

Avatar 1301

Chapter 1301: Mistakes and Plays Going Beyond One's Skill

Du Ming had been a bit too excited when he went onto the stage. The instant he went forward to make the first attack, he had still been wondering whether he should chat some more. But with Tang Rou's current skill level, how could it be so easy to deal with her? Tang Rou immediately saw a huge opening. A Circle Swing came out, and Du Ming's Moon-Luring Frost kneeled.

Again!

Du Ming's mind raced like galloping grass mud horses*. He had wanted to put on an eye-catching performance, but as soon as the fight began, his show was smashed apart. He had let such a huge opening appear and be taken advantage of. How could he show any face?

Du Ming panicked and blurted out "I was careless".

But this was a competition! Wasn't giving this sort of explanation to the opponent even more shameful than being beaten down? Luckily, besides Samsara's players, no one else thought that. The viewers thought Du Ming was saying these words to his teammates, explaining to them the reason for his mistake.

Tang Rou saw Du Ming's shout, but why would she care? While Du Ming's Moon-Luring Frost hastily got back up, Soft Mist's spear whistled towards him, once again putting Du Ming into a panic.

To put it simply, Du Ming looked excited, but his excitement wasn't excitement for the match. It was excitement for meeting Tang Rou again in a match. As a result, he wasn't actually in a competitor's mentality. His performance wasn't as stable as when he had fought against Mo Fan previously. He kneeled as soon as the fight started, and then Tang Rou's crazy offensive instantly took out 20% of his health.

Too shameful!

Two years ago, he could have said that he had been caught off guard facing a normal player and had been too careless, but this time? If he lost again, wouldn't that indicate how incompetent he was?

I CAN'T LOSE!!

Du Ming shouted in his heart. After Soft Mist's combo ended, he immediately launched a counterattack.

"Isn't Du Ming being too impatient?" Even Pan Lin instantly saw the issue. Tang Rou's combo had ended, but the situation hadn't reset back to zero. She still held the initiative. The combo had finished, but her offense hadn't ended yet. Her attacks were linked very closely together, yet Du Ming unexpectedly wanted to counterattack despite these circumstances. It just wasn't a good decision. Sure enough, Du Ming only just started his counterattack before Tang Rou's follow-up attacks smashed it apart, and another combo started.

"This Du Ming... At the All-Stars Weekend two years ago, he hadn't just lost to a normal player, but Tang Rou, who had only just started playing the game. He lost a lot of face there! It looks like he wants to

redeem himself. Holding these thoughts, it's no surprise he's in a rush. I hope he can quickly calm himself down." Li Yibo was quite confident with his analysis this time because there was no other explanation he could think of. If he knew that Du Ming's train wreck of a performance stemmed from his crush on Tang Rou, his mind would also be racing like galloping grass mud horses.

Soft Mist started another combo. The damage from this combo was even higher than the last. Moon-Luring Frost lost 23% of his health. He only had 48% health remaining now, not even half. As for Tang Rou's Soft Mist? Because she had traded blows at the start, she only lost 4% of her health from this exchange, which was already lower than usual. All of this was because of Du Ming's unusually poor playing.

"Damn, this is the pace to a blowout!" Samsara's players had been joking around in the beginning, but now, their tone was more serious.

They knew about Du Ming's thoughts, so they could understand why he hadn't been able to contain his excitement at the start of the match, but he still hadn't adjusted his mindset. This wasn't right. As a pro player, personal feelings should not be affecting your playing to such an extent. If he really lost in such a manner, the team would need to give him a harsh reprimandment.

Samsara's players stopped their banter. Their eyes were focused on the match.

After two combos, his character was not even at half health, while his opponent had only lost 4%.

What am I doing?

Du Ming asked himself honestly.

I might have been waiting this match for a long time, but haven't I been too negligent? This was a competition.

When competing, I should be going in with a steady mindset. Getting too excited or getting too indifferent is no good, and Team Samsara is the best in the Alliance at this point. Despite having won two championships already, we've always kept our calm, never arrogant in victory and never hateful in defeat.

I haven't won or lost, yet I've become a complete mess just because I'm meeting a girl I like?

Yes, a complete mess!

No one was more clear than him just how terrible he had been playing. He could lose, but not like this!

Come!

Tang Rou didn't try to understand Du Ming's mindset and started off with two combos. Her combos were smooth and successful. She obviously didn't plan on stopping here. Her third wave of attacks instantly arrived.

Triple Slash!

Du Ming's Moon-Luring Frost suddenly dashed out at an unexpected moment.

"Du Ming is really being too impatient!" Pan Lin shouted.

Li Yibo was just about to add to these words, but the match progressed extremely fast. Moon-Luring Frost looked like he was just about to crash into Soft Mist's attack, but instead just barely dodged it.

It had been an extremely narrow dodge.

Was it a coincidence? Or had Du Ming suddenly become precise?

Du Ming quickly told everyone the answer. The instant he brushed past the attack, the second slash came out. When he dodged the attack, his sword struck Soft Mist, and his Moon-Luring Frost moved horizontally, using the second slash to circle around Soft Mist. The third slash followed closely afterwards, and the instant it hit, Moon-Luring Frost was behind Soft Mist.

Everyone was dumbstruck, including the players on both teams. Du Ming's sudden burst had been completely outside everyone's expectations. His play had been extremely fast and precise.

Fast wasn't difficult for an overly excited Du Ming, and it was precisely because of that extraordinary speed that Samsara's players felt like he had exceeded his skill level.

But with speed, Du Ming lost precision. Because although he was excited, his mindset wasn't in the right place. His attention wasn't on the match. Without any focus, how could he be precise? As a result, Du Ming might have been fast, but he was also imprecise. It was how Soft Mist was able to instantly break through his attacks and complete two devastating combos.

However, Du Ming had finally become focused again. This Triple Slash had been beyond his skill level, and for a moment, Tang Rou wasn't able to keep up with the sudden change in pace. Two of the three slashes had struck Soft Mist, and Moon-Luring Frost had also circled behind her. Du Ming's counterattack was truly resounding this time. A flurry of sword slashes along with increased damage from back attacks splattered blood across the air. Du Ming had the nickname "Berserk Blade Master" for a reason. The word "Berserk" showed precisely what his playstyle was like. And right now, he was going wild, an extremely precise wildness. A full combo landed on Soft Mist's back.

31%.

This was the total damage dealt by Du Ming's combo. It was far higher than anything Tang Rou had done. One reason was because Du Ming's combo had been from the back. Another reason was because Soft Mist's equipment was still a little bit lacking compared to Moon-Luring Frost's.

Soft Mist's health instantly plummeted to 65%. As for Moon-Luring Frost? After completing his combo, he hadn't received any damage. All of Tang Rou's attempts at resisting had been blocked by him. Moon-Luring Frost's health was still at 48%.

65% to 48%. The gap didn't seem that large anymore.

This time, Du Ming did not show mercy to those had wronged him. He wasn't finished with just one combo and followed up with more attacks.

Berserk Blade Master.

Du Ming's style was actually very similar to Tang Rou's. He was good at fighting for the initiative, forcing fights, and violent attacks.

However, Tang Rou wasn't caught unprepared like last time. Her spear, Dancing Fire Flowing Flames, and Du Ming's lightsaber, Lingering Ice, clashed. Just from the name, it sounded like a battle of ice and fire. The glow given by the two weapons intertwined as if trying to devour the other.

"The battle has only just begun!" This clash pulled the battle back to a point where neither side had the advantage. Du Ming had the time, so he immediately typed out a message. Apart from fighting each other in this match, he also hoped that they could have a bit of chat together.

Of course, telling the other side "this is my true power" through these words was also a bit of selfishness on his part.

"There's no saving him..." When they saw Du Ming back to his usual self, Samsara's players returned to their relaxed state. And seeing how that guy even felt the need to say a few words, they collectively put their hands to their foreheads.

"Shouldn't he win the fight before spouting nonsense?" Samsara's players started discussing amongst themselves.

"But if he wins, who will listen to his nonsense?"

"It looks like he's got the guts to chase after her to Happy's side and worm his way into a relationship."

"He sounds so pitiful. But if it's like this, can we feel relaxed putting him in the team competition?"

"There's nothing we can do. The lineup is already locked in."

"All five players are needed to win this match! What if his mind is too preoccupied with other things?"

"He looks fine right now!"

"He looks fine right now, but what about afterwards? He'll feel like he performed well in front of his goddess, and then he'll go crazy thinking he's in heaven, what then?"

"That really might be a problem!"

"Yes, we can't be careless. We'll have to shoulder his burden in the team competition!"

"Hey hey..." At this moment, Wu Qi interrupted their discussion, "He isn't even playing in the team competition. I'm the sixth player!"

Chapter 1302: The Belief for Victory

Du Ming had recovered his usual form. His performance was slightly better than usual, aided by the fact that he was somewhat excited today. But what about Tang Rou? She worked as hard as always. She never let her guard down, regardless of the situation or the opponent.

The publicized bet for a 1v3 had already passed, but in Tang Rou's mind, she still hadn't achieved her goal of a 1v3!

Even though she was the anchor in the group arena, and there weren't three opponents for her to beat up, Tang Rou always played with the mindset to do so.

Du Ming switched suddenly from making extraordinary blunders to making extraordinary plays. This large variation did catch Tang Rou off-guard, but her mental state wasn't affected.

Strive for victory.

Tang Rou would always have this mentality. Regardless of whether her opponent was weak or strong, regardless of whether her opponent was blundering or playing beautifully.

Du Ming used the chat, thinking that Tang Rou would now acknowledge his skill. Unfortunately for him, Tang Rou didn't consider anything along those lines.

Bring him down! That was the only thing she was thinking. If Du Ming knew that his goddess's attitude towards him was so single-minded, who knew how long he'd be depressed for.

Thankfully he didn't know, so he felt some satisfaction that his goddess could witness him playing better than his normal skill. However, when he said "The battle has only just begun!", Tang Rou definitely hadn't just begun. While Du Ming considered this a reset and an opportunity to regain the upper hand, Tang Rou maintained her rhythm and clung onto any opportunities to launch attacks.

Du Ming thought that typing some words in this situation would be no big deal. He still underestimated Tang Rou's drive for victory, and also her tunnel vision for it.

She had zero intentions of chatting with Du Ming. The words that Du Ming thought were no big deal actually caused him to momentarily lose initiative.

Tang Rou was once again given the role of the aggressor. Magic emanated from and swirled around Soft Mist, while she wildly charged towards the gates of victory.

Du Ming didn't expect to be suppressed so soon. Even though his mental state was quite steady right now and he defended well, Tang Rou's offensive also felt more concentrated than before...

This tireless attitude was really indistinguishable from that time....

Du Ming's mind started wandering again, rewinding to the Allstars Weekend from two years ago, when his team Samsara was hosting. A beautiful newbie was fortunate enough to get the chance to challenge him. Berserk Blade Master Du Ming didn't want to be cruel and pick on this pretty girl. Turns out the pretty girl was cruel and picked on him, promptly destroying him when they fought.

Du Ming had been anxious. Disregarding the rules, he quickly issued another challenge which he won. The girl then accepted and won again! Du Ming felt ashamed and restless at the time, and with no regard for anything else, kept fight fight fighting... Then he somehow summoned God Ye Xiu, who tore him a new one.

Du Ming was very bitter at the time. He was very bitter that the newbie made him lose face big time. But now... thinking back, why did he feel a sense of sweet nostalgia?

What would have happened at the time if it wasn't for the meddling Ye Xiu? What would have happened if they kept fighting? Du Ming even started fantasizing about how the story could have continued...

Boom!

Magic gathered in front of Moon-Luring Frost's chest and exploded loudly. His guard had been broken through!

Crap!

Du Ming realised that his concentration had slipped yet again. Facing this matter, it really was hard to control his own emotions! Du Ming hastily controlled Moon-Luring Frost to try to salvage the situation, but he was too late. Tang Rou would never let an opportunity slip, and Du Ming was met with an intense wave of attacks. This formed a complete offensive when combined with the previous wave of attacks. Moon-Luring Frost was thrown around by the magical explosions, and his health dropped in chunks...

"Next time, I definitely won't lose!!!" Du Ming called out.

"Still yelling... He couldn't be more embarrassing if he tried!" Samsara's players did not know whether to laugh or cry. Du Ming's performance really was unacceptable. It was fortunate that Samsara still had a big advantage. What if this was the deciding match? What if this match was the championship finals? This kind of unstable performance would render his entire team's effort for naught.

Du Ming returned from the stage. Samsara's players put away their laughing and joking faces they had during the match and switched to looking at him with austere expressions.

Du Ming lowered his head. Of course he knew where his problem laid. He did take control of the situation at some points, but somehow it slipped from his grasp in the final moments of the battle.

"I..." Du Ming wanted to give a reason for his failure, but it was embarrassing to open up about subjects such as crushes.

"You played rigidly, and your concentration was off," said Jiang Botao.

"Yeah." Du Ming nodded. He couldn't argue against that.

"Our captain is very angry. He said you didn't put enough importance on the competition; when the whole team was working hard for victory, you were too engaged with your own thoughts. If this were the championship match and we lost the points because you were distracted and we ended up losing the championship, what would you do?" Wu Qi said.

Du Ming raised his head in surprise. "The captain said that much?"

"Yeah, the captain's rage induced many words," Wu Qi said.

Du Ming rolled his eyes. Wu Qi was definitely just trolling. However, the words may have been nonsense, but idea behind it was not. What if Samsara really lost their chance at three consecutive championships because of him? When Du Ming thought about this, he suddenly felt a wave of fear. This really should not have happened... Du Ming raised his head and watched the replay from his match. 70% of his play in this match was trash.

"As someone with experience, I know this is quite difficult for you. But you need to learn to control it. No matter what happens, it should not affect your performance on stage," Samsara's Cleric player Fang Minghua said. In esports, the average age of the players was very young. There was a big pile of players who were still in their teens, and very few were married. But Samsara's Fang Minghua was one of the few who was.

"I will..." Du Ming nodded his head.

On stage, the final battle of the group arena was about to start. Samsara's captain Zhou Zekai had already entered the stage, and the countdown for the start of the battle quickly began.

"That win came pretty easily..." On Happy's side, Fang Rui expressed his opinion as his team were discussing the match that just concluded.

"Yeah. That kid from Samsara is very inconsistent," Ye Xiu said.

"Wasn't Du Ming the one who lost to little Tang twice in the All Stars Weekend two years ago? I bet he lost his calm today after seeing her! Hahaha!" Chen Guo laughed.

"Probably!" Ye Xiu nodded. Du Ming's crush was completely known to the people at Happy, whom he had never interacted with.

"This match..." Chen Guo looked at the stage and the loading bars for the two characters, and didn't know what to say.

Even though Tang Rou had just won, there was a period where Du Ming performed above expectations. After that, there was also a steady period where he defended well. Du Ming still managed to grind down some of Soft Mist's health, which now sat at exactly 50%. Now, she was to face the number one in Glory, Zhou Zekai.

"Can she win?" Chen Guo felt her heart leap. If she really won, surely Tang Rou would become a hero? Even Happy fans who didn't like her would relish in the fact that she defeated Zhou Zekai with 50% health, since this was glory that belonged to all of Team Happy. If it was like this, then everyone would slowly change their opinion of Tang Rou. It would only be a matter of time before they started liking her again.

A sense of belief brewed within Chen Guo's mind. She also felt the change of atmosphere from the viewers. Their disinterest when Tang Rou entered the stage melted away. Expending 50% health to deal with Du Ming was nowhere near enough to establish confidence in anyone, but it did give them a sliver of belief. The player currently on stage was not like the viewers. She would not lose her fighting spirit just because she had to face Zhou Zekai.

She was pushing her limits. She worked hard to bring one down, and there was no doubt in anyone's mind that she would continue to work hard; maybe she would work even harder to bring down the next one. Zhou Zekai, the number one in Glory, would make many players lose part of their will to fight before the fight even started. To them, losing against him was almost an expectation.

No one could see this attitude at all on Tang Rou. She was just a rookie. If she lost here, not even her haters would be able to make a big deal out of it. But Tang Rou herself carried the air of someone who wouldn't forgive herself for losing. Once again, she charged forward, poised for victory, with no regard for anything else.

The first to attack was Cloud Piercer.

A fight between a ranged class and a melee class would always start off advantageous for the ranged class. The dance between the two opponents consisted of the melee class attempting to close the

distance and the ranged class attempting to maintain it. At the start, it might seem one sided the ranged class uses the melee class for target practice, but as soon as the melee class got close, they could potentially reverse the ranged class's advantage in one fell swoop.

Charge, charge forward! Soft Mist darted around through the hailstorm of bullets. A Sharpshooter was a subclass that has perfected the art of shooting. It didn't have the same fancy array of armaments compared to its three cousin subclasses. It only focused on guns and bullets. Its skills revolved around various methods for shooting.

Quick shots, spread shots, dual wielding, chains. The Sharpshooter had the most shooting styles and stances. The hailstorm of bullets they unleashed was a true bulletstorm. There was little smoke and explosion, just bullet after bullet whizzing past.

Can she make the charge?!

Soft Mist advanced in what was probably the strongest bulletstorm of the Alliance. Every step forward seemed that much more difficult.

Cloud Piercer's health was still full while Soft Mist's continued declining. However, she seemed like the one with an advantage right now, because the distance between the characters that determined life and death was shrinking slowly but surely. Her health was not being wasted.

Charge! Destroy him!

Gradually, this voice appeared within everyone's heads. At this moment, they forgot who the opponent was. They forgot their mindset that losing to this opponent was only normal.

"Charge!" a shout suddenly erupted in the stadium. Soft Mist finally covered the whole distance. With 17% health remaining, she managed to charge directly up to Cloud Piercer's face.

"Destroy him!" Happy's fans had long forgotten about their previous cold shoulder of Tang Rou, and hollered madly.

Although Soft Mist's remaining health was low, sometimes a melee class could decide the outcome of the battle in one direct confrontation with a ranged class. The two sides would had vastly different fighting styles and had huge differences in strength at different attacking distances.

But...

Bang bang bang bang...

Cloud Piercer continued shooting. Even though Soft Mist was next to him, he used the Sharpshooter's Taijutsu skills. Cloud Piercer began directly trading with Soft Mist.

Gun Fu...

This wasn't a skill described by the game. Rather, it was a high-end technique invented by the players themselves by mixing and matching skills. Most in the online game could only use Taijutsu. Gun Fu was a technique that only pro level players could achieve. Because of its immense difficulty, it was still difficult to gain an advantage using Gun Fu against a pure melee class. It mostly just prevented Sharpshooters from being helpless once locked in close combat, unlike other long ranged classes.

Right now, Zhou Zekai showed off his Gun Fu. Legs, knees, elbows, as well as bullets... they entered into a brawl with the spear that was in Soft Mist's hand.

It could be seen that even Zhou Zekai using Gun Fu could not suppress Tang Rou. His skill only carried him that far. Gun Fu was indeed very sophisticated, being very swift and accurate. However, it still lacked a melee class's ferocity. Its sophistication could not suppress this wave of ferocity.

He might have been able to deal significant damage, but the ability to control and limit the opponent was too weak. This was the drawback of Gun Fu.

However, the difference between the health of the two characters was far too large.

When Soft Mist got into attack range, her health was 17% compared to Cloud Piercer's 100%.

Zhou Zekai's Gun Fu was indeed more skillful; the Great Gunner Cloud Piercer's equipment was also much stronger than Soft Mist's.

Therefore, even though Zhou Zekai's Gun Fu could not suppress Tang Rou's Soft Mist, he could just rely on trading health. Everyone knows that the victory this round still belonged to Zhou Zekai.

In the end, this was the reality.

After getting close, Zhou Zekai chose to fight head-on against Tang Rou with Gun Fu. Tang Rou could only reply by fighting head on. She already got that far, there was no second option.

Finally, Soft Mist fell. That tiny sliver of belief did not bear fruit.

However, that was only this one time. What about next time? What would happen next time?

Cloud Piercer still had 75% health remaining.

During the explosive melee, Soft Mist's 17% health managed to trade away 25% of Cloud Piercer's.

What if Soft Mist entered the battle with full health? Starting at 100% and paying a 33% gap-closing tax, how much damage would she be able to do with the remaining 67% health?

98.5%! So close to 100%! If Soft Mist started on full health this fight, she would only be 1.5% health from victory. Maybe she really could have done it?

Of course, if it was a fair fight where both started on full health, Zhou Zekai probably wouldn't use Gun Fu to force out the ending, rather he'd seek a chance to keep the distance. Regardless, this theoretical calculation still let people see hope.

With hope, there would be belief.

For Tang Rou, there was a belief that she could defeat Zhou Zekai!

Happy lost the group arena. However, when Tang Rou left the stage, she heard applause for the first time in a long time. Applause directed towards her.

Tang Rou smiled.

She could bear the coldest reception and continue walking forward with her head held high.

However, support and encouragement would always allow one to feel happiness.

"How amazing!" Du Ming exclaimed, upon seeing the atmosphere change throughout the stadium. Then he met the eternal stares of all his teammates.

"Using Gun Fu to crush a Battle Mage, how amazing! Captain, I'm your biggest fanboy!!" Du Ming hollered at Zhou Zekai as he left the stage.

Chapter 1303: Happy's Cleric

The group arena eventually ended in Samsara's favor. With the individual rounds resulting in a 3 to 2, a 10-0 was now entirely impossible. This meant that neither Happy nor Samsara fans had a good slogan to chant. They had always found 10-0 to be the smoothest of slogans.

Having caught up after winning the group arena, Samsara's morale had been boosted greatly. Their fans were also much more lively. As for Happy? They were a little disappointed that they hadn't managed to claim victory in the group arena, but Tang Rou's performance had far exceeded their expectations. They didn't seem to be worried about losing two points, but Happy's players were feeling far more conflicted. They could feel the pressure from Samsara.

There was a rather long break between the individual rounds and the team competition. The players of the two teams were gathered in their own groups, discussing strategies for the team competition. Technically, teams were allowed to return to their prep rooms during this time, but most teams found it troublesome, so they usually wouldn't run back to their prep rooms.

"For the individual rounds, both sides have losses and wins. How this match will go is truly hard to predict. What do you think, Advisor Li?" During the break, apart from ads, the live broadcast could only have the commentators kill time.

"Indeed, it's hard to predict," Li Yibo solemnly agreed with this judgement, "On paper, Samsara's lineup is stronger, but Happy has the home advantage."

"Then what do you think will be the deciding factor?" Pan Lin asked.

Li Yibo felt pained. This was exactly the kind of precise prediction he wanted to avoid, but he knew that if he avoided all questions like this, he would be worthless as a special guest. Thus, most times, even if he was hesitant, he had to harden his heart and give them something.

"Hm, I think... it will depend on the healers. Happy's healer is their weakness. This isn't a secret anymore. In the past, many teams have tried to capitalize on this weakness, but the only team to have succeeded so far is 301. We can see that even though Happy's healer isn't the best, without him, Happy's team still cannot operate at its peak and they will still lose. In this round, I think Samsara's focus point will still be Happy's healer."

"Will they have their Assassin use Life-Risking Strike?" Pan Lin wondered.

"Possibly..." Li Yibo contemplated, "One hit KO, a powerful offensive, or like Thunderclap, using strategy to pressure them. I think all these are equally possible. It depends on Samsara's choice."

"Haha, comparatively, I'm actually more interested in how Happy is going to use their Cleric in this match against Samsara. Many of the strategies they plan around this weakness of theirs are very interesting," Pan Lin commented.

"Heh," Li Yibo chuckled, "A significant weakness in their formation, but Happy has never gone to find a way to patch it up. With their current record, they could easily find a better Cleric player during the winter transfer window. However, Happy doesn't seem to have any intentions to do so. Sometimes I feel like Happy's Cleric might seem like a flaw to us, but in Happy's designs, he's a trap, one to counter their opponent's strategies."

"Ah!" Pan Lin was stunned by Li Yibo's analysis, "Your view on this is truly brilliant!"

"With this weakness, Happy can more or less predict what the opponent is going to target. Then, with a cunning and experienced veteran tactician like Ye Xiu, they might've long since calculated for what strategies their opponents will use," Li Yibo said.

"That's brilliant! Absolutely brilliant!" Pan Lin exclaimed even as he felt a little strange at this behavior. It had been a while since this Li Yibo had made such bold predictions about another team's tactics.

"So how are they planning on dealing with Samsara this round? Like you, I too am very curious." Finishing his speech, Li Yibo gave a sigh of relief. He was rather direct. Either he didn't speak at all, or he analyzed everything comprehensively if he did. Pan Lin had already agreed with his views and began to delve deeper into discussing it.

The two killed time like it was a talk show and continued to discuss until the team competition was due to start.

Happy: Ye Xiu, Fang Rui, Su Mucheng, Qiao Yifan, An Wenyi, sixth player Tang Rou.

Samsara: Zhou Zekai, Jiang Botao, Sun Xiang, Lu Boyuan, Fang Minghua, sixth player Wu Qi.

With the formations revealed, the two began their commentary on the lineups.

"Advisor Li, I've realized that these two teams share a point of similarity today," Pan Lin noted.

"Oh?"

"These two teams haven't made any arrangements in accordance to their opponent. They've both chosen to use their most frequent lineups in this match," Pan Lin explained.

"Indeed. The two teams are facing this match with a normal attitude. They didn't place importance on this match like the outside world did and are treating it like any of the other 37 matches," Li Yibo determined.

"Yes, but this match is still amazing nonetheless."

"The players have performed unexpectedly well, thus leading the high performance of the match," Li Yibo said.

After a few exchanged sentences, the players had finished their greetings and entered their booths. The team competition was ready to start. The projection started to show the characters of each team, first

the away team, and then the home team. Each side had one onstage, switching positions and the screen began showing the data for each character.

When Samsara's One autumn Leaf and Happy's Dancing Rain appeared simultaneously, the atmosphere suddenly changed. Many of the Glory fans at Xiaoshan Stadium were past-Excellent Era supporters. One Autumn Leaf and Dancing Rain were two characters with six years of history together and harboring far too many of their hopes and dreams. Today, they were once again side by side, but not as Best Partners anymore, but as opponents. This feeling was heart rending for the Excellent Era fans, who had gotten so used their partnership. In that moment, the applause in the stadium was a little dry.

It was just good that the character introductions wouldn't last too long. After these two, two new characters appeared, then, eventually, it got to the healers of the two teams.

Samsara, Laughing Song; Happy, Little Cold Hands.

"Huh?" Someone immediately realized something was wrong when Little Cold Hands appeared.

"That's Little Cold Hands?" Someone called out in surprise. The equipment and style was completely different from the Little Cold Hands that they had seen for half a season.

The commentator Pan Lin and guest Li Yibo also noticed this situation.

"Little Cold Hands' equipment seems to have changed," Pan Lin noted.

Li Yibo nodded, already looking to the data displayed on the screen. The moment he saw it, he sucked in a breath.

"1810 Intelligence?" Li Yibo blinked. Yes, he wasn't hallucinating. Among Little Cold Hands' four stats, the intelligence was 1810.

"1810?" Hearing this data, Pan Lin was struck dumb. To do his job, he naturally had to have a good knowledge of Glory. He naturally wouldn't be expected or able to remember what the stats of all the pro accounts were, but some rather outstanding stats he knew like the back of his hand.

"No way! Tyranny's Zhang Xinjie's Immovable Rock only has 1570 Intelligence!" Pan Lin looked at Li Yibo in disbelief and hurriedly went to check Little Cold Hands' data himself. That's right, the Intelligence really was 1810.

By then, Li Yibo's attention had shifted.

"A full set of Silver equipment!" Li Yibo sucked in another breath, a pained feeling rising in his heart. Fuck, in the end he still got face slapped by Happy! He had only just said that they weren't at all focused on strengthening their Cleric, purposefully creating openings to use as bait, yet in the blink of an eye, they might've not switched players, but they had strengthened their Cleric to its limits. This intelligence was 240 points above the Alliance's Number One Cleric; wasn't that a little overdoing it?!

Li Yibo's mind drifted a little, but Pan Lin continued looking and noticed something else.

"These four stats... don't they look a little off, Advisor Li?" Pan Lin called.

Li Yibo returned to the present and hurriedly took a look.

"Er... This..." Li Yibo's foundations were very solid, so he understood, looking at Little Cold Hands' final four stats.

"They're pushing intelligence to the limit, no wonder it's so high," Li Yibo commented.

"Nowadays... are there still people who would do this?" Pan Lin said, confused.

"No." Li Yibo shook his head with certainty. In order to maximize a player's combat potential, balance was necessary. It was more common to see this push for intelligence in the online game. These Clerics had immense healing ability which would reduce the difficulty of the dungeon run. However, the pro scene was pure PvP. It was good to have powerful healing, but one must consider the other abilities of the healer. The stat increases the system gave upon levelling up were the same for everyone, so no one would get more or less than anyone else. Thus, the eventual four stats of the character would be adjusted by the equipment. The stats on equipment were limited though, so you had to lose some to gain some. Intelligence was the primary focus, but that didn't mean you should sacrifice everything for it.

However, that's exactly what Little Cold Hands had done.

Then, looking closely, the crit...

"This... this is entirely a PvE Cleric!" Li Yibo couldn't help but yell.

"His ice and dark resistance is pretty high," Pan Lin said,

"High counter control, but the other spirit based stats are only so-so. They didn't seem to have pushed for them," Li Yibo noted. The Cleric class' growth was mainly in the spirit stat, then the intelligence stat.

"Intelligence, crit, they're pushing these two to the limit... In terms of purely healing power, this is probably Glory's Number One Cleric," Li Yibo decided.

"No..." Just as he had made his judgement, Li Yibo suddenly rejected it. "It's better to say, looking at just the amount healed by a single skill, this is definitely the Number One Cleric. However, his cast speed isn't outstanding, so if we consider cast time, cooldowns, etc, then it's really hard to say how his heal per second is."

"What is Happy trying to do, making a Cleric like this?" Pan Lin said in shock. By then, the two Clerics had left the stage, switched out for the sixth players of each team.

Chapter 1304: Challenger

No one was paying attention to the sixth player right now. Everyone was discussing Little Cold Hand's huge transformation.

A full set of Silver equipment. Even though they could not see the stats, to the players, the dazzling silver lettering could only be described as tyrannical. 1810 Intelligence. It was immediately obvious that this was the highest Intelligence any Cleric had in Glory. The entire Xiaoshan Stadium was buzzing with whispers.

Was Happy's weak point, their healer An Wenyi, about to make a counterattack?

The problem was that the main criticism towards An Wenyi had been his skill. Everyone felt like if Happy could find a better healer, the team would instantly improve. However, Happy did not replace their healer and instead sharply upgraded his character. This method of fixing their weak point didn't seem logical?

The crowd didn't care about all that though. As soon as they saw their own team's character suddenly burst onto the stage with flashing Silver equipment, they instantly erupted with excitement. On the broadcast, Pan Lin and Li Yibo started to discuss this issue.

Why was Happy willing to spend so much on strengthening their healer character instead of spending the money on a better healer player?

Was there something special about An Wenyi that made Happy willing to pile so many of their resources onto him?

Pan Lin and Li Yibo looked at their information on Happy, but they just couldn't figure it out. The battle officially started, and the two characters loaded onto opposite corners of the map.

The map was Labor Mining Site, located at a mining site at the foot of a mountain. The structure of the terrain was complex, and there was no part of the map spacious enough to fit all ten players fighting at the same time. It was a map which required each team to move into a formation before advancing ahead into the terrain.

Happy moved swiftly as soon as the battle began and pressed forward, taking the middle route. Samsara pushed forward as well, but as they moved, their chat blossomed with liveliness.

"Did you guys see Happy's Cleric?" Jiang Botao and Lu Boyuan typed out simultaneously.

"I saw," Fang Minghua replied.

"What are your thoughts?" Jiang Botao asked. When discussing a healer, Fang Minghua would obviously be the one with greater authority.

"High intelligence, high crit, his heals will be stronger. Happy is making up for An Wenyi's weakness to a certain extent," Fang Minghua said. Samsara had analyzed Happy's weaknesses long ago. There was no need to re-emphasize this point.

"But aren't his stats a bit imbalanced?" Jiang Botao said.

"It's a bit on the extreme side. His cast speed is too mediocre. He'll require more protection when he's healing," Fang Minghua said.

"So you're saying that his teammates will have to take up a greater burden?" Jiang Botao pointed out the important part.

"Yes," Fang Minghua affirmed.

"It's indeed not bad a adjustment!" Jiang Botao said.

"How are we playing this?" Sun Xiang asked. The huge change that Happy had made happened to be the main focus point of their prepared plans.

"I suggest no change," Fang Minghua said.

"Mm, just treat it as a normal match and put pressure on the healer!" Jiang Botao said.

Happy's healer was their weak point, which became the focus of every team's strategy. But even without the healer being the weak point, targeting the healer was a very common strategy in the team competition. Samsara adjusted by treating this match as an ordinary one. They clearly had their misgivings towards suddenly upgrading An Wenyi's equipment.

Along with Pan Lin, Li Yibo, and many others thinking the same question, Samsara didn't think strengthening the character was a good solution.

This method may have resolved the old issue, but it brought up a new one too: the rest of the team had to share the extra burden. That meant everyone else needed to focus more of their attention towards protecting him. The hazard might have been reduced, but it had also become more spread out. What would happen if someone became distracted for a moment and failed to complete their task of protecting him?

Therefore, focus the healer!

Team Samsara's final decision for the core of their strategy had not changed. As for the specifics, those would change depending on the circumstances. They had to at least just how much the upgraded healer character impacted Happy.

The two teams soon came across each other. They did not immediately fight. On this complicated map, the instant the two teams found one another, the two teams scattered to quickly occupy advantageous positions.

The long-ranged classes searched for attacking spots, where they could better display their firepower. The close-ranged classes searched for routes, where they could better hide themselves while moving forward.

As the main team, Happy had a smoother time on this point. They had been prepared and practiced long beforehand. Everyone quickly found a good spot for themselves. Su Mucheng's Dancing Rain climbed to a rock jutting out of the mountainside and made the first attack in the team competition.

Bang!

A Stinger arced in a curve as it flew through the air. It quickly dropped down, and with a bang, it exploded like fireworks. Countless missiles burst out.

Boom boom boom...

The stingers crashed to the ground and turned the area into a sea of fire. Sun Xiang and Lu Boyuan were depressed. These two close-ranged players had picked this ditch to close in on Happy, but as soon as the fight started, Su Mucheng sent a missile at them.

One went left, and the other went right as they scurried out of the ditch. The two could only stare at Dancing Rain, who was on top of that rock with her hair fluttering in the wind. There was nothing they could do. They didn't have the range.

Zhou Zekai looked to have moved sluggishly, but he had been waiting for Happy to fall into position to make the first move. After Dancing Rain attacked and exposed herself, Cloud Piercer, Samsara's longest-ranged character, immediately moved towards her. Only he had the range to keep Dancing Rain's support under control.

But before Cloud Piercer could move into position, a gunshot landed beside him. Zhou Zekai could tell from the sound that it wasn't from Dancing Rain. The only other person who could fire a gun was Ye Xiu's Lord Grim.

Lord Grim had climbed over a ruined wall. The distance between him and Cloud Piercer was only five steps. Lord Grim could even combo his movement skills. What was five steps to him?

Zhou Zekai also realized the crisis. Cloud Piercer hastily retreated.

Lord Grim used his movement skills and rapidly rushed at him.

Ye Xiu, Zhou Zekai.

The number one players of the old and new generation. A face to face confrontation had come.

Who was better? Everyone was curious about this question.

Zhou Zekai had debuted in Season 5. It was from that season onwards that Excellent Era never entered the finals again. But at that time, Ye Xiu shined as brilliant as ever. The crown of number one player in Glory belonged to him. Who would have thought that Samsara, a mid-tier team, would find this quiet person who would one day become the Great Gunner and become the number one Glory player of the new generation.

When the Zhou Zekai of that era fought against Ye Xiu, no one would have regarded it as a battle between number ones, but rather a pretty good rookie versus a God.

But soon, everyone started to realize that this Zhou Zekai wasn't as simple as "pretty good". After Samsara took in this player, their fate instantly turned around. That season, Samsara made it to the playoffs, a breakthrough for them. However, because of the quiet personality of Zhou Zekai, he didn't synergize well with the rest of the team. In the end, the team was only able to make it to playoffs but nothing more.

Samsara had a headache over this problem, but soon afterwards, they uncovered a new rookie in Season 6. At that time, Jiang Botao had been a part of Team Parade. After a careful observation, Samsara quickly confirmed that Jiang Botao was exactly what their team needed, a person to stand by Zhou Zekai. That winter season, Team Samsara impatiently purchased this rookie. After half a year of practice, Jiang Botao was able to become the link between Zhou Zekai and rest of the team just like they had wanted. And in Season 7, Jiang Botao took up the position of vice-captain. At this point, the young players of Samsara had matured. The Season 7 Samsara had finally broken past the first round of the playoffs. Zhou Zekai's popularity was incomparable that season. In comparison, Excellent Era had started to go on the decline. The title of number one started to falter. Wang Jiexi? Huang Shaotian? Zhou Zekai?

These names started being mentioned. Among them, Zhou Zekai was the youngest and his performance on stage was the most dominating. Everyone thought highly of his future. The only thing he was missing was a championship victory.

Finally, in Season 8, Ye Xiu retired midway. The former number one said goodbye to the stage, and someone needed to take up his banner. That season, Zhou Zekai and Team Samsara seized the championship cup. It seemed to be a declaration that he was the successor to the title. And in Season 9, Samsara won the championships for a second time. From then on, his title as number one was unshakeable. But then, in Season 10, the former number one, Ye Xiu, returned...

Who was the real number one?

The media definitely wasn't going to miss such a fiery topic. But Ye Xiu was already at such an old age. Excellent Era had started declining years ago, and now, he was leading a grassroots team. Wouldn't debating whether Zhou Zekai and Ye Xiu was the current number one be seen as a joke?

Ten years of glory, the former number one player, had now unexpectedly become a challenger. And some even thought that he wasn't qualified.

But Ye Xiu's performance and Happy's performance showed otherwise.

Ye Xiu was undefeated in the individual competition. After Happy started coming together in Round 9, their record had crushed Samsara's ever since. Ye Xiu had earned the qualifications to take back his title as number one.

As a result, the media started working hard to utilize this as a topic. In Round 1, everyone had been questioning Ye Xiu's qualifications!

Unfortunately, neither Ye Xiu nor Zhou Zekai came across each other in the individual rounds. Finally, not long after the team competition began, the two had already started fighting.

Lord Grim rushed forward, while Cloud Piercer retreated backwards. Everyone seemed to have stopped breathing. Thenn, a formless qi suddenly struck Cloud Piercer from behind.

FUCK!!!

Countless curses exploded.

We want to see a fight for number one, could a dirty bastard like you not fucking interrupt it???

Chapter 1305: A Long-Awaited Scene

Using a Qi Blade, Fang Rui's Boundless Sea interrupted the contention for number one between the two generations without any hesitation. The countless players and reporters, who were interested in it, immediately started cursing.

Qi Blade wasn't easy to notice even when facing it head on. As a sneak attack, even the number one player wasn't able to notice it. However, this was a team competition. Zhou Zekai hadn't noticed it, but others had.

The instant Jiang Botao gave the warning in the team chat, Zhou Zekai's Cloud Piercer dodged. One person's warning and another person's movements coordinated beautifully.

But with this opening, how could Lord Grim not seize it to close in onto Cloud Piercer? People realized that Ye Xiu and Fang Rui were also coordinating with each other, and it had probably been planned beforehand. While everyone was overjoyed at seeing a fight between Ye Xiu and Zhou Zekai, Ye Xiu and Fang Rui conspired together and formed a pincer attack on Zhou Zekai.

The contention for number one and a qualified challenger were truly exciting topics, but did the players on stage care?

Just when these two formed a pincer attack onto Cloud Piercer, Samsara's Jiang Botao hurried over. The 1v1 that everyone had been hoping for didn't happen. The two had only just seen each other before everything turned into a mess. Lord Grim was currently interrupting Jiang Botao's Empty Waves from casting a formation, while Cloud Piercer was blocking the dirty sneak attack from Fang Rui's Boundless Sea.

The fight between the two sides had started all-around, but Happy's more prepared utilization of the terrain gave them a certain advantage. Su Mucheng's Dancing Rain was a troublesome existence for Samsara, and the only one who could keep her in check was Cloud Piercer, who Fang Rui and Ye Xiu had intercepted. Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash rushed over to provide support, and An Wenyi's Little Cold Hands stood beside him with his cross raised. The silver Holy Contract radiated with holy light as he chanted. This seemed to be his first time supporting his team in a direct conflict. An Wenyi was a bit excited. Could he finally participate in a team battle outright in the open? Before this, the situation always needed to be set up in a certain way before he could do anything, and Ye Xiu didn't hold back in telling him the reason.

An Wenyi was Happy's weakness. His technical skill was poor. Everyone in the Glory scene knew that. Believing in one's own lies wasn't something a logical person like An Wenyi did. Ye Xiu also trusted in his personality and didn't feel the need to keep his skill level a secret. Clearly pointing it out would help him grow faster.

Reality was as such. An Wenyi was always clear where his shortcomings were and always consciously worked on improving them. The only thing restricting him was probably his talent. His rate of improvement seemed to be very slow, and he couldn't help but worry about his future.

However, Team Happy's actions wiped away this worry.

An Wenyi was extremely confident right now. He was certain he would definitely become qualified to be the lifeline supporting the team. He wouldn't be like before and sometimes become the bait for the team's tactics.

Cast. Small Heal.

Even though Little Cold Hand's equipment didn't stack cast speed, Small Heal was a low-level skill, so the cast time was short anyways, and it was quickly cast.

Holy light flew out and converged onto Lord Grim.

Crit!

The high crit rate didn't let him down. After a switch of equipment, the very first skill Little Cold Hands used had crit.

The holy light surrounding Lord Grim looked to be brighter than usual. His health immediately went up a notch.

That feels so good!

For a healer, nothing was more satisfying than watching a health bar go up. The others felt a thrill watching their attacks deal damage, but Clerics felt a thrill watching their skills heal.

The bigger the heal, the more satisfying it felt. And this was just a Small Heal, and not a huge one.

An Wenyi calmly observed the battlefield, waiting for a chance to use a high-level skill. When he had been adjusting to his new character, that sort of leap almost made his heart jump out. In real combat, in a fight, a leap in health meant a nullification of all the hard work the opponent had put in. This was the type of attack only healers could do, a spiritual blow to the opponents.

Come!

The always logical An Wenyi couldn't hold back his excitement. He had been holding it back for too long. He had been waiting for this day, this moment for too long.

Which side?

An Wenyi looked left and right, searching for an area that needed his support.

One Autumn Leaf and Chaotic Cloudy Mountains climbed out of the ditch and entered the fray. Samsara's healer Fang Minghua and his Cleric Laughing Song looked to be in a position symmetrical to Little Cold Hands. He was also in position, waiting for a side that required his assistance.

This was a battle between healers! How exhilarating! An Wenyi saw Laughing Song across from him. The other side seemed to have noticed him too. The hot bloodedness in his mind couldn't help but surge forth again.

There!

An Wenyi suddenly found an opportunity. However, that side didn't require any healing. If he placed a Sacred Fire there, would he be able to restrict One Autumn Leaf's mobility?

Ah! This side too!

Or maybe I should Hypnotize Empty Waves?

Would I be noticed though? Little Cold Hands had a slow casting speed. Zhou Zekai's Cloud Piercer could interrupt his cast with just a single bullet.

Maybe I should cast a Sacred Fire first! An Wenyi made up his mind, but...

Dragon Breaks the Ranks!

One Autumn Leaf suddenly swept outwards with his spear. After finding an opening, he took a step and attacked Little Cold Hands with a Dragon Breaks the Ranks.

The distance isn't enough!

The first thing An Wenyi noticed was that Dragon Breaks the Ranks wouldn't be enough for One Autumn Leaf to fully close in onto him. But this surprise attack had still drastically increased the threat towards him.

An Wenyi didn't panic.

Sacred Fire!

He had originally planned on using this skill to decrease One Autumn Leaf's mobility, but One Autumn Leaf broke off from the fight first. The Sacred Fire was still sent towards him nonetheless.

Under the light of Holy Contract, the pale flames slid out from it. One Autumn Leaf had only been five units away, so the Sacred Fire was bound to be within his path. The spell had been timed to the extreme. But the instant the pale flames leapt up and it looked as if One Autumn Leaf would step on them, One Autumn Leaf leaped into the air.

Frightening reaction speed and extraordinary technical skill were all things An Wenyi lacked, but at this moment, Sun Xiang displayed these traits beautifully. It was just an instant, but Sun Xiang was able to react in time.

Dragon Breaks the Ranks was forcefully cancelled, but because he had jumped, the momentum carried him high into the air.

Shattering the Lands!

One Autumn Leaf's Evil Annihilation danced in the air. Under the gloomy backdrop, the flickering black light looked even crueler.

An Wenyi was still engrossed in what had just happened. How he envied Sun Xiang's reaction speed and technique! It was only an instant later, and One Autumn Leaf was coming down with a Shattering the Lands!

An Wenyi's reaction speed had always been his weakness. The attack itself was a large AoE move. Where could he dodge to?

He had nowhere to dodge, and he had no attack that could stop Shattering the Lands. Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash was close to Little Cold Hands, but he had no way of helping because this attack could not be blocked!

Boom!

Magic waves rippled and shook the earth.

Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash promptly jumped out of harm's way, but Little Cold Hands wasn't even able to take three steps before the spreading shockwave landed.

No one could block the attack, but they could always rescue him after it.

An X-1 Extruder launched from Dancing Rain's cannon towards Little Cold Hands. Anyone in its vicinity would be pulled away.

This sort of protection was only temporary. Getting the healer to safety required constant defense. Starting from Sun Xiang's One Autumn Leaf breaking through, Samsara held the initiative because Happy needed to maintain a certain distance from their target of protection.

Ye Xiu and Fang Rui weren't able to continue fighting on the other side. They needed to shrink their defensive zone to protect their healer.

Random Firing!

Zhou Zekai seized this timing to fire a burst of attacks. Bullets shot out from his dual guns and under his extraordinary control, nearly every bullet threatened Lord Grim and Boundless Sea.

This wave of attacks stopped the two from retreating, using a strong offense as a defense.

Empty Waves began casting a wave formation!

"Interrupt!"

Ye Xiu called out in the chat. This wave formation could not be allowed to be summoned. Lord Grim raised his Myriad Manifestations Umbrella and used its shield form to block Cloud Piercer's attacks. Fang Rui's Boundless Sea went into the cover provided by the umbrella and let out an attack towards Empty Waves.

Samsara's offensive had been repeatedly thwarted by Happy's players, but finally, Lu Boyuan found an opening to act.

Chaotic Cloudy Mountains flipped his palms...

Grapplers didn't have long-ranged attacks, and there was no one near him. However, the movements he made made An Wenyi's heart leap.

This was... the Qi Master skill, Cloud Grasping Fist!

Chaotic Cloudy Mountains was a Fighter class, so a skill of the same class could be added to his weapon. And in this match, he chose Cloud Grasping Fist. In order to target Happy's weak point, had this been an arrangement they had planned from the start?

An Wenyi wanted to dodge, but he immediately discovered that Sun Xiang had his eyes completely fixed on him.

With Dancing Rain's X-1 Extruder flying over, One Autumn Leaf wasn't able to press closer for now, but if Little Cold Hands moved, he would be outside of X-1 Extruder's protection, and One Autumn Leaf would instantly start attacking.

Samsara's teamwork put him in a helpless position. An Wenyi felt despair. However, the moment Chaotic Cloudy Mountains sneak attacked with Cloud Grasping Fist, a character stood in front of him.

Phantom Demon, One Inch Ash.

Chapter 1306: What Makes Him Special

Cloud Grasping Fist didn't have mountain-splitting power. When One Inch Ash came over to block it, the qi landed upon his body and instantly pulled him toward where Chaotic Cloudy Mountain was. This skill only pulled the target toward the user, it didn't restrict the target's movements. One Inch Ash, who had purposely taken the attack to help Little Cold Hands, was of course prepared for this. As he was pulled away, he also sent an attack.

Ghost Slash!

The blade light arrived in front of Chaotic Cloudy Mountain a second before the person did. But Lu Boyuan had seen that the opponent had taken the initiative to serve as a meat shield, so an attack like this was within his expectations. He dodged to the side with precise timing, already thrusting a hand toward One Inch Ash's shoulder.

Lu Boyuan had predicted Qiao Yifan's actions, but Qiao Yifan had actually also guessed that Lu Boyuan would respond. The problem was, Chaotic Cloudy Mountain's hand had arrived in the last second before Cloud Grasping Fist wore off. Cloud Grasping Fist didn't restrict the character's skills, but movement was undoubtedly locked. Even though Qiao Yifan knew that Chaotic Cloudy Mountain's attack would arrive, he simply had no way of controlling One Inch Ash to dodge. Lu Boyuan's hand flashed out with incredible precision, and his positioning was beautiful. Helpless, Qiao Yifan tried to change the direction of his Ghost Slash, but he still couldn't catch up to Chaotic Cloudy Mountain's movement.

Qiao Yifan was already out of strategies, but fortunately, this wasn't an individual battle. A Laser Rifle was accurately fired toward Chaotic Cloudy Mountain, forcibly splitting the connection he had tried to establish with One Inch Ash. Even though it failed to cause any damage, Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash had already recovered from the movement-restricting effects of the Cloud Grasping Fist.

Moonlight Slash, Full Moonlight Slash!

Two slashing attacks one after another instantly leapt toward Chaotic Cloudy Mountain. The slashing attacks of a Phantom Demon didn't cause much damage, but Lu Boyuan of course wouldn't just let his character be chopped up. He quickly backed up two steps, avoiding these two attacks. One Inch Ash quickly withdrew, as he had no intention of getting tangled with him here.

Even though Happy hadn't taken too much damage for now, their formation had unquestionably been thrown into chaos by Samsara's continuous disruption. Over by Little Cold Hands, Dancing Rain's X-1 Extruder had already exploded, and One Autumn Leaf was rushing forward. Dancing Rain again tried to block him, but he didn't dodge or retreat. Over there, Fang Minghua's Cleric Laughing Song was already casting, clearing covering for One Autumn Leaf as he forcibly killed off Little Cold Hands.

Happy was now completely on the defensive, all starting from when Sun Xiang's One Autumn Leaf had broken through with a Dragon Breaks the Ranks. Once upon a time, Samsara's weakness was their lack of a close-range, brute-force attacker. But after obtaining Sun Xiang and One Autumn Leaf, they finally had a character who could charge through, forcibly carrying the whole team into the offensive.

Samsara's weakness had been fixed with a transfer, but what about Happy's weakness? Right now, he was suffering under One Autumn Leaf's furious attacks, helplessly waiting for rescue by his teammates.

"It really is hard to understand Happy's actions." Pan Lin and Li Yibo, in the television broadcast, were discussing this topic instead of the events going on in the match.

They'd originally thought that Happy had gone to all this effort to update Little Cold Hands' equipment because An Wenyi had some special talent that would allow him to control this character very well. But just looking at this ongoing match, they couldn't tell. All they saw was, as usual, the weakness of An Wenyi's slow reactions. And this weakness was directly causing trouble for Happy in this match.

"If he had used Sacred Fire a little faster to restrict One Autumn Leaf's movement space, then One Autumn Leaf's formation-breaking charge might not have been successful."

"If his reactions were a little faster, he should have been able to dodge that Shattering the Lands. He shouldn't have been hit and then directly exposed in front of One Autumn Leaf. Now the whole team has lost the initiative."

"Team Happy's team roster here relies on the Phantom Demon's support and control to strengthen the battle ability of the whole team. So, as soon as the battle begins, they need to let the Phantom Demon successfully cast his boundaries. And the Launcher is the core of long-distance attacks. In other words, Lord Grim and Boundless Sea are the only ones directly controlling the situation from the front. This arrangement requires the team's Cleric to give a certain amount of support. An Wenyi has failed to do this, and so Happy was quickly scattered by Samsara..."

The two continued to discuss and analyze the problems. And An Wenyi was the core of this heap of problems. The simple conclusion drawn was that if Happy changed their Cleric player, even if it couldn't be said how the battle would ultimately play out, at least Happy wouldn't be so quickly broken by Samsara in a battle where they had the map advantage.

Yes, broken.

By this time, Happy had already been broken for good.

The Ghost Boundaries hadn't been set. The healer had been stolen away and was being beaten up. Only under Dancing Rain's desperate supporting were Lord Grim and Boundless Sea able to struggle out of their situation and turn around to try and save the healer. But Samsara instantly turned fire, with Sun Xiang's One Autumn Leaf throwing away Little Cold Hands and attacking Lord Grim and Boundless Sea. Zhou Zekai's Cloud Piercer took over for him, continuing to rain damage upon Little Cold Hands.

Inside-Out Tactics.

One of the basic strategies in Glory. Close- and long-range attackers exchange positions, continuously outputting damage.

And now, Inside-Out Tactics were being used by Sun Xiang and Zhou Zekai, these two pinnacle attackers in the Alliance, with One Autumn Leaf and Cloud Piercer, these two pinnacle characters. One could only imagine how powerful it was. Because of the restriction caused by the inside-out exchange of these two players, Happy had no way of interrupting their offensive. Over the course of this season, Samsara had used this method to swiftly wipe out who knew how many crucial characters on the opponent side. Even if it didn't succeed, this method greatly restrained the opponents, preventing their strategies from effectively playing out.

The situation Happy faced now was even more disastrous. Their healer was directly kicked out of the match by the opponent.

Happy lost, but no one expected that they could lose so quickly.

11 minutes and 58 seconds, that was how much time this team competition ultimately took. This was only a little over two-fifths of the average team competition duration of 25:47. Anyone could tell that this was a match where the healer was immediately killed off.

Samsara's fans were jumping and laughing. Who cared if they lost the individual rounds? The ultimate victory still belonged to them. Happy's fans, meanwhile, were quiet. When they'd seen Tang Rou's performance in the group arena, when they'd seen Little Cold Hands flashing new Silver equipment, they had held high hopes for this team competition. They truly felt that their team was about to defeat the champion team Samsara. But in the end, the team competition was such a swift and brutal defeat.

An Wenyi disappointed everyone. Although he had always been called Happy's weak point, thanks to the team's intentional protection with their strategies, he had never affected Happy's victory. But this time, it was exactly as Pan Lin and Li Yibo had analyzed. An Wenyi's weak point left a gaping vulnerability in the match, and it was this vulnerability that led to Happy's rapid loss to Samsara.

"Just switch the Cleric player!" The supporters in the stadium, the supporters in front of the television, even Pan Lin and Li Yibo in the live broadcast were giving this suggestion to Happy.

"Increasing the character's strength won't help! The character is dead, the player is alive! You have to start from the player!" At the end of this match broadcast, this was Li Yibo's exclamation.

In the post-match press conference, this issue became the focus. And An Wenyi, at the center of this whirlpool, hadn't been sent out by the team for this press conference. He sat in the prep room, silently staring at the television as Ye Xiu was swarmed by the media, the reporters firing question after question about An Wenyi.

An Wenyi took off his glasses and buried his face in his hands.

He'd really screwed up this time, he knew. The team had built this Cleric character just for him, a character specially catering to his playstyle, but his performance was still like this. It looked like he really wasn't suited to be a pro player. Everything he'd hoped for, dreamed of, they were no more than soap bubbles bursting in the air, right? Maybe this was the final chance the team would give him, and now they were probably going to find a new player. The transfer window still hadn't closed...

"Do you think An Wenyi is even at the professional level?" An Wenyi had taken off his glasses, but he couldn't stop the sound from reaching his ears, and he heard from the television a reporter asking such a direct question. Unlike many commentaries where they tried to tactfully express that An Wenyi's skill wasn't good enough, this reporter bluntly questioned whether he had a chance as a pro player...

An Wenyi wasn't the only one left in the prep room during the press conference. After hearing this brutally direct question, Qiao Yifan reflexively began searching for the remote to turn off the television. But then, they heard Ye Xiu's clear and certain answer:

"Of course. Without a doubt."

Qiao Yifan froze, and then slowly, the hand holding the remote slowly fell back to his side. He looked at An Wenyi, and saw that his teammate had lifted his head, a shocked expression on his face. But soon, he put his glasses back on and stared attentively at the television.

"Then how do you explain his performance today? There were several moments that I don't think were because of accidental mistakes or such reasons. They happened because he's not good enough, right?" a reporter asked.

"No." Ye Xiu shook his head with a smile. "That was because he's only had this new character for two days. He needs to adjust to the character, and at the same time, he needs to adjust to a few responsibilities that he hasn't taken on before."

"Responsibilities that he hasn't taken on before? What is that referring to?"

"Just like in today's battle, a Cleric standing directly at the front of the battlefield," Ye Xiu said.

"But he didn't do very well."

"This was his first time, and this was against Team Samsara. How well would you hope he'd do?" Ye Xiu asked.

"That is to say, Happy won't look for a new Cleric player, and will continue to believe in him?"

"Absolutely," Ye Xiu said.

"What's so special about him, that Happy has such faith in him?"

"Special? He is a member of Team Happy. That's what's special about him," Ye Xiu said.

A member of Team Happy...

An Wenyi stared blankly at the screen. When he once again doubted himself, when he once again lost confidence in the future, Ye Xiu appeared in front of everyone and clearly emphasized his identity.

He was a member of Team Happy.

Was all of the faith just from that? An Wenyi was extremely moved. But clearly, the reporters weren't touched by such an answer. To them, this was too idealistic, this was belief for the sake of belief.

"If An Wenyi repeats his performance today, will you still say that statement?" one reporter asked.

"I think that he won't give me that difficulty," Ye Xiu said.

Chapter 1307: The Buddhist Monk from a Foreign Land

Ye Xiu's declaration at the press conference didn't dispel many people's doubts. Stubbornly insisting on using someone, who was universally regarded as having subpar skill, received all sorts of criticism. The forums, in particular, had lots of nonsense like An Wenyi was Chen Guo's sugar daddy, and he could not be kicked because of the boss's authority. Numerous people actually accepted this conjecture, quite a few were even Happy's fans.

Fortunately, the reporters weren't so unreasonable and only criticized Happy's obstinacy.

"Happy's future this season is looking quite good, but perhaps it will end because of their stubbornness!"

A few media stations reported in this way because the transfer window had closed after this round and Happy truly had no intentions of recruiting a better healer. An Wenyi was the only person they could rely on now. Healers were different from other classes. There were usually no substitutes for them. Cries of mourning could be heard all around Happy. Even many of Happy's supporters complained about their team's stubbornness. Rumors without boundary started to spread further and further.

The only voice that could thoroughly dispel these doubts was a strong performance, but...

"Don't be anxious. This isn't something that can be resolved in a match or two." Early in the morning, Ye Xiu got up and found An Wenyi practicing since who knew when.

"The entire team needs time to get used to this new way of playing. It wasn't just you that made mistakes against Samsara. The team didn't protect you well enough either," Ye Xiu said.

"You're not consoling me, are you?" An Wenyi asked.

"I always say it how it is," Ye Xiu said.

"I believe you," An Wenyi nodded his head. Ye Xiu was truthful to the extent that he could infuriate others.

"Continue to work on your reaction speed. It'll always be helpful. And then practice and play together with the team to work on our synergy," Ye Xiu said.

"Maybe we can go back to how we played in the past..." An Wenyi said these words, thinking with the team in mind. He was a bit scared of holding back the team from winning just so that he could become a qualified Cleric.

"That style of play isn't sustainable. Even that slow Li Yibo is starting to smell out the traps inside. Do you believe that the likes of Yu Wenzhou, Zhang Xinjie, Wang Jiexi wouldn't be able to? We need to think about the long term. Starting from now on, we need to think about playoffs," Ye Xiu said.

"Playoffs?"

"I don't think we'll decline so far as to fall out of top eight," Ye Xiu said.

After Round 20, the fluctuations on the rankings were miniscule. Only four teams had changes.

Royal Style beat Radiant 7-3, and Miracle lost to Tyranny 1-9. As a result, two of these teams switched places on the rankings. At the moment, Royal Style was in 12th, while Miracle was in 13th.

Apart from that, there was Team 301 and Team Void. These two teams confronted each other directly. In the end, Team 301 won 9-1 versus Team Void. And in this match, the player Bai Shu, who Team 301 had dug out from who knows where during the transfer window, triggered quite a discussion.

The unknown newcomer displayed extremely high technical skill, and what was even more astonishing was that he seemed to have plenty of competitive experience.

A nobody having exceptional technique could perhaps be explained by bitter closed door training, but rich competitive experience wasn't something that could be obtained in seclusion. The Glory online game couldn't bring about this sort of high-level experience either.

Where did this Bai Shu come from?

Finally, Team 301 gave the answer to this mystery by revealing his identity. This guy was also a pro player, but he wasn't a domestic player. He was a Chinese pro player from England's Glory Super League.

This was... foreign help?

The pro circle was astonished. It obviously wasn't only China that had a Glory competitive scene. Glory was a popular global game, and many countries had formed their own leagues. It was just that up until now, each country had their own competitive formats. The scene was still young too, so there hadn't been any across-border interactions yet. At most, it would just be a few videos of other pro matches appearing on the Internet. The international scene had unfamiliar players, equipment descriptions that they couldn't understand, and it didn't offer anything that they couldn't see in their own country, so it naturally didn't have much of an impact.

But this time, Team 301 officially broke the communication barrier and recruited a pro player from outside of the country.

Bai Shu quickly received numerous interview invites from several media outlets. In the end, the one who came out on top was Esports Home, the country's highest authority in esports.

Bai Shu's unknown history was finally revealed through the interview. There was nothing crazy about him. He had been a student studying abroad and liked to play Glory during his free time. He was quite talented, so his skill level quickly improved. After making a name for himself in the Glory community, he attracted the attention of pro teams and was recruited. He already had nearly four years of competitive experience. Team 301 expanded their search for talents to outside of the country and brought Bai Shu back to China.

The Glory news reporters weren't as clueless towards the international scene like many normal players. England's Glory Super League had the highest level of competition in the European region, and Bai Shu had been a core member of one of the top teams there. His skill wouldn't lose to top player in China. From the results of the Round 20 match, many people believed that Bai Shu was at an All-Star level.

These were just words, though. He needed to prove it with action.

How bad was Happy's An Wenyi? How good was 301's Bai Shu? For a moment, these two topics became the most popular topics in the Glory competitive scene, and a match that would put them to the test had finally arrived.

Round 21. Happy had an away game against Hundred Blossoms, while 301 had a home game against Tyranny. This time, there wasn't too much debate from the broadcast for which match to show. Team 301 versus Team Tyranny was picked. Everyone was very curious about this international player.

Bai Shu's performance didn't disappoint. In their match against Tyranny, Team 301 won 8-2. Bai Shu's performance in the team competition was even more praiseworthy. In this match, Team 301's captain Yang Cong once again used Life-Risking Strike to OHKO the opposing side's healer. Tyranny's healer was on a completely different level than Happy's An Wenyi though.

An Wenyi was considered the Alliance's worst healer, while Zhang Xinjie was considered Glory's best healer. Zhang Xinjie had the experienced generals Han Wenqing, Zhang Jiale, and Lin Jingyan surrounding him, yet under Bai Shu's brilliant cover, Yang Cong was able to land a fatal blow.

The monk from the foreign lands had quite the skill! On the other hand, the domestic healer looked quite shameful. Happy ended up losing to Hundred Blossoms 4-6.

In the individual competition, Ye Xiu once again stood undefeated. Happy also won the group arena. However, in the team competition, their healer once again failed them, which led to their defeat.

The dissatisfaction of the fans rose even higher. But apart from complaining about it, there was nothing else they could do. The transfer window had passed, so no matter how terrible An Wenyi may be, Happy could only keep using him, unless they decided not to use a healer in the team.

The gloomy Happy fans didn't lack passion, giving all sorts of advice to Happy, but no matter how it was spun, it always came back to asking Happy to switch healers. Enlightened by Team 301, their search started expanding outside of the Alliance. An unknown but enthusiastic fan had gathered numerous matches showcasing healers from the international scene and then sent all of them to Happy's public mailbox for Happy to survey.

Chen Guo was helpless. She could only give another official team announcement expressing the team's faith in An Wenyi. She also hoped the fans could understand and be patient for a better future.

When the announcement came out, it persuaded a few, but there would always be stubborn fans. Happy's statement once again gave rise to all sorts of rumors. Possibilities such as An Wenyi being the boss's sugar daddy was no longer enough to satisfy them.

Including Happy's loss to Team 301 in Round 19, this was their third consecutive loss. However, just like last time, the rankings barely changed at all. No one really cared whether Conquering Clouds and Radiant, the 17th and 18th place teams, moved up or down. The other change was Void, who lost to Thunderclap 3-7, being overtaken by Misty Rain, who won 7-3 against Royal Style. However, these two teams were 20 points away from the playoffs zone. Apart from them, Team 301 was closing in onto the playoffs zone. After beating Happy in Round 19, Bai Shu joined their team. Ever since that round, Happy had lost three in a row, while 301 had won three in a row. The distance between 301 and the eighth place Wind Howl had shrunk to 13 points.

Team 301 looked to be making a strong comeback in the second half of the season. Their captain Yang Cong stepping back and their new player becoming a part of the main roster had changed Team 301's tactical style. Yang Cong seemed addicted to Life-Risking Strike at the moment. Team 301 might just make it their main playstyle. As for Bai Shu, everyone was still very curious about how much more potential he had left to show.

As for Happy's current predicament, besides their loyal fans, no one else truly worried for them. On the other hand, people like Ruan Cheng had found a gold mine. Their disgust towards Tang Rou had spread to the entirety of Team Happy. They couldn't find anything to criticize Tang Rou for at the moment, so they just brought her team into the mess.

In the new issue of the Esports Time, Ruan Cheng attacked Happy ferociously. However, his timing was poor. In Round 22, Happy would be facing Happy. For the current Happy, a small mishap like this wasn't

enough to a team like Radiant to upset them. After three consecutive losses, Happy made a resounding comeback with a 10-0, a loud slap in the face to people like Ruan Cheng.

Ruan Cheng wanted to cry but no tears came out. What could he do? Esports Time was released biweekly, so they couldn't publish immediate reports. When his article came out, Round 22 had ended. Ruan Cheng's criticism towards Happy received all sorts of condemnation from the community due to Happy's 10-0 victory.

Are you blind?

Countless Happy fans cursed angrily at Esports Time, at Ruan Cheng.

Chapter 1308: Tyranny's Home Stadium

After Round 22, there were only only small changes on the points ranking. Clearly, after half a season of accumulation, the various teams all had a solid point foundation, and it would be very difficult for the points of one round to cause any big shifts on the rankings.

In the three rounds after the new year, the most-eye catching team was undoubtedly 301..

None of 301's opponents these three rounds - Void, Tyranny, and Hundred Blossoms - were weak. But 301 had still managed to win beautifully with a 9-1 and two 8-2 victories. Bai Shu didn't disappoint all those curious about him and had a strong performance in all three matches. 301's Captain Yang Cong had already completed his style change in these few rounds. He was no longer that directly-attacking warrior Assassin. Cold, ruthless, deadly, this was the impression that today's number one Assassin in the Alliance gave everyone, and he did a better job than many other Assassins who had always used this style. This sort of clean and neat style change led people to feel that this was a player who had always been somewhat underestimated.

Even though 301 hadn't risen on the leaderboard after these consecutive victories against strong opponents, they were steadily closing the gap between themselves and the top 8. After this round, their opponent Hundred Blossoms had fallen to eighth place with 131 points, only eight points ahead of 301.

The other team that was worth paying attention to was Team Wind Howl. Wind Howl, named the soft-footed shrimp*, had really been beaten bloody by the strong teams during the first half of the season. 10-0'd by Happy, 9-1'd by Tiny Herb, that was the tragic ending they faced in the last two rounds of the first half. During the winter transfer window, they'd tried to invite Tyranny's Zhang Xinjie with much fanfare, but ultimately they'd failed to make the deal, and they'd left behind a strong impression that they desperately needed to adjust the team. If they wanted to make any acquisition after that, all of the teams were lions with jaws gaping wide. Any player could have an asking price over ten million for them.

Wind Howl was quite desperate, but they weren't going to be taken for a ride like this! Zhang Xinjie was a player that could truly take care of all their problems, a God, a popular player, they were willing to pay a sky-high price. But now any random player cost over ten million, this was simply robbing a burning house. To Wind Howl, these players were just spare tires. There was no way they'd make such a large investment.

They were unwilling to be cheated, but they also couldn't discuss any suitable transfers. In the end, the transfer window closed without Wind Howl being able to complete any discussions. They could only pretend they had everything together, sending out an announcement expressing the team's belief in the current roster, belief that their current strength was enough to win everything, and so on.

Quite a few people who liked drama all anticipated seeing Wind Howl's continued fall! But at this moment, the match schedule helped out Wind Howl. In the opening of the second half of the season, none of Wind Howl's opponents were strong teams. Conquering Clouds, Radiant, Lightly, in front of teams like this, the soft-footed shrimp could still bare its fangs and wave its claws, eating them one by one. After Hundred Blossoms lost to 301, Wind Howl reached seventh place.

And coming up next? In Round 23, Wind Howl's opponent was Bright Green, a team that with Seaside was already locked in the relegation zone. It looked like Wind Howl, for now, wouldn't be falling.

Those paying attention to Wind Howl were only interested in seeing results. The fans who truly enjoyed watching high skill and technique displayed during a match had quite a few high-level confrontations they could choose in Round 23.

Tyranny vs Happy, Blue Rain vs Samsara, and 301, who had found its momentum in the second half of the season, would be playing their away game against the team whose team competition style had completely changed this season, Thunderclap.

After deliberating, the television broadcast team finally decided to give up on the match between the number two Blue Rain and the number one Samsara, simply because the difference between Samsara and Blue Rain was a whole 22 points. Even if Blue Rain earned a ferocious 10-0 victory over Samsara, they still had no way of shaking Samsara's huge lead. After thinking of this kind of result, this match felt a lot less interesting.

On the other hand, Tyranny and Happy were currently tied at 148 points, and their relative ranking was determined by the outcome of the previous match they'd played against each other. This time, whoever won would reach fourth place on the rankings.

The higher the rank at the season's end, the more prize money and dividends the team could earn. It also had a bit of an effect on the playoffs. In the playoffs system that had come into effect last season, the right of playing the home match in the third tie-breaking match between two teams was given to the team who had the higher ranking in the regular season. Even though this home match didn't include the right to choose the maps, the boost in morale from the home fans was useful.

For the broadcast of Round 23, they ultimately chose to show Happy's away game against Tyranny.

February 21.

City Q.

After the All-Star Weekend, Team Happy once again arrived at this city.

Tyranny's home stadium had actually sent a large bulk of security officers to welcome Team Happy. After half a season, Chen Guo had never seen such a welcome before!

"Is this necessary?" Chen Guo said.

"This is an official match, and the arriving person is Ye Xiu," the captain of the officers said in a very serious tone. But as he spoke, a coldness also seemed to flash in his eyes as he coolly glanced at Ye Xiu. His right hand seemed to subconsciously drift toward the baton hanging at his hip.

"The hatred is that bad?" Even though Chen Guo was an Excellent Era fan in the past, she had never followed the team to Tyranny's home stadium, and didn't know the atmosphere here. As soon as she asked this question, she suddenly heard a loud shout from somewhere: "Ye Xiu, 1v1 me!"

And then a water bottle flew toward them, its cap very rudely opened, spilling water all over them.

"7 o'clock, 7 o'clock!!" This security officer's directions were like the directions given in a Glory match. Immediately, people charged toward the 7 o'clock direction, seizing the target. As for what happened afterward, Happy's members didn't know. The target was tightly surrounded by security and swiftly escorted inside the stadium, all the way into the prep room.

"How scary!" Chen Guo exclaimed with lingering fear. "What if that hadn't been water? What if it was acid or something?" Chen Guo examined where she'd been soaked by the water.

Ye Xiu was dumbfounded. "Isn't that a bit too cruel? How bad is this hatred?"

Right after he said that, there came a knock on the door of the prep room. It was a very precise and rhythmic knocking, quite eerie.

"Who is it!" Chen Guo was instantly on full alert.

"Zhang Xinjie," answered the person outside the door.

"Uh..." Chen Guo hadn't expected that it was actually a God and quickly opened the door.

"I heard that you all arrived, so I came to greet you." Zhang Xinjie greeted everyone in the room, and Chen Guo quickly let him in.

"Who's first from Tyranny in the individual round?" Ye Xiu asked.

This was a question that would very easily chill the atmosphere. But Zhang Xinjie still responded, "You'll see when the battle starts."

"Are you going in the group arena?" Ye Xiu asked another question.

"No..." Zhang Xinjie said.

"Do you know how to have a conversation?" Chen Guo finally couldn't restrain herself any longer.

"What is there to talk about?" Ye Xiu retorted.

Chen Guo was just about to answer, but Zhang Xinjie actually agreed with Ye Xiu's view. "Yes, I just came to greet you all. Play well, everyone. I'll take my leave now." After speaking, he just left.

"What?" Chen Guo was so confused. "There's nothing going on, he really came over purely to greet us? Was he trying to strengthen his sense of existence or something?"

"Then I'll go strengthen mine too!" Ye Xiu stood up.

"Do you need me to go too, Boss?" Steamed Bun jumped up.

"Up to you!" Ye Xiu didn't care either way.

"Let's go." Steamed Bun followed him.

"Me too, me too!" Fang Rui also joined the excitement.

"Boring." Wei Chen expressed his disdain toward these guys. The others were all more rule-following, and naturally didn't go along with this fun.

The three left the room. The prep rooms of two teams were generally either directly opposite or next door to each other, so it wasn't long before Chen Guo heard the hallway sounding with Ye Xiu's voice.

"Open up, I'm here!"

With that tone, it sounded like this was his own home, and he couldn't be any more familiar.

The door to Tyranny's prep room opened. Without invitation, Ye Xiu just walked right in, followed by two others.

"The host team's prep room is always nicer!" Ye Xiu exclaimed. "What's the temperature here? Ours is a little cold." After saying this, he saw the control for the air conditioning on the wall and very skillfully controlled it a bit.

"Why are you here?" Standing to the side, Han Wenqing asked.

"Reciprocating the greeting!" Ye Xiu said.

"Old Lin." Fang Rui also greeted his old partner Lin Jingyan.

"The number one Brawler Lin Jingyan!" Steamed Bun shouted.

Lin Jingyan was instantly very happy. It'd been a long time since anyone had given him that title. This inexplicable guy from Happy was very good at chatting, it seemed!

"Happy's idiots are already here!" At this time, the door to the prep room was pushed open again, and a person charged in.

"Talking about people behind their back, where's your professionalism?" Ye Xiu turned around. The person who had just entered was Zhang Jiale.

"Oh, you're here." Zhang Jiale acted like he had nothing to do with it.

"You were the one who threw that water bottle just now, weren't you!" Ye Xiu said.

"What water bottle?" Zhang Jiale was confused.

"Don't pretend. I saw that throw style, it was completely like a grenade you'd throw," Ye Xiu said.

"What's all this nonsense?" Zhang Jiale said.

"I'll teach you a lesson during the match." As Ye Xiu spoke, he headed outside.

"Teach you a lesson!" As Steamed Bun left the room, he also gave Zhang Jiale an aggressive and intimidating shout.

"Those guys in Happy... they're really confusing!" Zhang Jiale watched as these two people left.

"Did you really throw that water bottle?" Even Tyranny's own members were asking him. Evidently, even though this thing had only happened just earlier, the news had already spread to Tyranny's players.

"I'm not that childish!" Zhang Jiale said. "But was it only water? How come they didn't put in a drink or paint or something? Let those guys from Happy go onstage all bright and colorful, hahaha."

"How bad is this hatred!" someone exclaimed.

"Gah!" Zhang Jiale jumped. "There's another one!"

"There was always another one..." Lin Jingyan was speechless. Fang Rui had come over to chat with him, so when Zhang Jiale had come in, he'd only seen Ye Xiu and Steamed Bun, and didn't notice that Happy still had another member waiting in ambush.

"If you come to Happy again, there might be drinks or paint or something waiting for you!" Fang Rui said to Zhang Jiale.

"How bad is this hatred!" Zhang Jiale said.

"Who said it wasn't?" Fang Rui laughed. "See you!" He said his goodbyes toward everyone and then left.

"Damn. Next time we go, we really have to be careful. Happy's dirty and shameless, they'd definitely do something like that," Zhang Jiale said, after Fang Rui left.

"Why's it so cold in here?" After saying this, Zhang Jiale felt the temperature in the room, and then saw the air conditioning control on the wall.

"18 degrees? Are you guys crazy!" Zhang Jiale shouted.

"It was probably Ye Xiu..." Everyone remembered how Ye Xiu had been fiddling with the control earlier.

"Just like I said! Those guys can do anything!" Zhang Jiale said.

T/N: 18 degrees Celsius, about 64 degrees Fahrenheit

*Soft-footed shrimp = coward/weakling

Chapter 1309: Who's Under Pressure

In Round 23 of the regular season, where Team Happy faced Team Tyranny in their away game, the players from both teams had already started entering the stadium with holographic projections showing off each character's flair.

"Ye Xiu, your record ends here!!!"

The moment Ye Xiu stepped foot into the stadium, the crowd started issuing battlecries. This was evidently something premeditated.

"Haha, what a nostalgic feeling!" Everyone else was shocked, but Ye Xiu simply laughed it off. Come to think of it, he hadn't encountered this kind of treatment for a long time. His reception at the All-Star Weekend was similar, but ultimately uncomparable to during Tyranny's actual home game. The All-Star Weekend was a grand occasion for all of Glory, and having it hosted in Tyranny's home stadium would only result in slightly more Tyranny fans. There would still be many other fans from other teams, or even neutral fans of Glory, so Ye Xiu's reception wouldn't be as grand as this one, where seemingly everyone in the stadium was targeting him.

While walking towards the player seats, Ye Xiu respectfully listened to the various jeers that the crowd were freely coming up with and shook his head, "It's been a few years already, how come these fellows from Tyranny can't come up with any fresh ideas?"

After Team Happy, Team Tyranny's players entered the stadium, which was naturally a completely different scene to behold. Team Tyranny's fans had an unstoppable passion, whether it was against their enemies or for their team.

The players from both teams met each other, and as everyone crossed the stage and shook hands, the crowd once again hollered, "Ye Xiu, your record ends here!" Ye Xiu, who was shaking hands with Zhang Jiale, laughed and said, "Listening to the hopes of the fans, your first player must be under a lot of pressure?"

Since the competition was about to begin, divulging who would be playing first was no big deal. The gazes of all the players from Team Tyranny fell onto Lin Jingyan.

"Oh, it's Old Lin, hehe," Ye Xiu said.

"..." Lin Jingyan was depressed. The reactions of the fans in the crowd were something that the players couldn't predict. Ye Xiu wasn't wrong, with such expectations from the fans, the pressure on him was considerably weighty. If he wanted to win against Ye Xiu, it really wouldn't be an easy feat!

"It's been hard on you, I'll just take this point first," Ye Xiu took the opportunity to say this as he was shaking Lin Jingyan's hand.

"You're too arrogant," Lin Jingyan said.

"Work hard!" Ye Xiu patted him, continuing to be as arrogant as ever.

"Old Lin, you can't lose!" Zhang Jiale got fired up.

Lin Jingyan innocently looked at him, "Why don't you go?"

"I already went the last time! Now it's your turn!" Zhang Jiale said without any hesitation.

"Naturally, I'll do my best," Lin Jingyan said. Since he had already been selected as the first player, there was no need to hide his true feelings. Ye Xiu was truly a troublesome opponent. His response seemed to lack passion and fervor, but the stability he had from his many years of experience was something that up-and-coming new players couldn't compare to.

In no time at all, the competition officially began and the players from both teams entered the field. Team Happy's first player was, as expected, Ye Xiu, and Team Tyranny's was Lin Jingyan. The crowd took it upon themselves to start the jeering again, but Ye Xiu had already been tempered by years of experience and was unfazed by it. On the contrary, it was Lin Jingyan who was under a great amount of pressure. To be honest, this was a scene that Ye Xiu had seen countless times, but Lin Jingyan had never experienced it himself. When he'd arrived at Team Tyranny, Ye Xiu had already changed to the unspecialized, and the first time they'd met, it had been at Happy's home stadium where the atmosphere was naturally very different. It was only now that they were playing at Tyranny's home stadium that Lin Jingyan began to understand exactly what kind of attitude Tyranny fans had towards Ye Xiu.

"How bad is this hatred?" This was a question that Lin Jingyan really wanted to ask.

Go onstage, log-in to the character, enter the map. The players already couldn't hear the the shouts from the crowd. Still, the fans of Tyranny continued to use all their effort to verbally assault Ye Xiu.

"Stop making so much noise." All of a sudden, Ye Xiu's message appeared in the public channel.

"It'll be over in a flash." Ye Xiu used these words to send his message to the crowd.

Could everyone possibly stop making noise after that? The noise from the crowd momentarily grew even louder, to the point where Lin Jingyan could faintly hear their cries from inside the player booth.

"This is unscientific!" Lin Jingyan was astounded. He'd spent so many years as a professional player, and except from at the very beginning, when the facilities were basic and crude, it was his first time being able to hear the crowd after entering the booth. How many decibels was the noise outside? Wasn't this Ye Xiu too good at adding fuel to the fire?

"Old Lin, hurry up and accept your death!" Ye Xiu began to provoke him in the public channel again.

Lin Jingyan ignored him. This kind of trash talk could no longer affect him. He wasn't some new generation player or a rising talent. At the time when Ye Xiu was unparalleled, he was already part of the Alliance. He had a better understanding of Ye Xiu's strength than other people. After all these years, they had encountered each other more than just a few times. Lin Jingyan didn't want to tally their battle record though because he knew that it would just make him unhappy.

He wasn't arrogant or overbearing; he had been called a God for many years, but he was never one of those at the peak. Neither rising nor falling, it made people feel as if he was a little muddleheaded. He had thought that his professional career would come to an end like this, slowly heading to its boring end, but then he was released from his team.

After accepting Team Tyranny's invitation, three players at the twilight of their professional careers had gathered in the most hot-blooded of all the Alliance's teams. Champions?

Lin Jingyan didn't think he would be in over his head so quickly, unexpectedly wanting to aim for this height again. In this team, with these players next to him, his once-dwindling passion was suddenly re-ignited.

They had fought vigorously for an entire season, but tragically fell short at the last step. Countless people felt great pity for them, and at that moment, Lin Jingyan had thoughts of retiring. But at his side

was a player even older than him, who, right after losing the championship, had straightened his back at the press conference and said, "We'll be back next year."

Han Wenqing was even older than him, but he still hadn't given up!

Zhang Jiale had placed second four times, but he still hadn't given up!

And then there was that Ye Xiu, who had dug out an entire team from an Internet cafe before stubbornly triumphing over Excellent Era and imposingly slaughtering his way back into the Alliance.

All of them hadn't given up, how could he be the first to give up?

Lin Jingyan stayed on, holding on to the dream of becoming a champion and starting his efforts anew.

Dark Thunder walked out of the respawn point, strategically moving towards the middle of the map. Lin Jingyan didn't want to fight Ye Xiu head-on. It had already been more than half a season, but the unspecialized Lord Grim wasn't something that could be adapted to in half a season. This was simply because they didn't have the necessary conditions to practice for him. Aside from the actual competition, they could only rely on their theorycrafting, but without putting it into practice, their grasp over the unspecialized was still unsatisfactory.

So Lin Jingyan decided to use tactics, taking a roundabout route to advance. After walking halfway, he saw another message from Ye Xiu in the public channel, "Old Lin, could you hurry up, I've been waiting for half a day."

Lin Jingyan ignored him, continuing to move at his own pace. If talking more could help you win, Huang Shaotian would already have won six championship titles.

After going in a roundabout fashion for a while more, Lin Jingyan finally saw Lord Grim, who had been waiting for him in the center of the map. The guy was just standing there, gripping his umbrella in a self-satisfied way! Why didn't it seem like he was here to compete! For a moment, the old general, Lin Jingyan, had gotten infuriated. It had passed in a moment, but he still had to control himself from getting irritated.

After fighting against each other for so many years, could he still be unaware? Ye Xiu's arrogant self-confidence was something he did for show, if one were to think he was actually arrogant and fight him under these false impressions, they would truly have been duped. This guy was truly dirty! Lin Jingyan couldn't help but think of the blood and tears that he had shed in the past, before frantically dispelling these thoughts from his mind.

How could he think of such things now, it was too hurtful to his morale!

Lin Jingyan directed Dark Thunder to hide at one corner, carefully watching Lord Grim's actions. Upon closer observation, the guy looked like he was taking a stroll in a self-satisfied manner, but he was actually moving towards a few places where one could sneak attack from, blocking them completely without leaving any openings.

"Old Lin, you've arrived, right? How long have you been squatting for? You'll eat a yellow card, you know!" Ye Xiu started talking again.

"I've arrived, I'm observing you now!" Lin Jingyan replied.

"Really? Do you need me to make a few relaxed-looking poses for you?" Ye Xiu replied.

"Sure, you can start posing," Lin Jingyan said.

"Alright!" Ye Xiu replied, and Lord Grim's Myriad Manifestations Umbrella quickly transformed into its gun form.

Gatling Gun!

Lord Grim's body turned, sending the bullets flying out in a horizontal arc and causing the surrounding dirt to fly into the air. Unexpectedly, he completed a full 360 degree turn, and a bullet exploded just to Dark Thunder's side. Lin Jingyan's judgement in having his character stay completely still was truly incredible.

"How was it?" Ye Xiu asked.

"Nice gunplay," Lin Jingyan replied.

"Let me show you another trick," Ye Xiu said.

"Oh?"

Poof!

A cloud of purple smoke up as Lord Grim threw out a smoke bomb, concealing his entire body before disappearing without a trace.

"This isn't nice to look at," Lin Jingyan said, but he was already frantically adjusting his camera angle, afraid that Ye Xiu would use the smokescreen to have Lord Grim quietly creep over.

But according to reason, he shouldn't have been exposed yet, right?

Lin Jingyan had some hesitation in his heart, and in that moment, his judgements weren't as resolute as before.

This guy, what was he planning on doing?

Lin Jingyan didn't see Lord Grim quietly creeping over, and he didn't want to act blindly and expose Dark Thunder's location, so he continued to endure, waiting for the purple smoke to disperse.

"Look at this trick now." Suddenly, Ye Xiu sent another message into the public chat. At the same time, in the midst of the purple smoke, a blinding white light suddenly flashed.

"Fuck!" Lin Jingyan swore, but his screen was already filled with white.

Flash Bullet, a Spitfire skill. But by now, everyone knew that Lord Grim's perverse Myriad Manifestations Umbrella could add a different skill to each of its forms, and this time, Ye Xiu had evidently added Flash Bullet to the gun form of his weapon. Borrowing the smoke screen of the Ninja skill, Smoke Bomb, he had waited until the smoke had gradually thinned out before throwing a Flash Bullet. The light pierced through the smoke, finally dazzling Lin Jingyan.

"I can't move! He still doesn't know where I am, I'm not that easy to find," Lin Jingyan thought.

"Haha, you don't dare to move now, right? Why don't you guess whether or not I can find you?" At that moment, Ye Xiu sent another message in the public chat. After being dazzled by Flash Bullet, he couldn't see anything, but he could still talk without any impediments.

Chapter 1310: Backfire

Lin Jingyan wanted to cry.

This is exactly why they hadn't figured out Lord Grim's unspecialized class after half a season. Apart from possessing all the low level skills from all 24 classes, he could also equip different skills to his weapon. That meant that Lord Grim had the chance of knowing any skill that wasn't a classing or awakening skill, so long as Happy had enough skill scrolls.

Under such circumstances, how many different combos could Lord Grim execute? That wasn't something a human mind could calculate. Especially since they didn't know what skills would be set into the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, how would they know what to look out for?

Looking at his whited out screen, Lin Jingyan didn't know if he should act or if he should wait it out. In the end, he made a decision: he'd endure it!

Skills added to a weapon would be at most rank 1. The effects of Lord Grim's Flash Bullet wouldn't last long, and Lin Jingyan refused to believe that this guy could figure out his whereabouts in such a short time.

That's what Lin Jingyan thought, thus, Cold Thunder stayed there, unmoving and calm.

The audience, as well as Tyranny's players, were just about close to crying.

Lord Grim was already standing in front of Cold Thunder. If he moved the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella forward just by a bit, he would hit the other's forehead.

Old Lin, you've been tricked!

The spectators with their omniscient view actually all knew that Ye Xiu had probably caught sight of Dark Thunder when Lin Jingyan had first crept into the center of the map.

The TV broadcast chose a shot of Lord Grim's view. There was a split-second where a figure flashed by in the corner of the screen.

Yes, just a shadow, just a split second. Pan Lin and Li Yibo had even had a very long and enthusiastic discussion as to if Ye Xiu had seen it or not. Back then, no one could be certain if Ye Xiu noticed or not and how far he could go in determining Dark Thunder's position from that.

It wasn't until a Flash Bullet blinded Dark Thunder and Lord Grim's form appeared from the dispersed purple smoke, accurately darting towards Lin Jingyan that everyone was certain that Ye Xiu had noticed that split-second incident and accurately determined Dark Thunder's position.

Then, Gatling Gun swept forth, Smoke Bomb, he really put on quite the act. It wasn't until the Flash Bullet was used that Ye Xiu managed to close in without Lin Jingyan's notice.

Victory had already been decided...

Lin Jingyan's sight came back while he was being attacked, and then received a head-on beat down from Lord Grim. There had yet to be anyone who could counter Ye Xiu's unspecialized blitz. Lin Jingyan tried and tried and tried, but still lost in the end.

The first individual competition ended and Ye Xiu left the stage with a victory to thunderous cursing. Things like how fake, how deceitful, how treacherous, what a showoff!

No matter what, that's how it was like for Ye Xiu at Tyranny. If he lost, there would be endless mockery, and if he won, it wasn't much better. No matter how he won, the Tyranny fans would still find it dirty, unhonorable, low end.

The passionate, open Tyranny fans would all become mean and petty when Ye Xiu was concerned, nit picking at everything and not seeing anything good in him.

However, Ye Xiu was completely unmoved, calmly returning to his seat.

"Tyranny's home game atmosphere doesn't seem to be affecting Ye Xiu at all!" Commentator Pan Lin exclaimed.

Li Yibo, sitting to the side, gave a strained smile. He was from Tyranny and though it had been a long time, he had personally seen this scene before, shaking his head and saying, "It's not affecting Ye Xiu, but instead it's affecting Lin Jingyan's performance. The atmosphere Tyranny's fans created has backfired."

"Ah?" Pan Lin was stunned.

"This atmosphere is something Lin Jingyan has yet to experience, having been on the team for half a year. When the match started, everyone was yelling about ending Ye Xiu's consecutive wins. It's easy to yell, but what about for Lin Jingyan, who is actually going up against Ye Xiu? In the end, this is only giving him more pressure," Li Yibo explained.

"Oh... so that was why he had accidentally revealed his shadow while moving to the center of the map, giving his position away to Ye Xiu," Pan Lin said.

"Yeah..." Li Yibo sighed again.

Pan Lin didn't continue the conversation. This saying wasn't illogical, but how could you be certain that Lin Jingyan's mistake was because of this pressure? Pan Lin felt a little incredulous, so he couldn't really bring himself to agree so fervently. By then, the second players on each team were heading towards the stage..

Happy, Mo Fan, Deception.

Tyranny, Song Qiying, Sunset River.

"Hey, the second round is a clash between two newcomers," Pan Lin exclaimed.

"Indeed!" Li Yibo confirmed, looking interested. There were quite a few talented rookies this season. Tyranny's Song Qiying was definitely one of them. As for Happy, they had a particularly large number of

rookies. Tang Rou, Bao Rongxing, and this Mo Fan, then there was their Cleric An Wenyi. However, if you wanted to say whether or not they were talented, that was a bit of a problem over here.

People originally had high expectations for Tang Rou, but then there were some conflicts with her character and her popularity plummeted. Though this had some effect, Tang Rou's performance in the field continued to be outstanding. The Alliance was very conflicted. The selection for the Best Rookie award wasn't like the All-Stars voting; popularity wasn't considered. From pure performance, Tang Rou was the most outstanding rookie this season.

In addition, her position in the team was something no other rookie could hope for. She was the last line of defense for the arena, and no other rookie was taking such an important position in their team. She also performed extremely well in her position, scoring consecutive victories. Her performance in the team competition was rather amazing as well. In typical circumstances, Tang Rou would be a steady first in both popularity and skill. Even if her popularity was low, Tang Rou's performance would be enough to convince people.

But the problem was that Tang Rou's popularity wasn't just a little low, it was practically in the negatives. Award Tang Rou with Best Rookie under these circumstances? The Alliance really felt that they didn't have enough support to do that. They had never experienced such a situation. They were burning brain cells trying to figure out what to do. They just hoped that an even more outstanding rookie would appear.

But, there were none.

In this era, even if rookies had talent, they needed their teams to give them a chance to shine. Many mature teams had talented rookies, but they weren't as reliable as veterans due to their lack of experience. Each team had their own way of cultivating young talents. Some did throw their rookies into the thick of things directly, like Lu Hanwen who became a core member of the team at 14 and successfully took the title of Best Rookie. On one hand, he truly had talent, and on the other hand, he had enough chances to show his talent. Diamonds will shine, but this will wasn't the same for everyone.

This season's Tang Rou was like last season's Lu Hanwen; she had plenty of chances to shine, and she made good use of them, become a unique talent amongst the rookies.

The Alliance hoped for some new rookies. They didn't have to be better than Tang Rou, just being on par with her was good enough, and it would solve all their problems. Now there was still half a season. After the first half of the season, would there be any teams that felt their rookies were settling in well and could take on more responsibilities.

Li Yibo knew of the Alliance's attitude, so when he saw a match between rookies, his interest was peaked. Would there be any rookies that'd make a good final run and get to Tang Rou's level?

"Heh, this pair of rookies is pretty interesting!" Li Yibo opened up a discussion with this topic. "This Mo Fan used to be a notorious scrap-picker in game before getting pulled into the team by Ye Xiu and attending the Challenger's League with Happy. He's a rare self-taught talent these days. As for Tyranny's Song Qiyang, he's a talented product of Tyranny's training camp. He grew under professional training, coming from a very orthodox background. What's interesting is that this Striker player did not inherit

the style of Tyranny's Han Wenqing, but instead, from what we've observed, took after the Tyranny vice-captain Zhang Xinjie. His style is very meticulous."

"That's true indeed. This match will truly be interesting!" Pan Lin commented.

"Let's see which rookie will perform better!" Li Yibo exclaimed.

The silent Mo Fan and serious-as-Zhang Xinjie Song Qiyong were both the kind of player that didn't make conversation. After the match started, there were no communications in the chat. The two met and opened combat directly.

A wild, self-taught style and a meticulous, academic style clashed. In this battle, Song Qiyong attempted to break through Mo Fan's barrage in a frontal confrontation. However, Mo Fan's peak performance was enough to suppress Sun Xiang. Song Qiyong was really struggling to deal with it. Every time he felt that an opening was imminent, Mo Fan would always swiftly pull a full retreat.

Song Qiyong really didn't like this sort of pace. This was way too abrupt; who even fought like this?

However, this was the exact kind of opponent he had trouble dealing with, and fell to a disadvantage in the match.

"What do you think?" At Tyranny's bench, Han Wenqing posed this question to the others as they watched the match.

"It seems like that Mo Fan can only use five to six skills at a time well. He'll always break off his offense after these few skills and won't follow up with a new offensive afterwards, but instead clearly slows his pace down. It really does look like Cooldown Play," Zhang Xinjie analyzed.

"However, his execution of those few skills of his is truly very high," Zhang Jiale commented.

"Compared to before, he's improved immensely and his style has become more varied. However, he really has yet to solve the problem of continuity in his offense," Lin Jingyan added.

"If he can really solve that problem, then he'll become even more scary!" Zhang Jiale exclaimed.

"Yes," Lin Jingyan agreed.

"However, the current skill combos seem very complete and mature already. They don't hold much to continuity," Zhang Xinjie brought the topic down for deeper analysis.

"Could it be that he plans on persisting in his use of this style?" Zhang Jiale wondered aloud.

"He can clearly do better, so why doesn't he try?" Lin Jingyan voiced his confusion.

"What if he can't try?" Han Wenqing suddenly cut in.