions. But in the match against Happy, Yang Cong once again revealed his sharp fangs, and Life-Risking Strike stole away An Wenyi's Little Cold Hands.

This move was incredibly unexpected, and losing the healer in the team competition was deadly. Lord Grim's little healing skills could occasionally save a situation at critical points, but relying on him to support a 5v5 team battle was impossible.

Happy could only launch a full, rapid offensive, hoping that they could use this to obtain an advantage of numbers. However, 301 was clearly prepared for this situation. As soon as Yang Cong's attack succeeded, they immediately lowered the tempo of the battle and began a slow battle of attrition. Neither arrogant nor rash, they tightly protected their own healer, and ultimately they swallowed Happy like this.

The battle of attrition wore on for almost 20 minutes, but nearly all of the light of this match came from that Life-Risking Strike of Yang Cong's Scene Killer. This was a brilliance possessed only by Assassins.

During the post-match press conference, Yang Cong of course was surrounded by the reporters. Everyone was extremely curious, after seven years of persistence, why did he suddenly change his playstyle in this match? Was it because he found inspiration from that performance at All-Stars?

"Perhaps!" Facing the questions of the reporters, Yang Cong smiled. "You know, it's not that I don't know how to use Life-Risking Strike, it's that I'm unable to use it!"

"What does that mean?" The reporters didn't understand.

"Because I'm 301's captain," Yang Cong responded simply.

The reporters suddenly understood. The captain was a team's soul, its banner. At any time, the captain had the responsibility of leading the entire team. They might use words to encourage the team members, they might use actions to carry everyone along, but no matter how they led, the captain, first and foremost, had to be present.

And Life-Risking Strike? This was a lose-lose playstyle. After using Life-Risking Strike, the Assassin would only be left with a sliver of health. There wasn't a single team who would miss a target like that. And Yang Cong was 301's captain. He needed to strive to remain on the field. He couldn't just simply kill one target and then come offstage.

Life-Risking Strike. It wasn't that he didn't know how to use it, but that he was unable to use it.

Because he was the captain. On his shoulders, he carried more duties and obligations than others did. He could not be an independently-acting Assassin, because he represented not just himself, but the entirety of a team.

Once they understood this, the reporters suddenly realized something that everyone had overlooked all this time.

From Season 4, everyone praised how Wang Jiexi, for the sake of Tiny Herb, quietly adjusted his playstyle, gradually putting away his more elegant, more attention-grabbing, more popular Magician playstyle. But there was another player who joined in the same season as Wang Jiexi, another All-Star level player, another team captain. From the very beginning, he had also quietly sacrificed some things, for the sake of his responsibilities.

Life-Risking Strike was the most brilliant skill of an Assassin.

Perhaps compared to Wang Jiexi, Yang Cong hadn't done as much. But both players had the same determination of sacrificing themselves for the sake of their teams. For this sentiment, it shouldn't matter exactly how much was sacrificed.

After realizing this point, all of the reporters present felt extremely moved. But even as they were moved, they were still curious.

"Then why did you suddenly use Life-Risking Strike in this battle?" a reporter asked.

"I was probably inspired after All-Stars! After the All-Star Competition, I realized that nowadays, methods like this are probably the best way I can contribute to the team. It's about time that I leave some responsibilities for other people to carry," Yang Cong smiled.

The reporters were once again stunned.

This... was someone already preparing to give way and retire!

Players from Season 3 were indeed at the twilight of their careers; very few were still active in the circle. But how many were like Yang Cong, already deciding to step down before he'd even begun to reveal significant signs of decline?

The All-Star Competition... what did it allow him to see?

Did being at the bottom among All-Stars allow him to see the exit toward which he was walking? Or did the younger players allow him to see a future that was worth looking forward to?

None of the reporters continued to press for details. They knew that even if this was Yang Cong was doing this voluntarily, even if he could still smile gently as he faced everyone, his heart would certainly have feelings of sadness. The helplessness brought by the flow of time was cruel. Who was insensitive enough to dig into this scar for details?

Yang Cong's statement already revealed many things.

Team 301 Degrees was about to change their tactical core. Yang Cong's Assassin stepped aside for this, and he could use a freer method to battle. Perhaps starting from this round, Scene Killer's one-hit kill fangs would set off a new scene in the Alliance?

No one would overlook the fact that this was the number one Assassin in the Alliance! Nearing the end of his professional career, he voluntarily gave up his position as the core player, and from this he would step onto the road of a true Assassin.

Then, after Yang Cong stepped down, who would be 301's new core?

The reporters were just as curious about this question, but 301 didn't give an answer during this press conference. Looking at 301's current players, there was Li Yihui who'd transferred from Tiny Herb. Even though he'd dropped out of All-Stars after leaving Tiny Herb, he was still a very strong player. There was also the Blade Master player Gao Jie, whose ability had been steadily increasing the past few years. These two players both had the possibility of becoming 301's new core.

But two days later, the Monday of the new week, in the register of people signing with the Alliance, some people discovered that 301 just signed a new contract. Not a transfer, but an independent registration.

Bai Shu, a name that no one knew, silently entered Team 301 Degrees. And from the public data released by the Alliance, everyone could see that this person named Bai Shu was using the character that former 301 player Xu Bin had left behind after transferring away, the Knight Tide.

Who was Bai Shu?

Countless people were desperate to know this answer, but the Alliance was currently on a weeklong break. This year's Spring Festival had arrived relatively early. January 22 was already Lunar New Year's Eve, only two days away. All of the teams were already on break. Only the Alliance was still reporting as usual on the newest transfers and replacements as they happened during this transfer window. The players of the various teams had all long gone home to celebrate the new year.

Happy also became a lot quieter. Even Wei Chen and Fang Rui, these dirty and shameless guys, very seriously and obediently reported home for the Spring Festival. In an instant, only three people were left in Happy's training room.

"It's just the three of us again!" Chen Guo said, looking at Ye Xiu and Su Mucheng. She didn't feel lonely because there were so few of them. Two people still with her, this was more excitement than she'd ever had since her father passed away.

"Yup, us again," Ye Xiu said.

"Is your brother coming this year?" Chen Guo asked.

"Probably not!" Ye Xiu said.

"You're not planning on going back home?" asked Chen Guo.

"We'll see, we'll see." To this question, Ye Xiu's typical calm, free, and easy attitude wavered a bit, a rare sight to see.

"Then, let's get ready for the Spring Festival!" Chen Guo didn't ask any further.

"Are we going shopping again?" Ye Xiu asked.

"Scared?" The two women smirked at him.

"Even my legs are shaking," Ye Xiu smiled bitterly.

"Then, thanks for your hard work." The two of them showed no intention of letting him off easy.

Just as the three of them prepared to depart, Ye Xiu saw that the door to the R&D area was unlatched, and there seemed to be sounds coming out.

Ye Xiu shot a puzzled glance at Su Mucheng and Chen Guo, and the two immediately noticed this as well. The three of them went forward, Ye Xiu gently pushed open the door, and they saw Guan Rongfei sitting at the computer, completely engrossed in operating something, his mouth moving nonstop as though muttering something to himself.

"What's going on?" Chen Guo barged in, waving her hand in front of Guan Rongfei's face. "Isn't your train at 9? What time is it now?"

Guan Rongfei finally looked away in disgust after Chen Guo blocked his line of sight. After hearing Chen Guo's shout, he casually checked the time. "It's 9:40? Oh, I missed it."

"What are you doing?" Chen Guo shouted. If someone who didn't know what was going on saw this, it would have been really difficult to tell who was the one who had missed the train.

"Working on equipment." Guan Rongfei's response was incredibly simple, so simple that Chen Guo had no response. She of course figured that Guan Rongfei was suddenly investigating some clue, and then became so focused that he forgot about everything else. But her head really hurt over how this guy was always forgetting himself like this, so much that aside from his work, everything else was ignored.

"You're not going home?" Chen Guo asked.

"Don't rush." Guan Rongfei raised his finger and waved it.

Chen Guo suddenly thought that this guy must have reached some critical point, so she didn't dare to say any more and just waited to the side.

After that, Guan Rongfei continued to lose himself in his work, seemingly forgetting everyone standing around him.

"So what exactly are you working on?" Ye Xiu walked up to him.

"Look, this..." As soon as Ye Xiu came up, Guan Rongfei immediately grew animated, beginning to chatter away at Ye Xiu.

"Huh, is that so. Let me see." As Ye Xiu spoke, he turned on another computer.

Chen Guo's jaw dropped. What happened to their Spring Festival celebration?

Chapter 1285: Strengthening the Cleric

In the end, Chen Guo couldn't harden her heart to drag these two away from the computer. As for preparing for the Spring Festival, she and Su Mucheng quietly went to take care of it by themselves.

By the time the two women finished and returned to the Internet cafe, when they came upstairs and looked, the two in the R&D room were in the exact same positions as earlier. Such focus meant that Chen Guo couldn't bring herself to interrupt them. After exchanging a glance with Su Mucheng, they quietly retreated.

There was plenty of space in the strategic planning room, so all of the New Year's goods they bought were piled up there. Chen Guo sat on the couch, looking at the points leaderboard on the wall of the strategy room. In her heart, there was a taste she couldn't describe.

The season was officially halfway over, and Happy was currently ranked fifth with 131 points, a full 30 points buffer between them and the edge of the playoff zone. Such an outstanding score had already caused tremors within the circle, and of course Chen Guo rejoiced at these scores. But nowadays, she was no longer that fan who only saw the beauty and elegance of the players' performances onstage. As the phrase went, one minute onstage was the result of ten years of work offstage. Chen Guo, with her new identity, now saw all of the hard work and hardship these players had put in offstage.

Ye Xiu, Tang Rou, Fang Rui, An Wenyi, all of the players, as well as Guan Rongfei in R&D, and Wu Chen in Happy's guild, everyone was working furiously, working so hard that Chen Guo never felt that she was able to relax. They'd made it to the Spring Festival, and she wanted to give everyone a short rest, but Ye Xiu and Guan Rongfei ended up unconsciously squatting in Glory yet again.

For the first time, Chen Guo felt that the championship wasn't just beautiful and glorious, it was cruel. Those that obtained it, those that didn't, both had to sacrifice so, so much.

If they obtained it, at least their efforts were rewarded.

But if they couldn't?

After enduring these kinds of hardships, even though she hadn't even suffered these setbacks yet, Chen Guo already felt that she could feel the pain of those who were unable to win the championship.

She couldn't help but think of Zhang Jiale, the most famous "championship loser" in Glory, having the championship slip through his fingers four times. Yet he still didn't give up. The passion of a person like him was probably just like that of Ye Xiu and Guan Rongfei!

"They're all crazy," Chen Guo muttered.

When Su Mucheng heard this, she laughed and sat down beside her. "Isn't there that saying, only the crazy survive."

"But... What if you go crazy, and you still can't survive?" Chen Guo asked.

Su Mucheng was startled, and her gaze also landed upon that leaderboard.

True... This was competition. If they treated "surviving" as "winning the championship," then it was simply fact that many people, no matter how crazy they became, couldn't become champions.

"Then probably... they can only live with their regrets!" Su Mucheng said. She didn't say anything like "as long as you tried there'd be no regrets." For those who had been pro players, she believed that playing without regrets was possible, but the disappointment of being unable to win the championship certainly wouldn't be erased by such policy of "no regrets." Ultimately, perhaps these regrets were what accumulated in the heart the most.

"Then what about you?" Chen Guo suddenly asked.

"Me?" Su Mucheng was again startled. She became a pro in Season 4, and starting from then, Excellent Era had never won a championship again. Ye Xiu had won three championships, but so far, Su Mucheng was also a player who didn't have the championship keyboard and mouse.

"Would you feel a lot of regret?" Chen Guo asked.

"Probably... as well..." Su Mucheng's answer was hesitant. She was still unsure about this question. She would feel regretful, she was sure of that. But she wasn't sure, would her regret be for herself, or for Ye Xiu? In the end, she still wasn't so dedicated to and crazy for Glory. It seemed that she had practiced just so that she could keep up with Ye Xiu's footsteps. Chen Guo, who was now fairly close with her, could observe this point, and so she asked this question.

"If... If your brother were still here, what do you think you would be doing now?" Tentatively, Chen Guo asked another question.

"If he were still here... I would probably stand at the side and bring them tea and water? And..." Su Mucheng laughed as she continued, "I would also play some Glory, so that the feeling of being together would be a bit stronger!"

"Yeah... Together." Chen Guo nodded, and didn't ask any further. The two women sat together on the sofa, lost in their own thoughts, until a voice suddenly shouted from over there, "Done! Just like that!"

.

The two looked at each other, stood up together, and quickly made their way to the R&D room. When they pushed open the door, they saw that Guan Rongfei, who normally spent all his time staring intently at the computer screen illuminating his face, had actually revealed an extraordinarily happy grin.

"What's done?" the two women immediately asked.

"This set of equipment is complete!" Guan Rongfei said.

"What equipment?" The two women peered over to see. They'd originally thought that Guan Rongfei had spent all this effort working on the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella as usual, but from these words, it didn't seem like that was the case. The umbrella wouldn't be described with the word "set"!

"Just a set of Cleric equipment, that's all," Ye Xiu said from the side.

"That's all???" When Guan Rongfei cared about something, he would display that he did indeed have an extraordinary IQ. He sharply picked up on Ye Xiu's wording.

"High intelligence, high crit, that's not too new, is it?" Ye Xiu said.

"It's the Cleric equipment set with the highest intelligence and highest crit in the entirety of Glory!" Guan Rongfei emphasized.

Ye Xiu shrugged and didn't say anything else, as though he didn't have the energy to argue.

"Highest intelligence? Highest crit?" Chen Guo repeated.

"Yes!" Guan Rongfei nodded emphatically. "Added to Little Cold Hands' skill tree, he'll definitely become the Cleric player with the strongest healing ability in all of Glory. Where's Little Hands? Let him come try it out." Guan Rongfei looked around, searching for him.

"He went home for the Spring Festival," Chen Guo said.

"What about his account?" Guan Rongfei asked.

"I'll get it!" Chen Guo immediately turned around and flew toward the training room to get the account card. Strictly speaking, the account cards were all property of the team, and so the players couldn't casually carry them everywhere. Although Chen Guo wouldn't make a fuss about such a detail, with An Wenyi's personality, he would always stick to the rules, and he'd handed over Little Cold Hands' account card without hesitation to Chen Guo before leaving.

The account card was quickly retrieved, and they swiftly logged onto the game. After trading with the account that Guan Rongfei had been using for research, a full set of Silver equipment was transferred to Little Cold Hands' body, and Chen Guo was dumbstruck.

Head, shoulders, upper body, waist, lower body, shoes, six pieces of clothing.

Cape, necklace, left hand ring, right hand ring, badge, pendant, six accessories.

Plus the common weapon for a Cleric, the cross.

13 pieces of equipment, all Silver.

Now that they were in the tenth season, more and more characters had full sets of Silver Equipment. There wasn't a speck of Orange to be found on the core players of the various major teams. But Chen Guo never thought that their Happy would also get a fully Silver-equipped character so quickly, let alone that the first character to get all Silver equipment would actually be Little Cold Hands.

"This... is now the strongest Cleric?" As Chen Guo controlled Little Cold Hands, her hands were shaking a bit.

"Strongest? That depends on how you define it. From healing amount, this is the strongest," Guan Rongfei said.

"I understand," Chen Guo nodded. Even though she wasn't a pro player, she understood things like which stats were more important for a Cleric.

Intelligence, this was the number one thing a Cleric had to strive for. How high the intelligence was determined how strong or weak the Cleric's healing ability was.

And then, the more Vitality and health, the more ability they had to survive. Every class cared about the Vitality stat, and the survival of the Cleric determined the survival of the team, so some Clerics felt that Vitality was even more important than intelligence.

Aside from that, cast speed was also an extremely important stat for a Cleric. The faster the casts, the more heals could be made, it was another way of increasing how much the Cleric could heal, and on the battlefield, it decreased the chance of interruption from the opponent.

Crits, something that had a certain probability of occurring. Critical attacks increased damage. Healing criticals increased the healing amount.

These were all stats used to strengthen the healing ability of a Cleric. And when trying to strengthen the survivability of a Cleric, all sorts of defenses and resistances were also regarded as very important.

With all sorts of stats, it was very difficult to rank them. Generally, it depended on the characteristics of the individual player, so that these Cleric stats were allocated to form the most comfortable and effective partnership with the player. This was key in choosing equipment, and was also the value of Silver equipment: only self-made equipment could achieve the ideal stat distribution.

And this set for Little Cold Hands, the stats were rather aggressive. Intelligence and crit were strengthened without restraint, while aside from that, stats like cast speed which couldn't be overlooked by any Cleric suffered a cold shoulder. On the defensive side, this equipment had high resistance to ice and dark, but they were strengthened at the cost of fire and light defense.

"This... suits An Wenyi?" Chen Guo was now a more worldly person, and she didn't have any doubts looking at the stats of this set of equipment. She trusted that Ye Xiu and Guan Rongfei wouldn't give her something to laugh at.

"Yes," Ye Xiu nodded. "An Wenyi is weaker in terms of technique and reaction, so having to constantly cast heals to support the whole team makes things too difficult. Might as well give him this set, with a slower rhythm, but a strong explosive power."

"Ice and dark resistance, to decrease the risk of him being controlled." Chen Guo knew that the attacks with controlling and restricting effects were largely ice and dark element.

"Right," Ye Xiu nodded.

"So our weaknesses are taken care of just like that?" Chen Guo asked happily.

"The equipment is only a supplement. Even with all this, his reactions are still somewhat slow, he still needs to improve!" said Ye Xiu.

"Then what should he do?" Chen Guo asked.

"It's up to him," Ye Xiu said.

At the same time, in the Glory world, in the Heavenly Domain, in front of a Level 60 100-person dungeon, Lost Fleet.

"What? Solo healer? Bro, don't kid me, okay? This is the entrance to the 100-player dungeon. The 5-player dungeon is over there," said a surprised Knight player, to this Cleric who was wearing decent equipment.

"It's just a Level 60 one," said this decently-equipped Cleric. "Solo healer is enough. With more damage, it'll go a little faster."

Chapter 1286: The Scoundrel Healer

Level 60 100-person dungeon, solo healer.

The one who proposed this ludicrous idea at the entrance of the dungeon was Happy's healer, An Wenyi. One could only imagine the extreme chaos that such a situation would force upon the healer, but An Wenyi wanted to use exactly this type of environment to improve his own reactions.

The only problem was that this idea was quite ridiculous. In Glory, there had never before been the idea of solo healer for a 100-person dungeon, even if everyone was at Level 75 now, and this was only a Level 60 dungeon. There was a level advantage, but that didn't mean that players could easily crush a 100-person dungeon. If that were the case, healers wouldn't even be needed.

An Wenyi found a wild raid group. With his current identity as one of Happy's pro players, he could directly go to Happy's guild dungeon groups to practice, but those groups would definitely coordinate with him and care for him unconsciously. The teamwork of a stable team would lower the pressure on the healer. What An Wenyi needed was the most chaotic and insanity-inducing environment possible, and a wild dungeoning group formed right outside the entrance of the dungeon fit his needs exactly.

"Solo healer..." Even though this Knight was forming a wild raid group, he had a few companions. He didn't speak for a while, probably to discuss this issue with them.

An Wenyi quietly waited to the side. If this team rejected him, he could only search for other groups. Today was only Monday, the dungeons had just refreshed for the week, so large crowds of people gathered to dungeon. Only a minority of these players had set groups. Most players just casually threw together a team and dungeoned where they could. In such a setting, it shouldn't be too hard for An Wenyi to fulfill his desire of solo healing. After all, like any online game, in activities like dungeoning, healers were always a scarce resource. And of the 24 glory classes, healers made up only 8% of the player base, but for a 100-person dungeon, more than 8% of the spots typically needed to be healers, which only worsened the scarcity.

The group deliberated for a while. Finally, they probably looked at the people they'd already gathered and the applicants to the team. There were piles and piles of the various classes, but the number of Clerics and Paladins was so low it was pathetic. Whenever any were discovered, if you were too slow by a heartbeat, they would have already joined another group.

"How about... we give it a shot?" The players were tempted, and An Wenyi's Cleric was pulled into their group.

An Wenyi let out a long breath.

Level 60 100-person dungeon, solo healer. He'd never done it before, but he wasn't going in without any preparation. Why would he choose this dungeon to do this sort of thing? This decision had been made through calculations. The person who gave him this answer was Luo Ji, that person who could write countless Idiot's Guides just from watching dungeoning videos. He'd been a great help to An Wenyi for his. After calculating the damage in the Level 60 100-person dungeons and the healing power of the Cleric character An Wenyi would use, as well as all of the various situations that were likely to occur in these dungeons, he concluded that it was theoretically possible for a solo healer to sustain a raid group for a Level 60 100-person dungeon.

The raid group was quickly assembled. After they stopped considering healers, adding people was an extremely fast thing. But very quickly, players in the group also realized the fact that, in the entire group there was only one healer.

"Solo healer?" After one person asked and received an answer, everyone was in an uproar.

"Is he a dumbass? Does he even know how to play?" Immediately, many players immediately quit the raid group.

"For a Level 60 dungeon, solo healer is enough, max efficiency!" The team leader used An Wenyi's earlier words. But still, many players who thought this was impossible left. Of those that were left, some were shocked and some were curious, and then new players were added, some discovered the solo healer and quit in a rage, more were added, repeat the struggle, until finally, a muddled raid group was pulled together.

Solo healer!

Everyone was searching for that one healer in their group, wanting to see what kind of character it was.

At this time, An Wenyi couldn't help but feel a little nervous, too. He didn't come here wanting to screw everyone over. Solo healer... he had to pull it off.

"Enter!" the team leader ordered. The team entered the dungeon, and An Wenyi's crazy training began...

Wiped out.

Ultimately, the 100-person raid group fell to the very first boss of Lost Fleet.

"What solo healer you fucker!!!" At least 50% of the entire group immediately started berating him mercilessly.

They were Level 75, challenging a Level 60 dungeon. Even if it was a wild group as long as they were supported by a normal proportion of healers, they should at least make it past the first boss without wiping out.

The self-proclaimed solo healer was thrown into a mess right after meeting the first wave of monsters, and at that time the leader was already feeling a shadow over his heart. Wild dungeoning groups were chaotic, mismatched in both awareness and cooperation, and they needed healers to frequently stabilize the situation.

And so they progressed, chickens flying and dogs jumping, and whether in the chat or in voice, the most frequent content was cries for healing: heal heal heal heal heal.

People were dying nonstop, ending their dungeon adventure, and by the time they reached the first boss, over 30 people had already died. The remaining 60 or so ultimately fell to this boss.

...

As soon as the wounded leader was sent out of the dungeon, he immediately tried to find and harass An Wenyi. That guy, he came here purely just to screw people over, right? Had the leader accidentally

made an enemy of someone, who came to take revenge with an alt account? The team leader stewed in anger, but he didn't think that anyone had such a large grudge against him that they would go to all this effort to destroy a wild team that he'd casually pulled together. But when he took a circle all around the entrance of the dungeon, there was already no trace of that Cleric.

"Fuck, don't let me see you again!" the leader spat bitterly.

"It really is very difficult..." An Wenyi, who had already quickly escaped from the Lost Fleet dungeon, summarized this failure of a dungeon adventure. He'd been prepared for the chaos of a wild group, but the reality had still been far worse than his expectations.

But even though it'd turned out like this, An Wenyi had no thought of giving up. If he'd been able to do this right from the start, then would he even need this training in the first place? He'd already made all the preparations, including a drawer of Level 75 Cleric accounts.

An Wenyi did have a lot of experience in-game. He knew that this kind of scoundrel Cleric repeatedly doing this scoundrel thing would very quickly show up in the global channel, and so he'd already prepared to switch to alts.

However... always searching for a solo healer team, this action also seemed too conspicuous. Even switching accounts wouldn't be enough to hide it! An Wenyi was very thorough when considering problems, and he'd thought of this from the start, and so the new Cleric account he switched to was on the fourth server.

The ordinary servers had the same content as the Heavenly Domain, and their 100-person dungeons weren't lacking at all. An Wenyi had prepared these Cleric accounts specially for the ordinary servers, and so he began to wander all about the various servers as a solo healer, becoming a natural disaster for dungeon groups left and right.

Yes, natural disaster...

At the very start, the only thing that could be used to describe An Wenyi was "natural disaster."

One after another, wild dungeon groups were wiped out because of him, and group after group of players wasted their dungeon runs. An Wenyi was apologetic in his heart, but he twisted his head and, calm and determined, continued to be a natural disaster.

Did his skill show any increase?

Just looking at the progress in the dungeons, there was no significant change. Every run had different situations, and An Wenyi's performance had its ups and downs. Clearly, he didn't have the ability to stabilize and control these situations. But with An Wenyi's logical mindset, he hadn't anticipated any miraculous rhythm of instantly becoming God-like, so step by step he continued to use the drawer of accounts and wander around.

The new week gave him many opportunities to join dungeon groups. But the the Spring Festival quickly arrived, the time of the year with the lowest number of people online in Glory. Even though that was the case, Glory would still put out an in-game event during this time with many prizes for the players.

During an in-game event, the number of people actively dungeoning would decrease greatly. But this year's Spring Festival event also happened to be a huge group event. Even though it wasn't a dungeon, it was a dungeon-like environment for training, and so An Wenyi continued to train. After being a natural disaster for the dungeon groups, he became a natural disaster for the event groups.

About halfway through the Spring Festival, this legend of a natural disaster began to circulate in-game. Numerous players were complaining about meeting this scoundrel Cleric, and quickly even a discussion thread popped up, with the subject "Those Clerics Who Screwed You Over In Those Years." And so one after another, players showed up and told their stories, and gradually people began to realize, these experiences, how come they all sounded so similar? And afterward, the players who had been screwed over by the same Cleric character excitedly gathered together on this common ground.

"It's An Wenyi."

After Chen Guo told about this everyone about this exciting thing going on in-game recently, Ye Xiu found the thread in question. After flipping through a few of the descriptions written by the victims, he made this declaration.

"Ah?" Chen Guo was stunned.

"He's using this kind of method to crudely train his reactions," Ye Xiu said.

"This... does it work?" Chen Guo was doubtful.

"With such persistence, there'll always be some improvement," Ye Xiu said.

"But with him causing such a ruckus, he probably won't be able to persist much longer, will he?" Chen Guo scrolled through that thread, and toward the end people were already beginning to analyze this scoundrel Cleric. Even though they hadn't figured out any clues for now, it was clear that with the recent booming popularity of this thread, even ordinary players who liked to surf the discussion boards might see it, and once they saw it, they would be vigilant against any Clerics proclaiming they could be a solo healer.

"Haha, I'm sure he'll think of a way," Ye Xiu said.

An Wenyi indeed thought of a way. After being repeatedly refused as a solo healer, he began not to worry about maintaining that setup, and instead simply tried to find groups where the pressure on the healers was relatively high. In reality, after so much professional training, An Wenyi's current skill was higher than any ordinary player. He couldn't make the solo healer 100-person dungeon reality because of his own weaknesses, but for situations where there was a lack of healers and thus more pressure, he could handle them easily.

But healing step by step as usual, that wasn't the intense training that An Wenyi was looking for. And so in these kinds of groups, he took on all responsibilities, ignoring the divisions of the team. He treated the situation as though he were a solo healer, and furiously tried to maintain the health of the entire team.

Because there were still other healers supporting, it didn't fall into chaos. In fact, An Wenyi's extremely high-level wide-range observational ability became evident as he saved the situation all around. And so An Wenyi took the chance to make a request: "With me here, we don't need this many Clerics. Add some more DPS so we can go faster and kick out some healers for the next dungeon."

Chapter 1287: A Cheap Idea

The winter break for the Spring Festival passed by quickly. Guan Rongfei, who had missed his train due to being too absorbed in his research, decided to just forgo going home altogether, spending the Lunar New Year with Chen Guo, Ye Xiu and Su Mucheng. It was because of his presence that Chen Guo didn't manage to experience much of a celebratory air during their Lunar New Year's Eve feast.

Guan Rongfei focused on devouring his meal when he wasn't speaking, and when he spoke, he never deviated from business. Don't look at how Happy now had a full set of Silver Cleric equipment; their overall Silver equipment development was rather lacking. This topic was definitely a heavy one, especially when Guan Rongfei ran right back to his lab and retrieved a stack of documents to show Ye Xiu the materials they were in dire lack of. The entire atmosphere of their dinner simply sank.

With what Ye Xiu had accumulated through his efforts this past year and a half, plus Guan Rongfei's wealth of experience, Happy had already been able to take many shortcuts in developing Silver equipment. Apart from the upgrade of the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, the development of their other equipment had cost them extremely few materials. Otherwise, it would've been impossible for them to develop so much Silver equipment with their foundations - or lack thereof - as a new team.

However, after this half a season, their stocks had been depleted. They were good with low level materials since Wu Chen, now in charge of the Guild Department, had brought them to a standing a club guild should have. Throughout the servers as well as the Heavenly Domain, they were continuously accumulating materials. Their profits from dungeons were very stable.

However, the rare materials only a wild boss could provide, faced with a battle of guilds, wasn't so easy to gain. Wu Chen clearly didn't have Ye Xiu's ability to submerge everything into chaos and benefit from it. Plus, with Happy's current standing, it wasn't the same as back then when Ye Xiu could charge into the fray on his own and create an uproar. Balance was something Happy had to research and attain.

What Happy had as an advantage was the passion in their guild.

As a new team with a new fanbase, they had achieved some outstanding results and the passion for helping their guild and playing a part in their team's improvement swelled amongst their fans. Their efforts and dedication allowed Happy to maintain their competitiveness.

However, the rare materials from wild bosses were, at their core, very different from what could be obtained through dungeoning. There were only so many each week, you'd have to see if you could manage to win them first, and even if you did win them, would those materials be what you needed? With that, Happy was at a disadvantage.

Happy was, after all, a new team. Their need for these materials was far greater than that of the other teams.

Seeing the materials on the list Guan Rongfei handed over, Ye Xiu knew that it would be impossible to suit everyone up like they had Little Cold Hands. Next, they had to have a plan, and decide which character to focus on first.

Among these, the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella was a huge burden. Its materials were very demanding in the first place, then, as a project in development, it incurred huge material costs. After looking over the materials Guan Rongfei had used on the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella's development, Ye Xiu's heartbeat had quickened. If it weren't for the necessity of the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, how many pieces of Silver equipment could they have created from these materials?

"The Myriad Manifestations Umbrella..." Ye Xiu was a little hesitant. Since Guan Rongfei wanted to boost the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella directly to Level 80, there were many added variables to the research of this weapon. More variables meant a higher expense, and more importantly, this expense would continue.

"Should we give up on it for now..." Ye Xiu couldn't help but wonder, but... giving up now would mean wasting everything they had already poured into this. The research they had done on the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella had gotten to a point where it was difficult to stop. Even so, they couldn't just charge recklessly like this. When push came to shove, they'd have to make small scale sacrifices!

Ye Xiu took a deep breath, trying to force himself to calm down and consider this rationally. On the other hand, Guan Rongfei didn't consider so much. Seeing Ye Xiu looking over the materials required for the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, he instead became rather exultant. "It's almost done. Right now, we just need one more part. Once we confirm this one material, I'm pretty sure we'll be good."

"Can this part be modified on its own?" Ye Xiu's heart thumped again. Whether the part could be modified in isolation or not made a huge difference. If it couldn't, then this situation would be rather terrible. As a piece of equipment, if a single part had anything wrong with it, the equipment would fail; they might lose all the materials put into the equipment's conception and have to start anew. If they could modify and test it in isolation, then just redoing the part would cost far less materials.

"It can't..." Guan Rongfei gave him a most disappointing answer.

Ye Xiu sighed heavily. The next step of the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella was made entirely out of Level 75 rare materials. The consequences of these materials going to waste was something happy couldn't afford. If these materials were used on other equipment, then it could greatly improve Happy's overall strength. Seeing the materials required for other pieces of equipment, Ye Xiu made a decision. The Myriad Manifestations Umbrella would have to be set aside for the moment!

Yet, he hadn't even made his decision known when Guan Rongfei continued, "We can only modify it locally, at a cost of about three rare materials."

"..." The solemn decision Ye Xiu had made immediately dispersed. Though the expense of three Level 75 rare materials was rather painful, it was far more acceptable than all the materials the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella would be using!

"Good luck!" He quickly swept away the heavy heart of having to abandon the progress of his weapon and changed to encouragement.

"When the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella is finished, should we push all the other equipment to Level 80?" Guan Rongfei said in a smug tone. His passion seemed to have extended from researching the

Myriad Manifestations Umbrella to whether it was possible to upgrade the rest of their equipment to Level 80 under the current level limit.

"That's... a little too taxing on our materials. no?" Ye Xiu said.

"I'll do my best to get out a list," Guan Rongfei replied.

"Don't rush it," Ye Xiu hurriedly reminded him. "Let's go step by step according to the plan we had decided on!"

"But how cool would that be. All Level 80 equipment!" Chen Guo suddenly called out.

"Calm down!" Ye Xiu yelled. He hadn't expected this at all. Didn't they know what Level 80 meant? Didn't they know that Happy couldn't afford to undertake such a wide scale high level project like this? It was too irrational to push Guan Rongfei's passion in that direction at a time like this. Ye Xiu noticed Chen Guo's wine cup; was the boss drunk?

"The base stats of a piece of level 70 Silver equipment is equal to Level 75 Orange equipment. That means Level 75 Silver equipment is Level 80 Orange equipment. Conversely, doesn't that mean that Level 80 Orange equipment is equal to Level 75 Silver equipment? If we can find a way to improve our Level 75 Orange equipment and upgrade them to Level 80, then wouldn't they be like Level 75 Silver equipment? Though they won't be Level 80 Silver equipment, but being able to completely arm ourselves with Level 75 Silver equipment, that'll still make us very powerful at this stage!" Chen Guo exclaimed.

The room immediately quieted down. Ye Xiu glanced at Guan Rongfei and Guan Rongfei glanced at Ye Xiu. The two were already in deep contemplation. As for Su Mucheng, she was staring at Chen Guo in surprise. Though equipment editing wasn't her forte, she knew far more than Chen Guo would just through sheer exposure, and she definitely had a clearer understanding of the value of Chen Guo's sudden idea.

"Although this idea is a little cheap, but from a cost-efficiency perspective, this is a good idea," Guan Rongfei decided.

"Cheap!" Chen Guo's focus was always on the negative adjectives.

"Isn't that the basis of your idea? Using cheap equipment and resources to imitate more high-end equipment?" Ye Xiu retorted.

"How come it sounds so... bad coming from your mouth?" Chen Guo couldn't find any sort of rebuttal and simply sulked.

"Can Orange equipment be modified directly under the equipment editor....? This is something that's currently being researched, but I doubt anyone has figured it out completely. What the equipment editor can do is take equipment apart into parts, but there are too many unknowns regarding the variables and formulae that decide how the combined product of these parts is created. We aren't even all that clear on what materials make up some of the parts of dismantled Orange equipment. Currently, only the game developers can increase the stats and level of Orange equipment in their updates," Guan Rongfei mused.

"Orange equipment is just an example she brought up. In reality, we don't need to use the Orange equipment produced by the system, but create the Orange equipment from scratch using the equipment editor," Ye Xiu suggested.

"Using the equipment editor to create Orange equipment..." Guan Rongfei furrowed his brows.

"Then upgrade them to Level 80," Ye Xiu continued his train of thought.

"This idea is like, in a test, everyone is working hard to get that 100 percent. We can easily get a 90 percent, then do a bonus question that no one else knows of, thus boosting our score to 100, too," Su Mucheng drew an analogy.

"Of course, in the long term, getting 110 percent or a solid 100 percent would be best. However, in the short term, this is the quickest, most effective way to increase our strength," Ye Xiu concluded.

"Let's try it!" Guan Rongfei finally nodded. Ye Xiu was delighted because he knew that this guy didn't care much about things like team results or cost-efficiency or saving up. What really incited his passion and interest was the process of developing equipment itself. Thus, the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella was a very interesting project, as was creating Level 80 equipment. Crafting the highest intelligence and critical Cleric equipment was alright, too. Working on something you were interested in, passionate about would make you more dedicated and efficient; you'd do better. Currently, making Orange equipment instead of Silver equipment with the equipment editor was an entirely new idea that seemed to have motivated Guan Rongfei.

Of course, anything that came out of the equipment editor would have silver names, and was "Silver equipment" from this perspective.

However, if you didn't try to reach the high stat possibilities that Silver equipment would give you, but something only on the level of orange equipment, then the standards for materials would definitely be lowered. The only awkward thing was that they couldn't aim for the best for their Silver equipment, but had to make it a level below on purpose, that... was something Guan Rongfei really didn't have any leads in.

The chopsticks in his hands suspended in the air above the dishes, the gears in Guan Rongfei's head were already beginning to turn.

Chapter 1288: Big Surprise

The Spring Festival passed in the blink of an eye, and the various players made their way back to their teams. Unlike other people who could slowly readjust to their work after a long break, pro players needed to quickly adjust their condition back to normal. Round 20 of the League matches was right in front of them.

On the sixth day of the Spring Festival, January 28, Happy's players were already beginning to return to the team. When An Wenyi returned, he obtained the account card that had received a complete makeover.

He was Happy's weak point, the target of many opponents' strategies, and Happy had made many plans and arrangements revolving around him. His existence seemed like such a burden, and the outside world's cries for Happy to find a qualified healer player had never broken. An Wenyi knew all of this better than anyone. For a new player, the pressure on him was extremely high. But An Wenyi persisted. He knew that his own abilities were limited, and he knew that Ye Xiu had dug him out of the game not for any talent he had but out of helpless desperation. An Wenyi at least had some special trait and stood out just a tiny bit among the ordinary crowd.

There was still a lot he needed to work on. An Wenyi knew this clearly, and so he was always working hard. He hoped that he could gain something. During the entire winter season, in fact, he'd held worry in his heart. Before, Happy had chosen him because they had no other choice. But now, with Happy's current results, they could definitely attract a better healer. An Wenyi was truly quite scared that he would be replaced just like that. Especially because he was such a logical person, he felt that Happy's doing so would indeed solve the problem once and for all.

Every day after the winter transfer window opened, he carried this worry. But it seemed that Happy didn't have any intention of making any moves during this transfer window, which reassured him a little. And then during the Spring Festival, and he went home to celebrate the holiday. Even then, An Wenyi didn't dare slack off, and he continued his harsh training.

But on the last night he was at home, he still had a nightmare. Chen Guo came to find him, telling him that a new Cleric player arrived to the team, and An Wenyi was now left to fend for himself. She only told him now because she wanted to let him enjoy the holiday first...

An Wenyi was frightened awake in a cold sweat. A method like "let you enjoy the holiday first," which took into account the human feelings involved, was definitely something that fit Chen Guo's style. After that dream, he had no way of falling back asleep.

The next day, he returned to the team. Carrying the mood that the nightmare had brought him, he returned to Happy, he returned to the training room, and Chen Guo pushed the account card for Little Cold Hands back into his hands.

In that moment, An Wenyi's heart finally relaxed. There were only a few days left in the transfer window. It looked like the team really didn't plan to find anyone to replace him.

And then, as he inserted the card and logged onto his character, An Wenyi found that in the room, Ye Xiu, Su Mucheng, and Chen Guo were all looking at him strangely, as though waiting for something.

An Wenyi suddenly had another bad feeling. But he never could have predicted that, when he logged onto the account and checked the character's status and equipment as usual, he was suddenly blinded by an eyeful of silver words.

Silver equipment?

One piece, another piece, in total thirteen pieces. A full set of Silver equipment.

An Wenyi was stunned.

"How about it, still recognizable?" Chen Guo came up to him with a smile.

"This... this is..." The cool and logical An Wenyi was stammering.

"High intelligence, high crit, it should fit you very well. Become the fiercest Cleric in Glory!" Ye Xiu said.

"This is really... too great..." An Wenyi's mood was complicated, but he wasn't someone who could open his mouth and burst forth with eloquent poetry. In the end when he opened his mouth, he only gave this simple sentence of praise.

He worried that the team would give up on him. But in the end, the team hadn't given up. They'd actually created a whole new set of Silver equipment for him, a complete set, the first complete set of Silver equipment in Happy. For him. Someone who was nothing more than Happy's weak point, Happy's vulnerability, the one in Happy who was most viewed as dragging everyone down.

An Wenyi logically thought that he would be replaced, but he was met with the team's "illogical" response. He hated the illogical, but at this moment, he had no idea what he could say aside from "really great."

"Keep working hard!" Chen Guo said.

"Yes!" An Wenyi nodded his head firmly. Not only did the team have patience toward him, they had belief in him. And he could only repay them with his determination and loyalty.

"But don't take this equipment to join dungeon teams in game. If you lost it, that'd be bad," Chen Guo added, laughing.

"Ah... you know..." There was an added weight to Chen Guo's reminder, so An Wenyi immediately realized what Chen Guo was actually saying.

"Not bad," Chen Guo praised him.

An Wenyi sweatdropped. His diligent and harsh training had caused so many complaints and made countless victims. In order to improve, An Wenyi could only toughen his skin and continue because he truly couldn't think of any more effective method. In a dungeon he had to observe the whole situation and choose the skill and grasp the timing and make judgments and position and so on and so forth. Compared to pure reaction training, An Wenyi felt that this method would allow him to reap greater benefits.

Because An Wenyi had been training nonstop ever since he'd joined Happy, but to be honest, after a year and a half, the improvement in his reaction times were complete unsatisfactory. It looked like he was naturally limited in this area, and so from early on he'd searched for breakthroughs in other areas. And this sort of grinding training seemed to him an explosive way to improve himself.

"Alright, since you just got back, take a rest for now. When everyone gets here we'll start practicing again," Ye Xiu said to An Wenyi.

"I'm not tired, I'll take another look. An Wenyi was fiddling with Little Cold Hands, a Little Cold Hands clad in all-Silver equipment.

Ye Xiu smiled and didn't stop him.

With this, Happy had given An Wenyi a huge Lunar New Year's gift. But they hadn't expected that someone had also brought back a huge Lunar New Year's gift for Happy.

Wu Chen, after returning, didn't immediately return to the guild department. With a smile, he logged onto his own account in the training room and then displayed the guild's inventory for everyone to see.

"Surprised?" Before, it was Ye Xiu and the others waiting to enjoy An Wenyi's expression. And this time, it was Wu Chen's turn to wait and enjoy their expressions.

"This is..." Chen Guo was dumbstruck. She'd created this team, but her in-game life still continued, and she had an approximate understanding of how many materials the guild had. But she didn't have the habit of checking too often because she felt that that would be hovering over the guild work, and she didn't want to do that. So Chen Guo, as the boss, actually paid less attention to the guild storage than she had as an ordinary guild member. She didn't remember when was the last time she'd checked on Happy's stores. But no matter what, these pages upon pages of filled boxes was almost ridiculous, especially the numerous rare materials included within.

"From the event?" In the end, Ye Xiu reacted first. Although there weren't many rare materials, there was no way they'd come from wild bosses. Only so many wild bosses could spawn in one week's time. These could only have come from the Lunar New Year event.

"Yup! Unexpected, right? Everyone is very enthusiastic, you know!" Wu Chen said.

"Everyone?" Chen Guo was confused.

"The fans of Team Happy!" Wu Chen said proudly. As the guild leader, Wu Chen could be considered the member of Happy who had the most interactions with ordinary gamers and fans. He watched as Happy's fan base grew bigger and bigger, and he had the greatest impression of the fans' enthusiasm. Although a club guild could gather a large number of fan players, these players ultimately came to play the game, not to do any work for the team. So, the club could only directly control a portion of full-time or half-time players. And for these, the club needed to pay them for the benefits. They weren't reliant on fans' love and support.

But Happy wasn't quite the same right now. A new team with outstanding results. The fans that they'd gathered were still fresh in their excited support! They gave their time and effort simply out of love without keeping track of the cost. And this time during the Lunar New Year event, players in Guild Happy voluntarily organized groups to build the bricks and tiles that the team needed, and they received a roaring answer. Later, many players who hadn't joined Guild Happy but were still fans of Team Happy all came to participate. They earned materials and sent them to Guild Happy without hesitation.

Because of this massive, widespread, passionate support, Guild Happy's storage grew full to bursting in just a few short days.

"This is really... too great..." Chen Guo also entered the state An Wenyi had experienced earlier, the "didn't know how else to express praise."

"It's not just Heavenly Domain, either. The stores in all the normal servers also earned a lot from this event," Wu Chen said.

"Then... we really need to thank everyone!" Chen Guo was deeply moved, immediately going to Happy's official Weibo account to post a thank-you message.

Very soon, numerous people flocked to comment and reblog. The team had received their support, which made the fans very happy. The screen displayed nonstop everyone's shouts of well-wishes and encouragements, so many that there was no way for Chen Guo to reply to them all.

Happy now had its own official website as well. Chen Guo immediately went over there, prepared to write a more official and formal thank-you message, but after clutching her head for a while, she felt that there was no way she could express her current emotions in writing. She sat there in a daze.

"This is really too powerful. You organized this?" Ye Xiu asked Wu Chen.

"I can only say that everyone's emotions accumulated into this. Plus, everyone can see Happy's condition right now, and that we need this kind of support," Wu Chen said, smiling.

"This is really a great surprise," Ye Xiu said, voice filled with emotion.

"It's just that the rare materials are a bit lacking. The game system is still selfish!" Wu Chen sighed.

"Even ordinary materials are good," Ye Xiu smiled. Now that they were prepared to make Orange equipment in the equipment editor, the number of rare materials they needed would greatly decrease. They'd only just discussed this plan at the Lunar New Year dinner, and now the guild brought them this huge explosion. Happy's fortune in the new year was really incomparably strong!

Chapter 1289: Second Half of the Season

Little Cold Hands' complete set of Silver equipment, a new equipment creation methodology, the fans' boom in material donations during the Spring Festival, these non-stop, pleasant surprises took a while for Team Happy to digest. However, they couldn't bask in celebrations for too long, since Round 20 was in two days.

This was Happy's home game, so the team did not need to travel arduously. However, it could be said that their opponents this round were the strongest within the entire Alliance.

Team Samsara stood before Team Happy again after half a season's worth of matches.

Nineteen rounds ago in Round 1, the reigning champions showed their dominance to the team fresh out of the Challenger League. After 19 rounds though, most were seeing Happy in a completely different light. No one still considered Happy to be a grassroots team; this was a team that was shoulder to shoulder with Blue Rain, Tiny Herb and Tyranny, with 130 points each. Also, Team Samsara was no longer undefeated. In Round 19 which happened the previous round, they lost to Team Hundred Blossoms. In the Pro League, there was no such thing as "impossible".

In their previous encounter, Happy lost to Samsara 0 to 10. It could be considered a complete and utter defeat. This time, the media was sure to label this a grudge match, and fans of Happy were hoping for Happy to take revenge.

Although everyone was paying attention to this match, all the reporters of the big media companies were still focused on the transfer market. The end of the winter transfer window was in less than three days, and every team had only made minor adjustments so far. Were none of the teams going to make any big changes this winter? That was improbable!

Wind Howl and Misty Rain had proven themselves unsuccessful for the first half of the season. Even the fans' support might waver if they didn't make any significant changes in the winter, especially for Team Wind Howl, who were very vocal when they tried to acquire Zhang Xinjie from Tyranny? Why did they fall silent after the offer of 20 million?

The media waited for a big move from these teams in vain. Instead, they received word that Team 301 expressed interest in Royal Style's Tian Sen and his Exorcist Peaceful Hermit. Apparently they had already made an offer to Royal Style.

301 was currently in 10th with 98 points. Royal Style's performance was abysmal, ranked 13th with only 82 points, even losing to the new Miracle.

Royal Style's points were dismal, and the transfer market's atmosphere this season was also dismal. Furthermore, the long term sponsor of Peaceful Hermit was losing patience with Royal Style. There was already leaked information that they would not be working with Royal Style after the end of this season.

Royal Style was a powerhouse past its prime. In Season 1, they had battled Excellent Era for the title of champions. Their decline was hard for many to witness. Royal Style would be the most suitable representative of a "has-been" in the Alliance if it wasn't for the freakishly quick decline of Excellent Era.

In this sad state, even a forever-sidelined team like 301 wanted a slice of their pie. And this slice was the former top God character, Peaceful Hermit.

Team 301 has fully revealed their ambitions. After their long term captain Yang Cong stepped down from the team's core position, they actually took the stance that they would like to shake things up.

Royal Style's performance had declined year by year. Their financial situation was no better, being limited by their core player Tian Sen. The timing of 301's move was picking at Royal Style's achilles heel.

What would happen if Tian Sen and Peaceful Hermit really transferred to 301?

There were already people who couldn't resist fantasizing about this. This purchase would definitely end up in 301's core lineup. Along with their captain Yang Cong, who had stepped aside but could still throw down with the best of them, and the new recruit, the mysterious Bai Shu. The reporters always thought that Bai Shu was no ordinary player. However after much investigation, they could only prove that he was not a member of 301's training camp. Although at the age of 22 wouldn't he be way too much of a late bloomer if he really was from the training camp? If he wasn't from the training camp or another team, where did 301 pluck him from? He was also directly given control of 301's existing Knight character. With no previous characters to explore, the reporters were out of options and could only wait for 301 to reveal some information on their own terms. However, 301 had put that idea to the side for now and instead made plans to acquire Royal Style's Tian Sen and Peaceful Hermit...

The biggest commotion in the winter transfer window actually came from Team 301, who only had a small role in the playoffs for many years. This was very surprising for everyone.

Regrettably, this show didn't get another act. Tian Sen personally expressed his intention to stay at Royal Style no matter what.

"Peaceful Hermit belongs with Royal Style. His inheritance will never be severed while he's in my hands!" This is the resounding statement that Tian Sen made through the media, thus ending any plans 301 had for a purchase. There would never be a shortage of idealistic individuals within the Alliance. All players shared the desire to be champions, but all players also had their own goals, their own ideals that they would never abandon. Tian Sen refused to abandon his team for his own advancement, and further expressed that he was willing to take a salary cut to reduce the financial burden on his team.

Tian Sen's actions were praised by many. A pro player did not only shine on the battlefield. In this moment, Tian Sen's personal character far outshined the God-level character that he controlled in the game.

Such a rare opportunity for a big transfer ended just like that. The media did not get what they were waiting for, so they could only dutifully report the regular situations and predictions for the second half of the season. Round 20 was finally set to begin.

The arrival of the reigning champions once again allowed the focal point of the alliance to be brought to Xiaoshan Stadium. On match day, countless Glory fans roamed around helplessly, hoping against hope that they would encounter someone who wanted to return their ticket to the match.

At around six o'clock, Team Samsara's bus pulled into Xiaoshan Stadium. The players entered the stadium while flanked by the on-site security, through packs of fans and media personnel. There was no shortage of attention for the reigning champions.

And what about the players of Team Happy? At around half past six, they left from the back door of Happy Internet Cafe and crossed the road. There was even someone eating a piece of fruit. They arrived in the most lowkey fashion.

The two teams entered their own prep rooms respectively. They performed some final touches, such as collecting their thoughts, revising their battle plan, and making any last-minute adjustments before the match.

After this at around 7:40, the two teams entered the stage. There was no need for a fancy opening for such an anticipated match. The viewers' enthusiasm would be sparked as soon as the players entered via their entrances. Team Samsara displayed the terror of being the reigning champions. Their fans fully filled the area of the stands specifically for the away team supporters. They immediately created a deafening commotion, loudly yelling out their team and their players' names. Samsara's banner fluttered in midair in Xiaoshan Stadium. In the first half of the season, this banner was only placed below their opponent's once, and that was to Team Hundred Blossoms in Blossoms Stadium. This time, the banner waved rather menacingly, as Samsara was facing Happy, who they had swept previously in a 10-0. After an ordinary opening of introducing the players, handshakes and greetings, each team made their way towards their player stands and waited for the match to begin.

In the broadcast, the casters Pan Lin and Li Yibo had already turned the show into you guess, you guess, no, you.

"Will Team Happy once again send out Ye Xiu first in the individual competition? We know that from the nineteen rounds that have been played so far, Ye Xiu's win streak in the individual competition is eighteen rounds; it's off by one because he didn't play in the individual competition in the first round match against Samsara. Well, how would Happy go about this match against Samsara? Coach Li, if Ye Xiu doesn't appear in the individual competition this match, will his win streak count as broken?" Pan Lin asked.

"From the way the Alliance calculates their statistics, this would count as breaking his win streak. A win streak constitutes continuous victories. If you stopped playing for one match then that breaks the continuity. If you then resumed and won, we could only call it a perfect win rate, and not a win streak," Li Yibo explained.

"Well Coach Li, do you think Ye Xiu will have a perfect win rate or maintain his win streak?" Pan Lin asked.

"I reckon Ye Xiu will not shy away. His win streak is like the insurance for Team Happy's morale. He would dampen it if he chose not to play," Li Yibo said.

"Then what about Samsara's side? Will they send out Zhou Zekai or Sun Xiang to attempt to end Ye Xiu's win streak?" Pan Lin started his guessing game once again.

"This will probably depend what the Samsara players themselves want. Er... it doesn't seem likely for Zhou Zekai to try. As for Sun Xiang, I think it's possible that he might even put himself forward," Li Yibo did not dare to be too concrete with his words.

"Haha, then let's wait and see!" The two commentators finally concluded their guessing game.

"Okay, the match is about to begin," Pan Lin saw that the referee has approached the players' stands of each team so they could send out their players.

"Let's see who Team Happy sends out!" Pan Lin called out, while the cameras quickly panned to Happy's player seats.

"Ye Xiu. It's Ye Xiu!" Pan Lin shouted loudly.

At Happy's bench, Ye Xiu stood up, waved at the clamoring fans to acknowledge them, and walked towards the competition booths.

"What about Samsara!" Pan Lin continued shouting. The camera shots cut about wildly.

On Samsara's side, the first player for the individual competition also stood up.

It's... Jiang Botao..." Pan Lin said, after glancing at Li Yibo. This time, Happy didn't slap their faces; rather, it was Samsara. Albeit, it was more of a gentle pat across the cheek. Zhou Zekai? Sun Xiang? Neither appeared. Samsara has sent out their vice captain, the Spellblade player Jiang Botao.

"It looks like Samsara didn't want to allow Ye Xiu's win streak to disrupt their rhythm too much. Jiang Botao has been sent out in the first round of the individual competition quite frequently in the past. It looks like Samsara didn't put much thought into what we were discussing earlier. Let's see how Jiang Botao plans to play," Li Yibo skimmed over the arrangement.

Chapter 1290: Who counters who?

The match quickly began. The map that Ye Xiu chose with the home team advantage was once again a simple and straightforward one. The strategy that he chose was to fight head on. This was quite surprising as an old general's strongest weapon was experience. Choosing a map that contained a lot of complexities would be advantageous for him. But not Ye Xiu. Armed with the unspecialized, he would always pick a map that allowed him to play aggressively. And up until now, no one had been able to stand up to his aggression.

In this match against Happy, Samsara had not chosen to specifically counter this arrangement. As Li Yibo said, sending out Jiang Botao first was a very ordinary, comfortable arrangement for Samsara.

When the characters loaded and saw the simple map, there was nothing else to do but to charge forward!

"Senior, you can't keep winning! You have to leave us juniors something to aim to surpass!" Jiang Botao started chatting with Ye Xiu over the public chat. The Alliance had stressed that use of the voice chat was being discussed, but they had yet to reach a decision. For now, everything remained unchanged. This rule was not actually that important for the Alliance in terms of gameplay. Why did the Alliance ban voice chat in the beginning? It was for easier broadcasting. The players could not talk and had to use text to chat, making it easier for the viewers to see their communications and strategies. There was no other intention besides this. If the players used voice chat, then the broadcasters wouldn't have it as easy. Further, if they split the voice chat into a public one and two more, one for each team, then how do they decide which voice chat to tune in at any given time? Opening voice chat would allow the players to communicate fully, but the viewer's experience would not be the same as before, where they could catch every small detail in the communications.

The current scene was a great example. Everyone loved seeing the banter between players. If it were voice chat and the broadcaster had to switch the sound around, a lot would be missed.

In the end, the Alliance was currently still in discussions with the broadcasters with no outcome yet. For now, everyone was still using text to communicate in this match.

"Well of course!" on this side, Ye Xiu actually went and agreed with Jiang Botao. Everyone was surprised, but a second message followed quickly: "That's why I didn't play in Round 1! No matter how well I do, my win streak can only reach 37. See, I left you a whole round's worth to surpass!"

"Just play..." Jiang Botao wasn't really trash talking. He liked to chat a little with others. But now, he really couldn't keep chatting after what Ye Xiu said.

"Why don't you give Senior a hand? Perhaps just type GG?" Ye Xiu pressed on.

"Senior, please stop joking around," Jiang Botao said.

"It's not like it makes a difference in the outcome!" Ye Xiu continued.

"Regardless, I should at least give it a shot!" Jiang Botao wasn't affected by Ye Xiu's taunting. He still chatted as if this was a regular conversation.

The two characters met after these few words. Ye Xiu did not control Lord Grim use his long-ranged attacks hurriedly. He allowed the characters to continue to get closer. Just as he was about to step into the enemy Spellblade's attack range, Lord Grim suddenly accelerated!

Movement skill!

This had already become a signature move of the unspecialized Lord Grim. It seemed that Ye Xiu didn't plan to play cat and mouse with his opponent at a mid- to long-range; rather, he planned to get up close to deal with his opponent. Ye Xiu's Lord Grim had always played like this. He had never kited his opponent, not even when equipped with plenty of mid- to long-range methods of attack, or against an opponent who could only attack at close range. He always fought aggressively for the initiative and used any means possible to seize it.

A Shining Cut flashed out, and Lord Grim raced forward several units in an instant. Jiang Botao already saw through Ye Xiu's intentions, and Empty Waves retreated back. He leapt backwards while the Silver shortsword Divine Chain glinted. An Earthquake Sword rolled forth!

Jiang Botao, the vice captain of Samsara, had gained increasing popularity by the year as Samsara won back to back championships. But his technical skill and style did not really have any uniqueness to it like many other players did. His play was very ordinary, neither unexpected nor low-key. Games would finish seemingly very naturally.

In other words, Jiang Botao's matches didn't have waves of highs and lows where large portions of health were traded. The damage would accumulate steadily, and he would eventually win by slowly accumulating small advantages. It didn't matter whether those who lost to him were ahead or behind during the match, they would always come out of it feeling like they lost by "that much". However, regardless of how little "that much" was, a loss was still a loss in the end.

At first, people were of the opinion that Jiang Botao had frighteningly accurate calculations. However, they gradually realised this was not the case. It was more accurate to say that he did not let a single detail slip.

Jiang Botao was that type of meticulous player, whether it was in the individual or team competitions. He would consider and deal with any possibility that would arise in battle. Because of this, it was very hard for anyone to score a high combo against him. Jiang Botao was seemingly a counter to Ye Xiu in this regard: Ye Xiu's unspecialized focused on an unbroken combo in a one on one.

Lord Grim charged forth aggressively before his eyes, but Jiang Botao was well prepared. Empty Waves had already leapt back and used an Earthquake Sword as Lord Grim activated his movement skills.

In this moment, it looked as if Lord Grim's Shining Cut wasn't closing the distance, but rather pushing him to headbutt the Earthquake Sword. No time to dodge? Most ordinary players would feel this way; however, for a pro player, there was room to dodge even though the two skills were fairly fast.

Left?

Or right?

Jiang Botao was fixated on Lord Grim's every move. Empty Waves took up another stance after his jump backwards, ready to send out another Wave Sword as soon as Lord Grim dodged.

Turns out, it was neither left nor right. Lord Grim still charged forth, but his shoulders forcefully lurched forward.

Reinforced Iron Bones!

Ye Xiu chose not to dodge. Rather, he forcefully had Lord Grim activate this Striker skill. An increased defence would lessen the damage taken. For a skill like Earthquake Sword that swept away the target, however, the most troublesome thing about Reinforced Iron Bones was the Super Armor status that it grants.

Even so, Reinforced Iron Bones couldn't stop Empty Waves from sending out more attacks. However, this unexpected move from Ye Xiu still ended up making Jiang Botao hesitate for an instant. Jiang Botao was still paying all his attention to the left and right sides of his attack.

As the Silver weapon Divine Chain was raised for another attack, Lord Grim's hands already sent an object flying.

Puff!

It was only a soft sound, but thick, purple smoke quickly spread and engulfed the area. Lord Grim slipped out of Jiang Botao's field of view in a blink.

Ninja Tool: Smoke Bomb!

Jiang Botao froze.

Under the cover of the thick smoke, he had no idea about Lord Grim's position.

The thick smoke continued to spread. Were there any flow currents that seemed irregular?

Jiang Botao observed closely. If a character moved within the smoke, it would definitely disrupt its natural spread. Traces of movement could be spotted like this.

But, there weren't any!

No movement?

Impossible! Under this cover, why would Ye Xiu not attack? Then there was only one possibility!

Jiang Botao's right hand swiped the mouse and his left hand flew across the keyboard. Empty Waves turned, stepped back and Divine Chain slashed outwards. Wave Wheel Slasher!

Lord Grim would suddenly appear behind him with a Shadow Clone Technique.

That was Jiang Botao's prediction.

Thus, Wave Wheel Slasher was unleashed, with intention to immobilize the opponent with sword waves. The purple smoke swirled and a part of it dissipated, but it didn't find a target. Lord Grim was nowhere to be seen.

Jiang Botao knew at this moment: This is bad...

A spurt of blood flew out from Empty Waves' neck. Lord Grim did indeed appear next to him and mercilessly delivered a Cut-Throat.

Did he use Shadow Clone Technique or some other movement skill? That was no longer important. Jiang Botao only knew that Ye Xiu used a timing difference perfectly. He completely predicted Jiang Botao's reaction.

Following the Cut-Throat, the short blade in Lord Grim's hand flicked again. The Assassin knock-up skill, Leaping Blade, sent Empty Waves into their air.

Falling Light Blade!

However, Empty Waves barely left the ground when he used this Swordsman low-level skill, and suddenly plummeted.

But...

Gore Cross!

Two perpendicular lines of blood appeared on Empty Waves' back. He avoided being sent into the air, but Lord Grim continued his attack and didn't dodge. This skill was chained so quickly that Empty Waves wouldn't have had a chance to completely get airborne. Jiang Botao's quick reaction seemed like it was playing right into Ye Xiu's hands.

The combo began.

"Guess what combo I can reach?" Ye Xiu actually took the time to throw out a message. Obviously, this was targeted towards the fact that Jiang Botao was rarely on the receiving end of a high combo.

"I don't think it will be that high," and Jiang Botao actually replied. Under these circumstances, he was still in the mood to chat.

"Yeah, seems like the combo was just a dream," when Ye Xiu sent this message, the combo reset to zero.

However, this did not mean Jiang Botao had a chance to escape. Ye Xiu's unspecialized Lord Grim only aimed for the combo effect, and not the combo statistic.

Fake Combo! His attacks continued to chain beautifully one after another.

"It really is difficult to deal with!" Jiang Botao sighed.

"A little too many details right?" Ye Xiu replied.

"Yeah... way too many." Jiang Botao had a headache.

Jiang Botao could counter Ye Xiu to an extent? It looked like this was the wrong call. In reality, Ye Xiu's unspecialized countered Jiang Botao. There were too many skills, too many ways to chain skills, and overall too many variations. If Jiang Botao really wanted consider every detail, his rhythm beginning from his thought process would be slow by a beat. Jiang Botao's brain had no way fully keep up with the amount of details for this opponent.

Jiang Botao fell.

Even though there were many struggles in the process, it didn't affect the final result.

"Next time, send someone else up," Ye Xiu smiled. He acknowledged the amount of trouble Jiang Botao had while facing him.

"Is there still a next time?" Jiang Botao was confused. The two teams have already met twice this season. The individual competition was done for them, so when would next time be?

"Oh, if you guys don't make the playoffs, then I guess there's no next time," Ye Xiu said.

This bold presumption of Samsara not making the playoffs again left everyone speechless.