

Avatar 1391

Chapter 1391: Level 80!

The two players entered their booths and their characters loaded in. The match was about to begin.

That was when some sort of uproar erupted amongst the in-stadium audience, and then, the live broadcast commentator Pan Lin also suddenly yelled, “No way!!!”

“What?” Li Yibo was puzzled. The character loading was always the same, so he didn’t pay attention.

“...” Pan Lin hesitated. Just now, in the character loading screen, when it reached Lord Grim, his equipment flashed by and Pan Lin thought that he had seen an 80 in the Level section. However, it had just been flash, and he wasn’t sure what he had seen exactly. The character loading screen was a fixed shot, there wouldn’t be any special shots. Thus, Pan Lin didn’t say anything, just hurriedly asking the cameraman to display Lord Grim’s equipment as soon as they entered the match.

The uproar that had briefly occurred at Happy’s home stadium was also because some people had seen Level 80 on Lord Grim’s equipment. Just one or two people, then it might just be that they misread, but then those people who thought they misread realized that quite a few people were misreading today!

The characters loaded in quickly and before the audience had figured out what was going on, it had finished and the characters spawned on the map, symbolizing the start of the match. The live broadcast immediately displayed Lord Grim’s equipment.

Boom!! The audience exploded. This time, the entire audience could clearly see it: Equipment Level: Level 80. And it wasn’t just for one piece of equipment either.

Weapon: Myriad Manifestations Umbrella;

Top: Dissonant Soul Armor;

Shoes: Cloud Breaker Boots;

Belt: Chain Lightning Belt;

Cape: Civil Dawn;

Badge: Sky-Splitter;

Right ring: Hurricane.

Of Lord Grim’s equipment, these seven pieces of Silver equipment were Level 80.

“Lord Grim has... Level 80 equipment equipped. What’s going on?” This time, Pan Lin could see it clearly, and didn’t have to suspect that he had gotten it wrong, meaning that he was free to yell about it.

Li Yibo was also completely struck dumb. Level 80 equipment? What the hell?

There was no need to even mention the audience. The stadium was naturally a cacophony of confusion. Everyone was first shocked into speechlessness, then they exploded into discussion.

Even the referee wasn't spared. When he saw the Level 80 equipment, his brain practically short circuited. Then, his first thought after that was to wonder if something had gone wrong with the system. Did they need to pause the match?

Then, Blue Rain's players were also stunned upon seeing the Level 80 equipment.

"Level 80 equipment? What's going on?" Huang Shaotian expressed his bewilderment. Though it wasn't to the point where he would cry from fear, he had to admit that the Ye Xiu had truly managed to shock them this time.

Yu Wenzhou clearly hadn't been expecting that improvements to their equipment would be a Level increase to eighty. However, after a moment of shock, he began to organize his thoughts.

"Is it a system error?" The other members of Blue Rain all wondered.

However, Yu Wenzhou didn't think so. The equipment and system would all be checked before the match, to make sure that the match would go smoothly. It wasn't like there hadn't been small errors with the hardware before, but errors in data hadn't occurred once since the start of the Alliance, so why now?

"The characters are Level 75, that's for certain." Yu Wenzhou took his mind off of those incidents and began to analyze this logically.

"For Level 75 characters to equip Level 80 equipment, then there must be a 'Level requirement minus five' stat on the equipment." Yu Wenzhou swiftly thought of this.

"However, how they created these pieces of Level 80 equipment is a complete mystery." Of course, Yu Wenzhou wouldn't know. If he did, then Blue Rain would have Level 80 equipment, too.

"Happy's R&D is that skilled?" Huang Shaotian exclaimed in shock. Level 80 equipment was enough to leave all the powerhouses in the dust.

Discussion had erupted everywhere. After Yu Wenzhou, commentators Pan Lin and Li Yibo soon figured out that these pieces of Level 80 equipment had a "Level requirement minus five" stat, making them usable, which was relatively obvious. However, after that, no one could say how Happy managed to create Level 80 equipment under a Level 75 Level limit. "So this is the ace that Happy had prepared for the playoffs!" Pan Lin exclaimed in the broadcast.

"Level 80 equipment? How?"

The match continued. After confirming that nothing had gone wrong with the software or hardware, he didn't have a reason to pause it. Currently, Song Xiao, on the field, had also found out that his opponent had Level 80 equipment and was naturally shocked.

"Afraid yet?" Ye Xiu asked.

"Even so, it doesn't mean that I can back down!" Song Xiao replied.

As expected of the most renowned clutch player of the alliance, Mister Clutch. Against Ye Xiu, who had won thirty-seven consecutive individual matches this season, against this shocking reveal of Level 80

equipment, Song Xiao expressed his shock, but soon calmed. Afraid? Back down? He was just joking around. In reality, he was treating this like any other match, focused on taking victory.

“Let’s go then!” Ye Xiu called out and then the two charged forwards.

The group arena map choice naturally couldn’t only consider Ye Xiu’s needs. A clean, simple map would be great for him and Tang Rou, but for those like Fang Rui who relied on dirty play, then it would be a huge trouble.

Thus, the group arena map had to make sure to take care of everyone’s needs, so it’d usually contain a variety of terrains.

However, it didn’t seem like either of the two participants had any intentions to use the terrain, the two were heading directly for the center.

Just as they were about to meet, with everyone eagerly anticipating how this Level 80 equipment would perform spectacularly, Ye Xiu’s Lord Grim suddenly swerved.

Ye Xiu, having maintained a straightforward and brute force style for thirty-seven rounds, suddenly decided to switch to being strategic in the first one on one match of the playoffs.

“Ye Xiu has decided against a frontal confrontation,” Pan Lin noted.

“A wise choice,” Li Yibo commented, “The group arena is different from individual matches. One must defeat their opponent with minimal cost to oneself, so, if possible, it’s better to use the environment and play strategically. Brute force styles aren’t actually the most suited to group arenas. In individual matches, their victories will be victories no matter if they take down an opponent with great cost or if they manage to take down an opponent without losing a drop of health. However, in the group arena, these two results are completely different.”

“But many teams still have brute force style players in their group arena lineup! It doesn’t seem like anyone avoids having them play in the group arena,” Pan Lin brought up.

“Brute force is a style that players use, but it’s not set in stone. In the group arena, brute force style players can play a little more wisely. Like Ye Xiu, for the individual competitions, he kept a brute force style, but now with the group arena, he’s decided to be a little more flexible,” Li Yibo said.

“But some players seem to stick with using brute force even in the group arena,” Pan Lin argued.

“Yep! After all, everything has its exceptions! Different situations will require different attitudes,” Li Yibo said.

The two stopped their conversation there. Currently, Ye Xiu’s Lord Grim had swerved left, heading towards Song Xiao’s right flank. However, since Ye Xiu only swerved after the two had seen each other, Song Xiao knew exactly where Lord Grim had gone and was already keeping an eye on that side.

Ye Xiu didn’t act like many dirty play pros did, hiding away and waiting for a chance. From an opening on that side, Lord Grim peeked around the corner and, boom boom boom, three Anti-Tank Missiles came blasting over.

Song Xiao had his eyes on that side and he saw Lord Grim just as he peeked out. The three Anti-Tank Missiles couldn't even count as a sneak attack, yet...

Boom! Receding Tides actually got hit by one of the missiles. The force of the explosion threw him back a few steps, but Receding Tides soon stabilized himself.

"He did it on purpose!" Li Yibo immediately realized. "Oh?"

"He's testing Lord Grim's attack power," Li Yibo explained. Too many pieces of equipment had been changed, causing a huge shift in stats. Though the base four stats could still be seen, they needed experience to get an understanding of Lord Grim's attack power. Song Xiao had a good grasp on the consequences of getting hit by this attack, and at the same time, he was giving the rest of Blue Rain information. In the future, they'll continue to face Ye Xiu's Lord Grim, so they had to hurry and collect data.

"Hm, Lord Grim's switched out several pieces of equipment at once, very effective. All the data that the teams collected on him during the regular season is pretty much useless now. Everything will have to start from scratch," Pan Lin mentioned.

"What's even more troublesome is that the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella clearly has different stats depending on the form," Li Yibo added.

"Happy really has dropped quite the bomb!" Pan Lin said.

"Right now, we just don't know if only Lord Grim has seen such improvements or if all the characters in Happy have," Li Yibo continued.

"We'll know soon enough." Pan Lin seemed rather excited.

"Hm... After Ye Xiu let Lord Grim attack, he hid again." Li Yibo returned to the match.

"Song Xiao isn't rushing either. Is he trying to figure out Lord Grim's attack power? Advisor Li, what do you think of this attack?" Pan Lin asked.

"Ah... the attack's damage has clearly gone up," Li Yibo said. This season made him feel more and more that he was falling behind. He was preparing to do some revision and further study. Actually, it was very hard to get much from a single attack. This was something decided by both the attack power of the attacker and the defense of the target. Li Yibo was like the audience, he didn't know the actual stats of the characters, so it would be impossible to ask him to deduce much from a single strike. Team Blue Rain's members at least knew their teammates' character's defense, and they could derive the attack from the damage taken. As for the other spectators? In their eyes, there would be a hundred different damage calculations from Lord Grim fighting a hundred different opponents. It would be extremely difficult to figure out Lord Grim's actual attack power. Though Li Yibo was studying up, he couldn't figure out something so difficult in such a short time, unless a team was willing to provide their stats.

Unfortunately, that wasn't possible. So, he could only say that Lord Grim's damage had increased, which was clearly unnecessary. If his attack power hadn't changed, then what would the point of switching in all that Level 80 equipment?

Chapter 1392: Counterattack

“Neither side has made any moves!” Pan Lin shouted. This would usually be boring, but Pan Lin was excited. He was looking forward to what Level 80 equipment could do.

Li Yibo found Lord Grim’s info and compared the stats before and after. The four main stats were clearly displayed, so Li Yibo hoped to quickly find something he could analyze.

“Lord Grim is moving deep. Could he be looking for better angle of attack? But the area he’s in should be within Song Xiao’s line of sight. There doesn’t seem to be any location which he can mount a sneak attack from though. Is he going to venture even farther in?” Pan Lin continued to comment. Usually, if it wasn’t a deciding moment, these remarks would rarely be said. However, right now, it looked as if Pan Lin would even analyze Lord Grim’s thumb movements.

“Just as I thought! Lord Grim is going even deeper. He’s planning on making a big turn!”

“Ah, Song Xiao has also moved!”

“Receding Tides is moving forward. Song Xiao truly deserves to be called Mister Clutch, he has exceptional mental fortitude! It’s quite bold of him to push forward. Lord Grim’s already moved away though, so cutting in won’t be dangerous. In fact, he might be able to see through Ye Xiu’s intentions this way.”

“What...” Pan Lin muttered to himself. For a moment, he wasn’t able to continue. He had been too ambitious in guessing Ye Xiu’s intentions. Ye Xiu didn’t move according to his analysis and instead moved in the opposite direction of what he had expected. This surprise caught him at a loss for words.

However, with Song Xiao’s Receding Tides moving away, there were now no traces of Lord Grim.

“He calculated everything that precisely?” Pan Lin was shocked. Although it was just small play, being able to read someone so thoroughly was truly frightening.

At this moment, the broadcast cut into a slow-motion replay.

“Oh...” Pan Lin suddenly understood. It wasn’t a calculation. There had been an angle from Lord Grim’s previous position where he could see Receding Tides.

“As expected of Ye Xiu!” Li Yibo returned to the match, “He’s extremely proficient at this map, a trait very few young players possess. Young players lack an attention to detail towards maps, which is a huge advantage for the home team.”

“Happy’s Qiao Yifan is quite good in this area too!” Pan Lin mentioned his name.

“He’s got a good mentor beside him!” Li Yibo sighed.

Pan Lin subconsciously thought of other players on Happy who weren’t particularly strong in this area. For example, Steamed Bun and Tang Rou weren’t thorough enough in their utilization of the map. Saying all that would tear Li Yibo’s praise apart though, so he restrained himself.

Song Xiao didn’t see Lord Grim, so instead of having Receding Tides continue moving straight, he circled around in reverse.

“Song Xiao’s very experienced,” Li Yibo said, “Even though he doesn’t see his opponent, from the distance he’s traveled, he has a rough idea of Lord Grim’s possible positions. If Lord Grim wasn’t in those areas, he wouldn’t have been able to disappear from the map so quickly.”

“Oh, the two sides are...” On the bottom right corner of the broadcast, a bird’s eye view of the map appeared. The positions of the two characters were represented as dots as they moved. The camera constantly switched back and forth between the two characters, giving a feeling of tension.

Closer, closer...

The two sides neared each other. At the next intersection, the two would meet. Everyone held their breaths. Suddenly, Lord Grim jumped.

The Myriad Manifestations Umbrella’s ninjato stuck into the wall. The wall that originally couldn’t be jumped was instantly climbed through the usage of the Ninja class’s special skill.

That’s cheating!!!

That was what Pan Lin wanted to shout. The surprises from the unspecialized still gave off a feeling of cheating even after an entire regular season. Everyone’s thought process was different from Ye Xiu’s. They needed to spend a certain amount of time and effort to understand what an unspecialized could do. As a result, when they saw Ye Xiu’s Lord Grim in a match, they would constantly think “why didn’t I think of that?”

The cameraman was also in a fluster. He wasn’t sure which first-person perspective he should look at to best display this suddenness. Should he use Ye Xiu’s hunter-like view to show his sharpness? Or should he use Song Xiao’s confused-prey view to show helplessness?

There was no time to think carefully. The camera instinctively shifted to a viewpoint.

Song Xiao’s perspective.

Receding Tides was moving.

Then, a grenade suddenly appeared from above and dropped in front of him.

Too awesome!

The cameraman cried out in his heart. Song Xiao’s perspective had given this grenade highlight clip. From above to below, the image of the grenade grew larger as Receding Tides moved. Everything was quiet as the grenade fell. It was as if the scene was static.

If only it could be in slo-mo... the cameraman was still obsessed with the shot.

Bang!

The grenade exploded, and Lord Grim dropped from the sky.

Roll, roll, roll.

Song Xiao’s Receding Tides rolled backwards three times and then shot a Qi Bullet.

The spectators all felt frightened seeing this sudden ambush. However, Song Xiao himself was as calm as ever. He did react promptly and appropriately.

Three rolls backwards pull the distance between Receding Tides and Lord Grim, and then a Qi Bullet at the slightest opening.

“Beautiful!” Pan Lin cried out.

Ye Xiu’s ambush had been beautiful, but Song Xiao’s response was too. This level of play was truly deserving of the playoffs. It was just the first exchange, and Pan Lin felt like it was worthy of the ticket price. Unfortunately, he didn’t have time to praise this moment because there was still a battle underway.

The Qi Bullet flew out.

Lord Grim didn’t dodge it though, and tanked the hit to stay on the offense.

“Even if it’s the group arena, sometimes it’s necessary to show a tough display!” Li Yibo praised.

By tanking the hit, Ye Xiu maintained the initiative. But because of Song Xiao’s calm response, the ambush didn’t deal too much harm. The battle had suddenly shifted to a direct confrontation.

“An ambush doesn’t seem to be a good choice against a player with strong mental fortitude like Song Xiao,” Pan Lin said.

“Ye Xiu was at least able to gain the initiative through it,” Li Yibo said.

No one would have any objections to that. In a direct confrontation, Lord Grim would be attacking 70% of the time.

“But it can’t be said that Song Xiao is at a disadvantage,” Pan Lin said.

Song Xiao was 70% defending, 30% attacking. Yes, he seemed to be a bit on the backfoot, but his rhythm was steady.

“Such a steady defensive counterattack playstyle is Blue Rain’s style,” Li Yibo said.

The healer character exemplified the team’s style to a certain extent. Of the eight playoff teams, Samsara, Tyranny, Happy, Thunderclap, and Hundred Blossoms all had Clerics as their healers, a show of their overall offense-oriented playstyles. As for the other three teams, Tiny Herb had two healers, an exception. Then, there was Blue Rain and 301, who had Paladins as healers. And these two teams leaned towards defense.

Especially Blue Rain.

Team Blue Rain was a paragon of a defensive counterattack team.

Defend while waiting for mistakes and capitalizing on them.

This was their team’s playstyle, which eventually became many of the styles of the players on the team. To be a part of Blue Rain’s main roster, not having beautiful defensive play was extremely difficult.

As a defense-heavy style, being on the passive side was normal because you were intentionally giving the the opponents space. As a result, while it looked like Song Xiao's offense looked rather weak, Pan Lin and Li Yibo didn't think it was mark of him being at a disadvantage. It was just how he played.

So they waited.

Defensive counterattack. The high point was the counterattack. Opportunities were fleeting. Once grasped, it couldn't be let go. That instant required explosiveness and efficiency. For a defensive counterattack playstyle, defense needed to be steady and slow, while the counterattack needed to be fast and fierce.

Everyone stared at the screen. The Happy fans listening to the commentators were held in suspense.

Song Xiao wasn't a stand-out existence during the regular season. His numbers were so-so, but everyone knew he was formidable during playoffs. He wasn't an easy opponent. As a result, even if Ye Xiu was the King of Duels in the regular season, everyone still felt worried.

Straight Punch, Knock Back, Grenade, Shining Cut, Double Stab, Ghost Slash, Floating Bullet...

Skills after skill was released through Lord Grim's ever-changing Myriad Manifestations Umbrella. His speed was so fast that the viewers couldn't even clearly distinguish what forms his umbrella were in. A skill came out, and then the umbrella transformed into a different form.

Without a pause.

The Myriad Manifestations Umbrella never stayed in the same form for more than two seconds.

Bang!

A falling Flower Palm suddenly struck Receding Tides, sending him flying backwards.

"Ah!" Pan Lin cried out in astonishment. The equilibrium had been been broken by the palm.

"Ye Xiu's broken through Song Xiao's defense!" Li Yibo shouted.

The Myriad Manifestations Umbrella continued transforming non-stop, but this time, the rate of hits landing on Receding Tides had increased.

"In the end, Song Xiao isn't able to hold on. Let's see if he can turn this around," Pan Lin said.

They still had confidence in Song Xiao because no matter what, this player wouldn't panic. He had the mental fortitude necessary to make a comeback.

So they waited.

Before, it had been a defensive counterattack style. Now, it had turned into a get-beat-up counterattack style.

But Lord Grim's offense continued to pour out relentlessly.

As a result, Receding Tides took even heavier beatings.

The expressions of those waiting for a reversal gradually started to turn strange.

“This... is he going to get taken out in one combo?” Pan Lin started questioning. Their hopes for Song Xiao seemed to have disappeared.

“Ambush to start, suppression with attacks, offense breaking defense, one combo kill,” Li Yibo summed up the battle with twelve words.

The so-called defensive counterattack playstyle. So we’ve seen the defense and the get-beat-up part, where’s the counterattack?

“Is he not able to find an opening to counterattack?” Pan Lin was still thinking about it.

Chapter 1393: Eyes Are Blurry

Everyone held hope for Song Xiao because he never panicked, because he always performed spectacularly during critical moments.

But this time? Ever since Ye Xiu’s Lord Grim pierced through his defenses, Song Xiao failed to successfully get them back up. If it was said that he had deliberately left openings in his defense looking for a counterattack, then right now he was purely focused on resisting his opponent’s attacks; he was playing on the defensive to survive.

However, even in this sort of situation, players proficient in defense could still find ways to break through the opponent’s offense and seize opportunities to turn the tides.

Song Xiao was a calm player and was also exceptional at defense, which was why unlike other players who were overwhelmed by the Unspecialized Blitz during the regular season, people felt like he definitely wouldn’t lose like them.

But from the looks of it, they shouldn’t hold any such expectations. Song Xiao was being suppressed just like every other player. Receding Tides was in dire straits. As for Song Xiao’s current state of mind, no one knew.

“He only has 10% health left,” Pan Lin hadn’t given up. He hoped to see a sudden reversal at the final moment. But then he looked at Lord Grim’s health and despaired.

73%.

Lord Grim still had so much health left. Song Xiao’s playoffs opening was starting off unlucky. As soon as he left the door, he met a brick wall.

It’s not going to just end like this, is it? Some were muttering in their hearts. In particular, the Team Blue Rain fans had confidence in Song Xiao, because Song Xiao never let them down at the crucial moments.

But... there’s a first time for everything. In the end, Song Xiao had his first failed performance when it mattered.

Loss.

70%. Lord Grim’s health halted here when Song Xiao’s Receding Tides fell.

The stadium applauded to Ye Xiu, of course. Some brave young fellows were even so bold to shout “1v5!”

Song Xiao walked out from the player booth on stage. The broadcast zoomed in on his face, but there didn’t really seem to be any particular expression on it.

“Song Xiao’s performance today is a bit disappointing!” Pan Lin sighed.

“Or perhaps our expectations for him were too high,” Li Yibo said, “Song Xiao’s technical skill isn’t considered anything outstanding, but rather it’s because of his exceptional mental fortitude that he’s able to perform beyond his usual skill level during key moments like the playoffs. On the other hand, other players get nervous and might become too cautious, leading to a decrease in their level of play. One side plays worse, while the other side plays better. As a result, it’s not hard to understand why Song Xiao always seems to play spectacularly in the playoffs. Unfortunately, his opponent this time was...”

“Saying Ye Xiu gets nervous in a playoffs match sounds more like a joke, doesn’t it?” Li Yibo said.

“Yeah,” Pan Lin confirmed.

“So Ye Xiu dominating him isn’t anything unexpected. If Song Xiao’s opponent had been a Happy rookie, perhaps things may have turned out differently,” Li Yibo said.

“It looks like Blue Rain didn’t expect Ye Xiu to appear first even in the playoffs. Their original idea was probably not to have Song Xiao encounter Ye Xiu,” Pan Lin analyzed.

“Yeah, let’s see who Blue Rain’s second player is,” Li Yibo started paying attention to the big screen. The playoffs was set up to always be suspenseful. It wasn’t like the regular season’s group arena, where the two team’s lineup would be listed all at once before the three players went onto the stage. The playoff’s five-player group arena was done one at a time. Before it was time, no one besides the player’s respective team would know who would be up next.

Lu Hanwen, Blade Master, Flowing Cloud.

Finally, the big screen displayed the name of Team Blue Rain’s next player.

“Uh, this...” Li Yibo wanted to say something but then hesitated. Lu Hanwen was still the Alliance’s youngest player, but he had already been a part of the main roster for two years, entering All-Stars both years. In his first season at just fourteen years of age, it was because of his mistake that the team lost.

Team Blue Rain’s method of training Lu Hanwen was too unrestrained. Nowadays, no team would throw their rookie out onto the battlefield to play around and figure out things for himself. Everyone trained their rookies methodically step by step. Quite a few people expressed their worries for how Team Blue Rain was treating Lu Hanwen.

When rookies first entered the Alliance, they needed time to get used to the intensity and pace of the professional circle. Many talented youths were able to immediately adapt and shine as soon as they stepped onto the stage, with all sorts of awards suddenly being thrown at them.

But what rookies never knew was that what they were facing wasn’t the true professional scene. Because they were a newcomer, neither they nor the pro scene was familiar with them. And once they started shining, the pro scene would notice them, and the other opposing teams would make

preparations to target them. It was only at this moment would the rookies truly be facing the pro scene; teams would use anything at their disposal for the sake of winning.

Countless rookies crashed into this iron wall, leaving their heads broken and bloody. And this was the so-called Rookie's Block. Many of the current Gods had hit this wall before.

They had broken past it, but numerous talented players disappeared into nothing after hitting this wall. The more massive the blow, the greater the pressure, the more unfavorable it was for the rookie's growth.

In many people's eyes, Blue Rain's Lu Hanwen had fallen into such a predicament. And to no one's surprise, once the teams started familiarizing themselves with him, his performance dwindled. However, Lu Hanwen never fell into low spirits. He continued to work hard. It was as if he had just entered the Alliance. He continued to preserve that endless reserve of energy.

Dwindling performance? A mistake dragging down the rest of the team?

Lu Hanwen had experienced and suffered through them all. However, his enthusiasm never wavered. He was true youth filled with boundless spirit. His heart was filled with sunshine without a single bit of haze.

Blue Rain had used the method most suitable for him. He didn't need to be protected. He could face setbacks and crash to the ground heavily, but he would always quickly climb back up, stumbling until the day he flew.

"Coach Li, what are your thoughts on this matchup?" Pan Lin saw that Li Yibo seemed to want to say something and switched the conversation to him.

"Ye Xiu is experienced. Lu Hanwen is driven. It's going to be an exciting match," Li Yibo smiled.

Pan Lin guessed that this wasn't what Li Yibo had originally wanted to say, but it wouldn't be good to press him on air. He could only continue with a brief introduction of Lu Hanwen's situation as he watched the young player get up from his seat and head to the stage.

"This Lu Hanwen has a big heart!" Pan Lin suddenly said, when he saw Lu Hanwen cross Song Xiao.

"Yes, compared to skill, the heart is much more difficult to train. Lu Hanwen is only a young kid. How rare," Li Yibo said.

"Blue Rain's two players are talking with each other. Is Song Xiao passing on the experience he had just gained from this match?" Pan Lin guessed.

"Blue Rain should have that knowledge way beforehand!" Li Yibo remarked. After all, Blue Rain and Happy had fought against each other twice in the regular season already.

"Perhaps a new discovery?" As Pan Lin said these words, Song Xiao and Lu Hanwen parted. Lu Hanwen went onto the stage, while Song Xiao returned to his seat.

"Is he really hard to fight?" Huang Shaotian asked.

"My eyes went blurry," Song Xiao got to his seat and shut his eyes.

"Blurry?"

“That umbrella changes forms again and again and again non-stop. I really can’t bear it,” Song Xiao said.

Everyone in Blue Rain looked at each other. When they prepped for this match against Happy, Ye Xiu and his unspecialized were obviously a huge focus, but they hadn’t prepared for something like this.

“What is this?” Blue Rain’s Spitfire, Zeng Xuan, sighed. Spitfires could be considered as the best at interfering with the opponent’s line of sight. Others might not be able to reach the apex and emulate Zhang Jiale’s Hundred Blossoms style, but it had become a commonly utilized Spitfire technique.

Ye Xiu’s technique was different from theirs though. They simply used visual effects, but Ye Xiu directly made visual attacks! Making someone’s eyes go blurry, that was the effect of Flash Bullet!

“What did you say to Lu Hanwen?” Yu Wezhou asked Song Xiao.

“I told him to try to cut in from the side or circle to the back. Try not to fight face to face. Doing so is truly too disgusting. Truly. You guys should try when you have the chance,” Song Xiao said.

Yu Wenzhou didn’t ask any further and watched as Lu Hanwen went into Blue Rain’s player booth. Then, the characters loaded in. Flowing Cloud and Lord Grim entered the map.

Lu Hanwen obviously wasn’t the type to go around in circles. Flowing Cloud went directly towards the center. As for Ye Xiu? He once again took a roundabout path, a different route than last time too. Previously, he had Lord Grim go to the left, this time he changed it to the right.

“Playing dirty again!” Huang Shaotian ground his teeth. He was a bit nervous too. He knew of Lu Hanwen’s style better than others. Lu Hanwen wasn’t good at dealing with dirty play. An ordinary level of dirty wasn’t a big deal, but Ye Xiu’s dirtiness, on the other hand, was on another level.

“Lu Hanwen is taking the straight path, while Ye Xiu is taking a roundabout route,” Pan Lin explained the opening.

“Ye Xiu seems to be taking it at a medium pace! It doesn’t seem like he plans on rushing for a position,” Li Yibo commented on Lord Grim’s movement speed.

“Where is he planning to mount a sneak attack from this time?” Pan Lin said. Ye Xiu’s strategic movement wasn’t completely dirty. He didn’t hide, attack, retreat, harass, retreat, harass, and annoy his opponents to death. Most of the time, he would launch a sneak attack to gain the initiative and then keep fighting face to face. However, this was the group arena. The less health lost the better. Under these circumstances, it wasn’t impossible that he would play completely dirty. The Glory Textbook. No one believed that there was no style Ye Xiu could not play.

Would he play dirty?

Everyone stared at Lord Grim’s unhurried movement and thought quietly to themselves.

Chapter 1394: Ineffective to Effective

Lord Grim and Flowing Cloud took their own paths. Neither side was facing each other but from the omniscient view of the spectators, it could be seen that the two characters were closing in on each other, even if there was stuff between them.

Lu Hanwen's Flowing Cloud moved in a straight line and reached the center of the map first. Seeing that his opponent wasn't within sight, he didn't hesitate and continued charging forward.

"Wow, Lu Hanwen is very decisive!" Pan Lin was pleasantly surprised.

"Oh, this way Ye Xiu won't be able to find a place in the center of the map to mount a sneak attack. Lu Hanwen's Flowing Cloud has already left!" Li Yibo said.

"Is this the advice Song Xiao gave? It's simple, but effective!" Pan Lin said.

With just these few words, Flowing Cloud had already crossed through the center of the map towards Lord Grim's spawn point.

"But what's Lu Hanwen going to do next? He's not hoping that he'll find Lord Grim at the spawn point, is he?" Pan Lin questioned.

"Lu Hanwen should have a better understanding of this map from the first fight. I'm guessing his plans are based on this understanding. Or perhaps, someone gave him some pointers," Li Yibo said.

"Song Xiao?" Pan Lin looked at Flowing Cloud's movements.

"Song Xiao may have played on this map, but his understanding might not be better than the players off-stage," Li Yibo said.

"Yu Wenzhou!" Pan Lin realized. Why would the off-stage players have an easier time grasping the map? Because they had spectator control, allowing them to get a full view of the map or cut to different perspectives. This control gave them a much more complete picture than what the broadcast could give. Song Xiao had never traversed to Lord Grim's spawn point, however, those off-stage could see the terrain Lord Grim passed through and his spawn point via their spectator view.

Team Blue Rain obviously wasn't very familiar with the map chosen by Team Happy, but a tactics expert like Yu Wenzhou could easily find numerous strategical points from the map in this amount of time. What areas should be avoided, what areas could be utilized, the following Blue Rain players could already start reflecting on how to take advantage of these points. Perhaps Lu Hanwen had been given a suggestion by Yu Wenzhou.

"Let's see what he'll do!" Pan Lin suddenly became excited. But at this moment, Lord Grim suddenly changed directions.

Because he was taking a roundabout route, Lord Grim hadn't reached the center yet. Even so, he suddenly turned left, making his way towards the path to the center.

"This is!" Pan Lin yelled. For a moment, he couldn't figure out Lord Grim's goal. Li Yibo was also thinking about Lord Grim's decision. After awhile, it looked like he was planning on charging out from the right flank to meet with Flowing Cloud.

"No way! Switch to Ye Xiu's perspective!" Li Yibo shouted.

The camera immediately switched views. The scenery was rapidly changing. Lord Grim was moving very fast, traversing through the map with great familiarity. Not far from his position, Lu Hanwen's Flowing Cloud was following the main central path towards the south.

Slide Kick!

Lord Grim suddenly did a Slide Kick, not as an attack but as a way to move at a low height. He slid across the ground through the gaps of several thick tree branches.

Jumping over the tree branches or circling around them were possible options, but Ye Xiu choosing to use a skill instead wasn't just to look cool.

Lord Grim and Flowing Cloud were very close. Everyone felt like the two would soon be within each other's sights.

But after the Slide Kick, Lord Grim immediately hugged the ground.

The camera reacted quickly this time. With a snap, the perspectives of both players were shown simultaneously on the big screen.

Lord Grim hugged the ground as he moved, while from Lu Hanwen's perspective, there was no one in sight.

He's hidden himself!

Everyone gasped in surprise. Then, they saw Lord Grim roll, without standing up, to behind a shrub.

Nothing abnormal could be seen from Lu Hanwen's perspective, but Ye Xiu's Lord Grim had quietly approached him.

There was no time to reflect on this scene though.

Lu Hanwen's Flowing Cloud continued to dash forward. From the bush Lord Grim was hiding behind, the sound of footsteps could be heard. Everyone in the stadium could hear it, let alone Ye Xiu.

Just as Flowing Cloud passed by the bush, Lord Grim jumped out.

Lord Grim hopped over the bush instead of leaping through so that he wouldn't be heard.

The Myriad Manifestations Umbrella also jumped out, transforming into a spear.

Dragon Tooth!

A back attack against Flowing Cloud.

Whoosh! Tap!

Two sounds rang out simultaneously.

The sound effect that came with Dragon Tooth could not be eliminated by player control, but when Lord Grim let out the Dragon Tooth, the sound effect coincided with the Flowing Cloud's footstep.

Was it a coincidence?

Or was it skill?

There was no time to analyze it. The two sounds were different, neither was covering up the other. But because of the mix between footstep and skill, Lu Hanwen reacted a beat slow.

Pu!

This sound was incomparably clear. Flowing Cloud's back had been pierced through by Lord Grim's spear.

Dragon Tooth inflicted a Stun. A follow-up combo didn't need to be said. After being struck in the back, Flowing Cloud's health rapidly fell.

"Lord Grim's attack power must have been improved," Li Yibo didn't make this comment for nothing. Even though he couldn't see the exact numbers, he was confident in what he had said.

Pan Lin didn't follow up. Li Yibo had said these words before! Why would you repeat yourself? His equipment are all Level 80. It would be weird if his attack power didn't improve, can't you say anything meaningful?

"Lu Hanwen's on the defensive!" Pan Lin described the state of the fight.

"Who would have thought Ye Xiu would do something like that? Could he have seen through Lu Hanwen's intentions?" Li Yibo said. The two sides had started fighting. There was no way to switch perspectives to analyze Ye Xiu's previous string of movements.

"It's not going to be a one hit to death, is it..." The combo had only just started, and Pan Lin was worried. Although Lu Hanwen had been voted into All-Stars twice, which made it seem like he was better than Song Xiao, in terms of emotional control in a match, how could this young player compare to Song Xiao, the player nicknamed Mister Clutch?

Even Song Xiao had been crushed in a direct confrontation by Ye Xiu, now that Lu Hanwen had been attacked from the back, turning the situation around would probably be even more difficult, no?

In the blink of an eye, 15% of Flowing Cloud's health had been taken away. A back attack increased the damage by a considerable 20%. Assassins had a class advancement skill "Art of Assassination" buff, which buffed that number to 40%. Unfortunately, class advancement and awakening skills could not be attached to a weapon.

"I hope Lu Hanwen can stay calm and search for opportunities to fight back," Pan Lin continued.

Fast!

This was the impression Lu Hanwen got from the fight. From the first Dragon Tooth to now, he had lost 15% of his health. The unspecialized didn't have class proficiency or armor proficiency, so their stats couldn't compare to real class. Plus, their skills were low-level, so their damage wasn't high. That was the objective opinion towards the unspecialized. But Flowing Cloud had just lost 15% of his health in an instant, low damage? Then use speed to make up for it! Lu Hanwen could tell how closely linked the attacks were. He didn't know how an unspecialized could attack so fast. Did his attacks not have start-up and end animations? Was it his Myriad Manifestations Umbrella was transforming again and again?

Lu Hanwen couldn't tell. He was trying his hardest, but Ye Xiu was more experienced. He kept adjusting his position, so Lord Grim was behind him.

It wasn't Vanishing Step, but it was the same reason.

But in this case, he didn't need to be troubled over his eyes blurring.

This energetic and hopeful youth could still find good points in this situation. Even if these good points had no value, it still made him feel gratified.

Now, he needed to find a way to break out of this predicament.

Lu Hanwen didn't panic, although he wasn't that calm either. He had courage though, the courage to try. Failure after failure, he would scratch his head and then try again!

Bang bang bang!

Flowing Cloud was using his sword too, but some of his attacks looked pretty poor from the lens of an expert. It was as if he was panicking without any thought behind his attacks, hoping to luck his way out.

"This sort of recklessness probably isn't going to work on Ye Xiu, is it?" Li Yibo said.

You can do it!

Many people were cheering for Lu Hanwen, especially Blue Rain's fans.

Although it looked like he was just randomly doing things, it wasn't necessarily that there was no thought behind his attacks. Lu Hanwen was at the very least never doing the same thing twice. In other words, what looked brainless wasn't actually brainless. He was testing different methods. He couldn't think of any certain-success methods, so he could only gamble on the probable ones.

If one didn't work, he would try again. If that didn't work, then a different one. Another failure? Again...

Bang bang bang bang...

The "brainless" Lu Hanwen continued to struggle, sword light dancing randomly.

"Good child!" Huang Shaotian praised.

Yu Wenzhou chuckled, but didn't say anything.

The perceiving Blue Rain players could see it. Lu Hanwen's attempts might have carried a lot of energy, but none of them succeeded. However, his constant attempts may have failed again and again, but they were taking a toll on Ye Xiu. And this effect, through Lu Hanwen's brave tries, was slowly accumulating and expanding.

Ye Xiu was trying hard to get rid of it, but Huang Shaotian and Yu Wenzhou could see that he wasn't able to completely eliminate it.

Having Lord Grim keep up this insanely fast offense was extremely difficult in itself. It required extraordinary precision. Lu Hanwen's ineffective methods were converging into a whole, transforming into what could be an effective solution.

Chapter 1395: There's Still a Gap

Bang!

Flowing Cloud's Silver weapon, the greatsword Flame Shadow, clashed against the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella with a dull sound.

Meteor Form!

The fastest of the powerful Level 75 skills was as quick as lightning, even when used by Flowing Cloud, who had a slow attack speed. Still, Lord Grim managed to parry the attack.

"Oh, what a shame. If Flowing Cloud were using a tachi or a lightsaber instead of a greatsword, that attack definitely would have hit," Li Yibo sighed. But to his surprise, after this attack, although Lord Grim managed to parry it with his umbrella, his body was still pushed backward. The Myriad Manifestations Umbrella was actually jolted to the side.

"This..." Li Yibo was shocked. Even though Meteor Form was a Level 75 skill, this skill prioritized speed and involved the blade moving light and fast. In terms of attack priority, it wasn't very strong. Lord Grim might not have high-level skills, but he should have still been able to parry it. But Lord Grim's movement right now made it look like he hadn't been able to withstand the impact of this attack at all.

Purposefully faking an opening?

Just as this thought flashed through Li Yibo's mind, he saw Flowing Cloud unleash another Headwind Strike. The sword tip swung in a circle, and Lord Grim's chest spurted blood.

"Beautiful!" Pan Lin was already shouting. Lu Hanwen finally broke through Ye Xiu's crazy attacks and successfully counterattacked within the span of one move.

Sword attacks came out one after another, whistling through the air. Li Yibo watched a few attacks, and suddenly reached a realization.

"Even though Flowing Cloud doesn't have a high attack speed, the greatsword gives his skills greater impact. That Meteor Form just now, if he'd been using a tachi or a lightsaber then Lord Grim might have been able to parry it, but because it's a greatsword, his skill priority wasn't high enough, so it was directly knocked aside," said Li Yibo.

"This is a very good opportunity! Hopefully Lu Hanwen can take advantage of it," Pan Lin shouted.

In an instant, the attacker and defender had switched roles. But Flowing Cloud's combo had only reached the sixth attack, an Upwards Slash, when Lord Grim jumped into the air. He took the Upwards Slash and flew even higher, then raised the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella over his head. Pa pa pa, the umbrella folded and lengthened, the flaps beginning to hum and spin. Instantly, Lord Grim was pulled to the side.

Rising Dragon Slash!

Lu Hanwen hurriedly controlled Flowing Cloud to use an attack that would hit Lord Grim in the air, but he was too slow. The sword light flashed right by Lord Grim's body. But Lu Hanwen barely had time to feel regret when the humming noise from Lord Grim's umbrella suddenly stopped, and Lord Grim was already extending his right leg...

Eagle Stamp!

Bam bam bam bam.

Four consecutive kicks mercilessly fell upon Flowing Cloud's body, and the priority of his Rising Dragon Slash had long since expired. He'd originally wanted to use a Falling Light Blade to get away, but he was still too slow, and Lord Grim stamped down upon him.

Shing! Lord Grim pulled out the tachi from his Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, Falling Light Blade! Lu Hanwen hadn't been fast enough to use it, but Ye Xiu now very leisurely used it. The tip of the sword pressed against Flowing Cloud's throat, and they continued to fall.

The entire audience was stunned.

This reaction, this combo...

Lu Hanwen had only just broken through and begun a counterattack! The Happy fans live at the stadium hadn't even had time to begin worrying about Ye Xiu when this guy recovered the situation. In comparison, Blue Rain's players only made their fans worry more.

Bang...

Because of the Falling Light Blade, Flowing Cloud was stuck and couldn't escape. Just like that, he was crushed against the ground, sending up a cloud of dust. Punisher, Earthquake Sword, Lord Grim used another flurry of ground attacks against the already-fallen Flowing Cloud. Lu Hanwen was once again at the disadvantage.

"Aw, Hanwen didn't grasp it well!" Huang Shaotian sighed. He was also a Blade Master player, so he had quite a right to speak about the judgments made in that moment. He felt that that opportunity had been created extremely well, and if it had been him, there was no way he would let the opponent get away after only six attacks in a combo.

"His attack was a bit slow," Yu Wenzhou said.

"Mm... The equipment would have a bit of effect on that, but the greatsword should have been enough to deal with that situation. Hanwen didn't have good control, the timing wasn't accurate enough," said Huang Shaotian.

"Or you could say, Ye Xiu's timing was simply too accurate," said Yu Wenzhou.

Huang Shaotian paused and realized, indeed, that was the case. The attack rhythm of the unspecialized Lord Grim was extremely rapid, and Ye Xiu's controls were still so accurate. Lu Hanwen's Flowing Cloud was a greatsword Blade Master. It was hard enough for slow to keep up with fast rhythm, and because the opponent was Ye Xiu, the difficulty was only greater.

“Find another opportunity, kid! Don’t give that guy another chance to show off!” Huang Shaotian said, grinding his teeth.

Ah, too bad!

Lu Hanwen had only managed six attacks before Ye Xiu took back the initiative, so of course he was disappointed. He was positive, he was optimistic, but he wouldn’t forget scars instantly. As a pro player, he couldn’t afford to forget scars so easily, because every scar was a lesson, something that led to growth. Lu Hanwen’s personality didn’t help him forget scars; it allowed him to actively face his scars, never fleeing.

Maybe I could’ve done this or that instead, and it would’ve turned out better...

Lu Hanwen, just like this, grew up through these “ifs” and “maybes.” From mistakes and failures, he accumulated experience nonstop. But this kind of growth didn’t happen overnight; making a mistake once didn’t guarantee that it could immediately be avoided next time. After all, with Lu Hanwen’s current skill level, the mistakes he made wouldn’t be those particularly obvious kinds of mistakes. Sometimes, it would be a problem of small, inadvertent habits, and it would require a lot of time to pick them out and fix them.

Over these two years, Lu Hanwen’s growth had been clear to see. He had grown so much since he entered the Alliance, but the opponent in front of him now...

Lu Hanwen sighed deeply.

By the time he’d entered the Alliance, this God in front of him had already become a legend. He never would have thought that he’d have the chance to meet him in-game. That summer, Lu Hanwen had followed Blue Brook Guild to train in-game, and that summer he had accumulated numerous painful failures.

An extremely difficult opponent, possibly even more difficult than Senior Shaotian.

At that time, Lu Hanwen had already felt it, and that had only been in-game, where the two of them hadn’t had too many face-to-face exchanges. At first, he’d only heard from Blue River, the guild worker bringing him along, about how this person stirred up storms and reaped the profits. Afterwards, the exchanges in-game had only verified Blue River’s words. Lu Hanwen clearly remembered how even he, someone who had clearly come to support Blue Brook Guild and fight Lord Grim, had ultimately become that guy’s helper in the process of stealing the Boss.

He’s too good!

Lu Hanwen could only think this. In terms of skill and technique, he could still work hard to improve, but those things like strategic layout and maneuvering? It was like their captain Yu Wenzhou.

Lu Hanwen could view Huang Shaotian as the goal he was chasing after, even the target that he wanted to surpass, but Captain Yu Wenzhou... forget it! How could he ever match that kind of guy? Lu Hanwen never believed that he had that kind of mind.

Their in-game struggles allowed Lu Hanwen to learn Ye Xiu's skill in this area, and this alone was already breathtaking. And then Happy entered the Alliance, this legendary God returned to the professional stage, and then, 37 consecutive individual wins.

How could this kind of person be beaten?

Whether in terms of strategy or technique, he still just couldn't compare?

Compared to Ye Xiu, Lu Hanwen could only draw this sad conclusion. He was brave, he was fearless, but he could recognize skill. Yet even when recognizing this huge gap between himself and Ye Xiu, he could still battle courageously.

Lu Hanwen was very clear on this point. As for whether or not he could close this gap, Lu Hanwen didn't think about it too hard. Victory wasn't simply determined by such a gap. Lu Hanwen, as well as most of those who were raised in Blue Rain, held this belief in his heart: A gap isn't scary. A gap doesn't determine everything!

Because they had a captain called Yu Wenzhou. Because their captain had a weakness that was fatal for most pro players.

But Yu Wenzhou frequently used his situation to tell Blue Rain's team members and Blue Rain's trainees who dreamed of becoming pro players: A gap isn't scary. What's scary is giving up because of a gap.

"Even someone like me hasn't given up – what reason do you have?"

Even now, Lu Hanwen still remembered the words that Yu Wenzhou had once said to the trainees at training camp. Although he was very young, he could understand this relatively straightforward point. And Yu Wenzhou's experience of walking through Blue Rain's training camp was even more of a real, living motivation for all of them.

In the training camp, they wouldn't give up on their dreams; on the battlefield, they wouldn't give up on victory.

They saw the gap, but they wouldn't shrink from the gap.

Continue on like this!

Facing a gap, Lu Hanwen doubled down on his determination. Win or lose, he wouldn't think about the outcome too much. He just knew that he had to put his full effort in to do everything he could.

These efforts weren't meaningless, because this was the group arena. This was a team project. Whatever health and mana of Lord Grim's that he could deplete, the next Blue Rain player would feel the benefits. This would become the basis of their victory.

So, fight hard!

"Lu Hanwen really has a great attitude. Even though Ye Xiu has completely suppressed him, he isn't retreating or getting discouraged at all," Li Yibo praised.

"He definitely has a bright future ahead of him," Pan Lin said, moved.

Although the two praised him freely, the fact that they were talking about his future made it clear that right now, they didn't think Lu Hanwen would win.

44%!

When Lu Hanwen's Flowing Cloud fell, this was how much health Lord Grim had left. Blue Rain had already sent up two players, but they had only knocked away a little more than half of Ye Xiu's health.

"Happy is already in a two-point lead," Pan Lin announced.

"1v2, and in the playoffs... Ye Xiu really deserves the title of King of Dueling this season. Just this kind of performance should be enough to silence the doubts that he only won so many consecutive victories because he hadn't met strong opponents. Ye Xiu had the ability to achieve victory at lesser cost to himself, but he didn't need to do so in individual battles," said Li Yibo.

"But if he wants to 1v3 right now, it looks like it'll be a bit difficult. Lord Grim lost a lot more mana than health," said Pan Lin.

"There's still 11%," said Li Yibo, after checking.

"Uh... this time, at least, he shouldn't be carrying mana-boosting equipment, right?" Pan Lin still clearly remembered the events of last year's Challenger League.

Chapter 1396: The Talkative Rhythm

Getting a useful amount of mana recovery wasn't something that could be accomplished with just one or two pieces of equipment. With the current stats of equipment, as limited by the maximum equipment level, a set of many pieces of equipment was needed. Lord Grim right now had many pieces of Level 80 Silver equipment, whose stats weren't visible, but for stats like mana or health recovery that had a visible effect over time, it could be directly seen whether or not they were present. On Lord Grim's body now, there didn't seem to be any such equipment.

And carrying an extra set of equipment into a match was something that hadn't been done for a long time. A set of equipment increased weight, which became a large burden on this high-level professional stage, especially since this was now the highest-level playoffs competition.

But Li Yibo didn't dare use common principles to draw conclusions.

Ye Xiu leading Team Happy to return to the professional scene, this was already so far out of everyone's expectations. Anything contrary to common expectations was possible. Perhaps the weight added by this set of equipment could be erased somehow by Ye Xiu's unspecialized Lord Grim?

Li Yibo didn't say anything. Everyone was waiting to see.

Lu Hanwen came offstage and returned to Blue Rain's player area.

In the first battle, Song Xiao had knocked away 30% of Lord Grim's health. In the second battle, based on his onstage performance, it had seemed that Lu Hanwen was doing better, but in the end he had only taken down 26% of Lord Grim's health, which was a little inferior to Song Xiao's performance.

From this it could be seen that the scene onstage and the actual numbers were two different things. It had looked like Song Xiao was taking a beating throughout the entire match, and he had ultimately fallen in a one-wave rush. But during this process, he had relied on his tenacious defense to wear away Ye Xiu by a significant amount. On the other hand, Lu Hanwen's aggressiveness was more apparent, and he'd actually found an opportunity to successfully counterattack, but ultimately, he hadn't worn down Ye Xiu as much as Song Xiao had.

However, Blue Rain's players didn't fuss over this point.

"You played well," said Captain Yu Wenzhou.

Lu Hanwen nodded, taking this simple sentence to heart. He knew that their captain never threw around these polite words just to comfort his teammates. Whether success or failure, victory or defeat, he would always be gentle and sincere. He wouldn't criticize harshly, nor would he protect them excessively.

So, even though he hadn't won, his performance was correct, was worthy of recognition. When he thought about this, Lu Hanwen's courage was suddenly refilled, and he almost felt like charging back to play another match against Ye Xiu.

"Of course this was impossible. All Lu Hanwen could do was turn toward Blue Rain's third player, who was already walking onstage, and holler: "Go Huang Shao!!"

Huang Shaotian heard it, but he didn't turn around. He simply waved his right hand, his index and middle fingers raised in the shape of "V" for victory.

"Ah, Team Blue Rain is already sending out Huang Shaotian as their third player!" Pan Lin said.

In the five-player group arena of the playoffs, simply winning the final victory wasn't enough. The key was to win more points by having more players left standing. So up until now, a common strategy was to place the ace player in the third or fourth spot, because if a victory was achieved then, that would guarantee two or three points. If, on the other hand, the ace player was fifth, then even if they won the final victory, they would only have one point. One point had much too small of an impact on the team round. The team competition was rarely fought until only one player remained.

"But the current situation can be seen as fairly unfavorable toward Blue Rain," said Li Yibo. The fact that he spoke so carefully, even though Happy was so far in the lead after completing a 1v2, only showed how cautious he was now.

Ye Xiu's Lord Grim still had 44% health, but only 11% mana remaining. This little mana definitely wasn't enough to kill an opponent like Huang Shaotian, so what would Ye Xiu do? Did he bring equipment, or would he use Wish Prayer?

But even if he did have Wish Prayer, it would only be at Level 1. With Lord Grim's Intelligence stat, he would probably only be able to recover around 10%. 21% mana, this still might not be enough to deal with Huang Shaotian, would it?

Still, Ye Xiu had already knocked down two opponents. At this point, everyone was already quite satisfied with his performance. For this round, any amount of Huang Shaotian's health that he managed to knock away would be considered a victory.

Huang Shaotian came onstage and entered the player booth. His character loaded in, and very soon, the third battle of the group arena began.

"I'm surprised you're up so soon. Fighting me, the pressure's pretty high, huh?" The moment the match began, Ye Xiu began to talk in the channel. The audience members watched as Lord Grim lifted his Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, surrounding himself with glowing blue light and chaotically-flying chanted runes. Indeed, he was using Wish Prayer. But ultimately, the mana-recovering equipment didn't make an appearance. It appeared that in the rhythm of a playoffs match, even Ye Xiu couldn't carry such a burden.

"I don't have much mana left, it should be easy for you to pick up this wallet!" Ye Xiu continued to speak.

"How come you're not talking? Since I saw it was you, I made extra sure to talk a bit more. What's wrong with you, did you get muted? Or are you so scared that you're all choked up?" Ye Xiu was still talking. But Ye Xiu was already on his third message sent, which everyone found strange. What was going on? Huang Shaotian wasn't saying anything, while Ye Xiu was blathering on. Had these two switched bodies or something?

"Holy f*ck you're so annoying!"

Just as everyone was growing confused, Huang Shaotian finally exploded.

"Who wants to talk to you? We're enemies right now, enemies! Understand?"

"You were so arrogant just now, defeating two of our people! Right now, are you getting mana-recovery equipment or doing some Wish Prayer or whatever? Whatever dirty tricks you have, bring it!"

In an instant, Huang Shaotian had already sent three messages in reply. Indeed, his rhythm here had surpassed Ye Xiu's.

"Oh, that's more like it. If you don't yell a few sentences, the whole atmosphere feels wrong," said Ye Xiu.

"Screw your atmosphere! Even if you want to do anything you don't have much mana left, so stop wasting time and hurry up and come out and die!"

"Be patient. As you wish, I'm recovering mana!" Ye Xiu said.

"As expected, dirty and shameless," said Huang Shaotian.

"Hehe, you're just jealous," Ye Xiu replied.

The cast time for Wish Prayer was long, as was the skill's duration, so Ye Xiu activated the skill at the very beginning. Huang Shaotian had essentially guessed that Ye Xiu would do this, so as soon as the match began, he had Troubling Rain fearlessly charge forward.

Even as the two people were playing seriously, they were also chatting away in the channel. The audience didn't know what to think. This was the high-stakes playoffs! In the two previous battles, who was in the mood for chatting? As expected of the super-God Ye Xiu, what a calm attitude for him to be able to chat with Huang Shaotian like this...

As everyone quietly reflected, those two were still going at it. Even though Wish Prayer was slow, it was still faster than Troubling Rain making his way toward Lord Grim. Happy hadn't chosen a small map for this group arena, perhaps for this reason exactly.

Finally, Wish Prayer was complete, and Lord Grim recovered 11% mana, putting him at 22%. With this one-fifth mana, Ye Xiu could probably casually wipe out two or three ordinary players. But against a pro player, then the outcome would depend. Huang Shaotian was a strong player, so almost no one had any hopes for Ye Xiu. Happy's supporters just hoped that he could chip away as much of Troubling Rain's health as he could. When Ye Xiu defeated Blue Rain's first player Song Xiao, someone had actually shouted for a 1v5, but right now, there weren't even people yelling for 1v3.

A yell for a 1v5 was immediately obvious as a joke, so no one would pay much attention upon hearing it. But to shout for a 1v3 right now? In theory, 22% mana was enough to defeat a character. But the opponent was Huang Shaotian! Shouting for a 1v3 now would just seem ignorant. The passionate fans now suddenly became very rational, and they didn't pull out unsuitable cheers.

After finishing Wish Prayer, Ye Xiu didn't control Lord Grim to walk directly forward. Like last round, he took the path to the right. This didn't surprise anyone. When starting a match at a disadvantage, especially when the opponent was such a strong player, it made sense to use more tactical thinking.

While Troubling Rain continued to charge, Lord Grim circled around to the right, and soon began to head directly toward the center road. When the audience saw this, they realized, this was an exact repeat of last round! Once again, Ye Xiu wanted to sneak directly behind the opponent and ambush them!

As expected.

This time, Ye Xiu had accurately calculated Troubling Rain's movement speed. When Lord Grim circled to the right and then cut back to the center, his rhythm was completely synced with Troubling Rain's footsteps. Of course, it wasn't so coincidental that he used the same bush as last time, but like before, there were plenty of places for Lord Grim to hide and wait to ambush.

Roll, Slide Kick, again with these low-movement skills. Soon, Lord Grim had made his way right next to the path.

However, the audience members could see from the live display screens that Huang Shaotian's camera view was currently locked onto the exact spot where Lord Grim was hidden.

The televised broadcast was a bit slower, but soon enough, they also displayed a split-screen featuring Huang Shaotian's camera view.

"Ah, Ye Xiu's ambush position has been discovered!" Pan Lin shouted.

"Blue Rain has enough understanding of the map now. Plus, Ye Xiu is repeating his strategy of last battle," said Li Yibo.

"Will he directly attack?" Pan Lin shouted. As soon as he said this, Troubling Rain halted in his steps.

Silence.

A sudden silence.

Earlier, Troubling Rain's footsteps had been pounding on the ground, and Ye Xiu was using that sound to anticipate his movement position. If Lord Grim poked his head up now, he would certainly be seen by Huang Shaotian.

But Huang Shaotian suddenly had his Troubling Rain to stop...

He's found me!

Ye Xiu immediately realized. Right now, he could pretty much judge where Troubling Rain's final step had taken him, but it was possible Huang Shaotian was already controlling Troubling Rain to small hop, roll, slow walk, or other such silent movements.

If he wasn't accurate in his judgment of position, then if he acted now, he would only lose the initiative. This wasn't what Ye Xiu wanted.

After Ye Xiu instantly and clearly organized his thoughts, his actions were extremely decisive.

Slide Kick!

Lord Grim moved low to the ground, and then rolled twice to the right. Ye Xiu was actually controlling Lord Grim to turn and move away.

Chapter 1397: Blue Rain's God

Silence, complete silence.

Neither player knew what the other was doing. Even listening carefully, there wasn't a whisper to hint at the other's presence.

Only the omniscient audience knew that both of their characters were moving.

Lord Grim rolled twice after a Slide Kick, swiftly leaving his hiding spot for another. As for Huang Shaotian's Troubling Rain? As Ye Xiu expected, he had merely slowed and rolled into a crouch, carefully approaching where Lord Grim had been hiding before.

Without any hesitation, sword light flashed, cutting through Lord Grim's previous hiding place.

Whoosh!

Lord Grim had originally settled next to a meter high mud wall. Troubling Rain had attacked with a Piercing Form.

This skill had very high priority, and sword light shot into the mud wall, tearing through it like paper and exposing the upper half of the blade on this side.

A miss. Huang Shaotian made a swift judgement. He immediately had Troubling Rain tug his sword out, but Ye Xiu's Lord Grim had already flashed out from the other side, sending a Laser Rifle his way.

Lord Grim couldn't get that far with a Slide Kick and it barely took Laser Rifle a blink to arrive. However, Huang Shaotian was facing his way, so he could clearly see Lord Grim's actions. No matter what, he couldn't leave his sword behind though, so Troubling Rain fell into a crouch.

Boom!

Half the Laser Rifle smacked into the wall, taking off a small chunk, and the other half shot directly over the wall, brushing right over Troubling Rain's head.

Laser Rifle didn't have the same force that Piercing Form did, and Lord Grim's Laser Rifle was only rank one. Being able to take off a small chunk of the wall was good enough.

Fwip!

Troubling Rain had already yanked out his Silver weapon Ice Rain by now and was hiding behind the wall.

Slide Kick!

On Ye Xiu's side, Lord Grim saw Troubling Rain crouch after he released the Laser Rifle, so he resolutely charged out. However, this was when the audience once again saw an important opportunity on the big screen.

On the screen showing Huang Shaotian's screen, after Ice Rain was pulled out of the wall, his view immediately went towards the small hole that Ice Rain had made. The hole was too small, so it was impossible to see anything clearly, but the moving shadows were clear enough.

Apart from Troubling Rain, wasn't the only other thing that can move Ye Xiu's Lord Grim?

Lord Grim executed another silent Slide Kick, but this time, Huang Shaotian caught the movement through the tiny hole he had made.

They were very close. Huang Shaotian didn't hesitate. Troubling Rain rolled to a stand at once, rolling right off the meter tall wall. Ice Rain's deep blue sword light stabbed down towards the bottom of the wall, but on this side of the wall, Lord Grim, Slide Kicking over, had raised his Myriad Manifestations Umbrella. The tip opened up, revealing the dark gun muzzle. As the deep blue sword light came down, light flashed from the muzzle and a bullet shot out.

Two strikes, a little out of synch. For a moment, it was impossible to figure out who's attack had hit first. Blood splashed from Lord Grim's shoulder, while a bullet found its home in Troubling Rain's side as he rolled sideways across the wall.

Lord Grim's Slide Kick had yet to finish, but that was when he suddenly stopped. He was already pressed to the ground, but after that strike, he became even more intimate with the ground.

Falling Blossom Form! A Level 75 knockdown skill.

It was an excellent follow up from Troubling Rain, but at this time, Troubling Rain had already been thrown into the air.

Floating Bullet! A Level 1 knock-up skill.

One was a Blade Master high-level skill, the other was a Spitfire novice skill. In that moment, the two executed a trade. In terms of damage, Falling Blossoms Form was far stronger than Floating Bullet, but

the final result was that one character was flat on the ground while the other flew into the air. It seemed like neither could do anything to the other in that moment.

However, it only looked like that.

Because Lord Grim wasn't Troubling Rain. He had ranged attacks.

Bang!

Lord Grim, still on the ground fired, another shot. From this perspective, the strike from Troubling Rain that pinned Lord Grim to the ground had given the latter to perfect angle to shoot from. If his Slide Kick had continued for another step or two, then it probably wouldn't be nearly as comfortable.

Another bullet flew.

Troubling Rain hadn't been tossed too high by the Floating Bullet. At this distance, for a ranged attack, it was far too close. At such a distance, the travel speed of their skills didn't even matter anymore, even if the skill Lord Grim was using was the relatively slow Stun Bullet.

Huang Shaotian adjusted Troubling Rain's position in the air, but in the end, he still failed to dodge this close ranged attack. His character froze in mid air, his adjustments futile. Three booms of cannonfire from down below, too close to dodge, not to mention that he was stunned right now, and three anti-tank missiles erupted against Troubling Rain one after the other. Flames and smoke bloomed in the sky, suspending Troubling Rain in mid air. By now, Lord Grim's knockdown debuff had worn off and a chain of bullets erupted from the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella's muzzle.

Gatling Gun! Ye Xiu attempted to continue juggling Troubling Rain in the air, and with Lord Grim back on his feet, he was free to chain even more attacks after closing in.

However, Ye Xiu's opponent was Huang Shaotian.

His character bore the title of Sword Saint, and his strength was recognized as one of the top in Glory.

As soon as the stun effect of the Stun Bullet passed, Troubling Rain moved.

Falling Light Blade!

Troubling Rain made himself plummet from the sky and Ye Xiu hurriedly adjusted Lord Grim's angle, bullets chasing after the Blade Master. Unfortunately, as soon as Troubling Rain readjusted his pose, he immediately switched to a different skill.

Guard!

Plink! Plink! Plink! Plink!

Silver weapon Ice Rain swept down horizontally in front of him, guarding against the hail of bullets. Bullets! It needn't be said what precise mechanics this required. However, Ye Xiu wasn't dead. After several bullets were blocked, he once again readjusted Lord Grim's angle. With a shift in sword light, his attack glanced away from Ice Rain's blade, but Ice Rain was already sweeping out, slicing a circle through the air.

Headwind Strike!

Troubling Rain's body spun like a drill, parallel to the ground, his sword stabbing through the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella's bullet rain, straight into Lord Grim.

Blood splattered, forming a circle in the air. Lord Grim's Gatling Gun stopped.

"Spectacular! Absolutely spectacular! As expected of Huang Shaotian! As expected of the Sword Saint!" Pan Lin cheered without a care in the world.

From a mere wall between the two, to their exchange, in this short period of time, they had unleashed a flurry of changing skills. In the end, Huang Shaotian's skilled bladework broke through Ye Xiu's close ranged bullet rain with a Headwind Strike!

Last round, Lu Hanwen had broken through Ye Xiu's offensive and successfully counterattacked using Headwind Strike. This time, Huang Shaotian had managed to overcome his passive stance and take the initiative with a Headwind Strike as well.

Then, Huang Shaotian displayed his array of Blade Master skills, more precise and experienced than Lu Hanwen.

Troubling Rain, still spinning in the air, didn't even bother landing. His bent legs kicked out, pushing off the mud wall behind him.

Meteor Form!

This was the fastest trick in a Blade Master's repertoire, and with the boost Troubling Rain gave himself from kicking off the wall, his body seemed to transform into a shooting star.

The deep blue sword light flashed at the front, drawing a blue streak that darted forth. Then, in the path that the blue light took, a dark red replaced it, blooming and spreading. It was the blood that this strike had drawn from Lord Grim.

"That's damn cool!" Pan Lin yelled. The bloody line that the blue light had drawn, the scene of it erupting in the air, it was so cool he was almost crying. Secretly, he promised himself that he would go back and replay this moment in slow motion a hundred times after the match.

"As expected of Huang Shaotian!" Li Yibo could only find this one sentence to express himself and display his shock in that moment.

The timing, the use of the environment, the mechanics, all of it, the top of the top.

This was Glory's top player.

And this match was a battle between two of the very top players of Glory.

After Ye Xiu successively took down two of Blue Rain's players, the atmosphere finally peaked again.

Though those two matches had Song Xiao's steady defense and Lu Hanwen's never-give-up enthusiasm, Ye Xiu's victory still seemed ever so matter of fact. It didn't create the tense atmosphere one expected from a playoffs match at all. Or at least, it seemed that way.

Yet now, Ye Xiu versus Huang Shaotian, Lord Grim versus Troubling Rain, this fast paced offense, the beautiful and dazzling action. This! This was a true battle between gods!

However, currently, it was Huang Shaotian who was performing beautifully, who had the advantage. This match was on Happy's grounds, so the atmosphere had its limits. It was Blue Rain's fans on the away team spectator stands that were cheering wildly.

Changing Spring, Blue River, Chilling Nightfall, Flying Brushstroke, Bound Boat, etc etc.

These were those responsible for managing Blue Brook guild. In the last steps of the season, they had come with their team to the battlefield. This was the benefits of the job, but at the same time, they were the ones who were responsible for leading the Blue Rain fans in their cheering.

"Huang Shao!!!" Blue Rain's fans bellowed under their lead. Changing Spring personally held the flag embroidered with Blue Rain's team logo, waving it swiftly through the air above their heads.

Blue River next to him was also very excited. He wasn't very loud, but his class ingame was the Blade Master. This was the class he loved, and Huang Shaotian was also his favorite player.

Right now, Huang Shaotian's opponent was Ye Xiu, the Lord Grim that had so much interaction with them ingame, that had tormented them until they coughed blood so many times.

Blue Brook Guild's members had been eager to see their team's pro players beat the other up for them. In the regular season, Blue Rain had won twice against Happy, which was great, but unfortunately, Ye Xiu hadn't lost a single round against them in the individual competition.

Then, in the playoffs, he destroyed two of their players upon coming up.

Changing Spring, Blue River and co had sat depressed in the stands. Could it be that not even their pro players could do anything about this guy?

But now, their core, their God Huang Shaotian was on the field. Although Blue Rain was two players down and Ye Xiu had wiped out two people in succession and was at a health disadvantage from the beginning of the third round, Huang Shaotian's spectacular performance had them vibrating with excitement and pride.

See that!?! That's Blue Rain's God. That's our God! Blue River thought proudly.

Chapter 1398: This Feeling

It had already been a year and a half since the new Level 75 skills had been implemented. They were no longer in the experimental stage of last season. By now, the pro players had already completely mastered these skills.

The four Level 75 Blade Master skills: Falling Blossom Form, Meteor Form, Piercing Form and Curving Wind Form had already become core skills in their offensives, influencing the entire system of their class playstyles.

The Level 75 mass update had given Happy many opportunities. For example, all those materials won in the battle for Level 75 Wild Bosses, using Orange equipment from the new update to close the gap in equipment quality between them and Excellent Era...

However, for Ye Xiu as an individual, the Level 75 mass update was a disadvantage.

Ye Xiu was known as the Glory Textbook, a master of all the classes. His experience was incomparably comprehensive. However, the update naturally would influence Glory's metagame. In a time like this, if one wanted to continue being a master of all, then they would need to carry out far more and far deeper research on the new material than others.

Ye Xiu had never gone out of his way to achieve this. His title was from the accumulation of his experience and skill throughout all these years, naturally allowing him to achieve this title. This had to do with a lot of factors, including how he was a part of the very first batch of Glory players, how he was always at the head of the development of techniques and styles in Glory, and how Glory had stopped at Level 70 for so long.

The Level 75 update unbalanced this situation.

Although with Ye Xiu's experience and knowledge he could easily come up with all sorts of ideas upon seeing the new Level 75 skills, he hadn't looked into it like pro players would with their preferred class. So, when this mass update occurred, a textbook like Ye Xiu would need some time to patch for the update.

That unmatched master of all would naturally crack a little during these patches.

However, this actually existed for all pro players. In building and refining their new combat system, each person would be met with all sorts of accidents and mistakes on the field.

This was because each person had to update their own Glory schema and this progress might not always be the same for each person, especially since players prioritized their own classes. As for the other classes, they merely had to observe the results of the research of others.

In the earliest times, all the experts would gather to discuss all manner of things and they would manage to bring a scientific air to the game. Since Ye Xiu had many creative and foundational ideas and achievements in all the classes, his Textbook title was set from then on.

However, as the Glory pro scene developed into the competitive scene it was now, there was less and less of a chance for these top players of Glory to sit down and simply chat about the update.

In these times, most people would prefer that what they managed to find out would never be known by any other, forever stay a secret weapon for the field.

Everything had become information that, if used well, could be the code needed to claim victory.

This competition had Glory's technique development growing ever the fiercer and more varied.

In the past, all the experts would come together to discuss, select, experiment, and come up with rather unified answers.

However, everyone walked their own path now, and tested each other's hypotheses in real battle. In the end, the techniques that resulted from this varied. As Blade Masters, Huang Shaotian's use of the Level 75 skills would be different from Tiny herb's Liu Xiaobie, or Samsara's Du Ming, or 301 Degrees' Gao Jie.

Everyone had their own ideas and techniques. A standardized path slowly ceased to exist.

Under these circumstances, it was naturally far harder to be a master of all classes.

Though Ye Xiu may not have aimed to and pursued such an advantage, under these circumstances, being a master of all classes didn't yield as much benefit as it could've.

Especially with the Level 75 skills morphing the entire system of skills.

Now, what he was facing was a class that had experienced a relatively large shift in the paradigm due to a whole four Level 75 sword forms being added. In addition, his opponent was the one with the title of Sword Saint.

Even though Ye Xiu wouldn't neglect to keep an eye on Huang Shaotian, wouldn't be completely clueless as to how he used the four sword forms, but in the end, knowing was different from experiencing it firsthand.

"What do you think? This feeling's not bad, huh?"

After Meteor Form brought Troubling Rain past Lord Grim, drawing forth a stream of blood, he immediately turned. Huang Shaotian even took the time to type out a sentence as he did this, and then, Immortal Guides the Way!

If this stab attack with a powerful blowback effect was used in a combo of attacks and blew its target too far, then it would naturally cause the combo to break. However, at this time, Troubling Rain had already used Meteor Form to switch positions with Lord Grim. This attack blew Lord Grim back, but soon enough, Lord Grim slammed into the meter tall mud wall. Instead of being sent out too far, the powerful blowback effect slammed Lord Grim into the wall, dealing another round of damage as well as a stun.

Troubling Rain's offensive continued!

However, the audience was still pondering over what Huang Shaotian had meant by what he typed just now.

"This feeling? What feeling?" Pan Lin wondered aloud.

"Er..." Li Yibo wasn't sure either.

Shockingly enough, something Huang Shaotian had typed had managed to elicit everyone's deep contemplation. What a rare sight! Usually, everyone would be doing their utmost to try and ignore everything that he typed into the chat. However, in this match, against a strong opponent like Ye Xiu, Huang Shaotian didn't have much energy to spare on flooding the chat. Under such a circumstance, everyone believed that Huang Shaotian would only spare energy on typing something truly meaningful, and not waste it on bullshit like usual.

What feeling?

The feeling of being suppressed? Huang Shaotian was probably mocking Ye Xiu, taking revenge for the two that were wiped out by Ye Xiu, right?

That was what most people thought. The only ones who could truly understand the essence of the trash talk that was compressed into this one sentence was Blue Rain and Happy's players.

“He’s probably talking about the slight slip in rhythm due to an unfamiliarity with a new system, right?”

Blue Rain’s Yu Wenzhou and Happy’s Fang Rui practically gave the explanation for Huang Shaotian’s “this feeling” simultaneously.

“It’s definitely payback!” Fang Rui continued with certainty, “Because everyone got bullied pretty badly by Ye Xiu’s unspecialized.”

That’s right. In regards to having trouble adapting, how could the changes brought on by the Level 75 skills compare to Ye Xiu bringing back a completely discarded ancient playstyle?

To everyone, that was truly a completely unfamiliar system. No experience, no ideas, no one had Ye Xiu’s comprehensive knowledge either. For the unspecialized Lord Grim, from the original discovery, to officially engaging in the pro scene, it had been two years if your rounded up. However, this unfamiliarity had yet to disappear. No matter who was met with the unspecialized Lord Grim, they were overwhelmed.

Thirty-seven consecutive victories in the individual competitions, then wiping out two people at the very beginning of the playoffs. This intimidating record of Ye Xiu’s had at least some ties with the advantages that his unspecialized class brought him.

But now, Huang Shaotian was using this unfamiliarity against Ye Xiu, so his triumphant jeer was understandable.

Troubling Rain had Lord Grim completely pinned on that meter tall wall. What Ye Xiu had originally used to conceal himself was now exactly what was cutting off his escape. Sword light splattered blood onto the wall again and again, slowly dying it crimson.

Ye Xiu’s defeat of his two previous opponents meant that he had already beautifully accomplished his mission in this group arena. Even if he was killed by Huang Shaotian here, it wouldn’t matter. But, they weren’t satisfied with just that!

None of Happy’s members were satisfied. Maybe they were too greedy, but just seeing Ye Xiu on the field, they felt that he wouldn’t be defeated without doing something shocking.

Losing was normal, but being completely suppressed like Song Xiao, like Lu Hanwen? Even if the opponent was Huang Shaotian. It was completely incomprehensible to Happy’s members.

Impossible!

Happy’s players thought. This feeling in their hearts was far more intense than even the most loyal fans of Happy.

The support of the fans was sometimes completely irrational, blinded by emotions.

But they weren’t like that. Happy’s members were clear headed and yet this sharp feeling came from their utmost confidence in Ye Xiu. How could that guy, who started from nothing, who took an Internet cafe team through the vicious competition of the Challengers League into the cruelest stage of Glory, the playoffs, be suppressed like this? This was unacceptable!

“Stop pretending! Hurry up and use your ace!!” Fang Rui suddenly cupped his hands around his mouth and roared at the stage.

Ye Xiu couldn't hear his voice. The two characters fighting in the projection wouldn't be able to react at all. Instead, it was Blue Rain's members on the other bench that heard him.

“Ace? What ace?” They wondered aloud, nervously watching the match.

“What ace does he have?” Chen Guo also asked nervously.

“How the hell would I know? Either way, he definitely has one!” Fang Rui replied.

“Definitely!” Su Mucheng determinedly expressed her support.

“Then hurry up!” Wei Chen slapped his leg.

“He's going to use it soon, right?” Tang Rou said.

“What will it be?” The others all wondered in eager anticipation. Though they had no idea what it was, they were certain it existed. Happy's members seemed almost like a bunch of cult members, all blindly believing.

“Die!!” On the field, Huang Shaotian once again sent a message. By now, Lord Grim only had 7 percent of his health left and this message was almost like a death sentence.

Whoosh!

But then, the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella suddenly opened. The sword light that Troubling Rain had gathered, preparing to unleash the last strike to Formless Phantom Blade, hit the surface of the umbrella.

Not good!

Huang Shaotian felt his heart leap.

If it was just holding up a shield trying to endure the hit, he wouldn't be so nervous, but the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella was so damn massive when opened. Lord Grim was hidden behind it and Ye Xiu was definitely trying to play some sort of trick.

“Not saying the right thing at the right time is your greatest flaw!” Ye Xiu's message popped up on the screen.

Did he leave an opening by typing that one word? Huang Shaotian subconsciously wondered. If Ye Xiu had the time to chat with him, then the other had probably already prepared his trick.

Experience, awareness, everything sparked and burned. Huang Shaotian resolutely canceled Formless Phantom Blade.

Sword's Divine Judgement!

The Blade Master Awakening skill, activate!

Chapter 1399: A Bite Back

Sword's Divine Judgement, the Blade Master Awakening skill. The user's attack speed and attack power would increase sharply, and at the moment of execution, sword qi would fly out in a fairly large 360 degree circle.

Huang Shaotian's Troubling Rain suddenly used this skill as a defensive option rather than an offensive option. The sword qi swept up the surrounding earth, an attack as defense, and without any blind spots either. When Ye Xiu had Lord Grim hid behind his Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, Huang Shaotian had guessed that there was an eighty percent chance that Lord Grim would try to close the distance with a movement skill. But whether it was a frontal charge or a Shadow Clone Technique to flicker behind him, his Sword's Divine Judgement covered all possible options. The instant he used this skill, Huang Shaotian fixed his gaze onto Lord Grim. He wanted to see what sort of tricks Ye Xiu had planned on using.

The sword qi circled around Troubling Rain as he turned slightly to the right. Huang Shaotian thought it was more likely that Ye Xiu would have Lord Grim use a Shadow Clone Technique or a Teleport to attack him directly from behind. This was a technique Ye Xiu frequently used. In critical moments, players would always subconsciously seek comfort and choose the option they were most familiar with.

But no...

The spectators could see better than Huang Shaotian. Lord Grim, who was hiding behind his Myriad Manifestations Umbrella, didn't see the seals required for a Shadow Clone Technique nor the flow of mana for a Teleport.

Lord Grim simply kept the umbrella in its shield form to protect against incoming strikes and then stepped to the right diagonally.

It was a very simple movement, one even a normal player or even someone didn't know how to play Glory could do.

However, it caught Huang Shaotian off guard.

His Troubling Rain turned right. Lord Grim stepped to the right.

Both sides moved to the right from their perspective, and as a result, they happened to move in opposite directions.

In that instant, Lord Grim suddenly disappeared from Huang Shaotian's view through just this simple step to the right.

Any player could get their character to take a step to the right, but they definitely wouldn't be able to make the prediction and calculations required to achieve such a precise outcome.

The distance, the position, the angle, the timing, the speed, etc.

If any one part was slightly off, the vanishing effect would not happen.

It looked to be a simple step, but the skill required to pull it off was the accumulation of ten years of effort.

Huang Shaotian instantly recognized that the situation wasn't good. Troubling Rain immediately snapped back to where Lord Grim had still been in his sights, but now, Lord Grim was directly in front of him.

Even though Troubling Rain had swung his sword as he turned around, Lord Grim's attack came faster. After all, his movement skills were attack skills to begin with.

The blood that filled the air was in part due to his own fault.

Fuck!

Huang Shaotian was extremely annoyed. Despite his skill, he couldn't figure out where he had gone wrong.

Was using Sword's Divine Judgement a mistake?

Or was it because I was too confident Ye Xiu would move behind me?

These all seemed to be reasons, but also weren't.

And this sort of feeling was common when playing against Ye Xiu. You had no idea where he saw through you.

It was truly the most disgusting feeling possible!

Could you at least let me know where I made a mistake?

Even Huang Shaotian felt helpless and discouraged at this feeling. It was terrible for one's morale and fighting spirit.

"DON'T BE TOO ARROGANT!!!" Huang Shaotian typed in chat. Rather than trash talking his opponent, it was more of a reminder to himself. Many people knew that Huang Shaotian's famed trash talk was often a way for him to focus.

Huang Shaotian had absolute confidence in winning. He had originally been crushing Ye Xiu in every area, yet Ye Xiu had been able to find an opening, a layered strike to both his technique and his mind. So at this moment, Huang Shaotian needed to remind himself not to become lax.

He needed to continue to focus and maintain his calm.

It was just a tiny bite back. All I need to do is keep steady.

Huang Shaotian's message made him appear flustered and exasperated, but in reality, he was reminding himself to not be like that. He handled the situation very maturely and calmly. He successfully suppressed his urges, and this was the willpower of a true Assassin, of Glory's number one opportunist.

Even Ye Xiu wanted to praise him.

At this moment, calmly resetting the fight was far more reliable than urgently trying to take back the upper hand. The opportunity Ye Xiu had obtained after machine-like calculations had been calmly dissolved by Huang Shaotian.

"I thought I'd be able to take away at least a quarter of your health. Forget it, it's my loss!" Ye Xiu sighed in the chat.

"What do you mean 'it's my loss'! It was going to be your loss anyways!" Huang Shaotian grinded his teeth. He didn't seem calm, but at this moment, his Silver weapon Ice Rain pierced through Lord Grim's heart, striking the fatal blow.

16%.

That was the amount of damage Ye Xiu had been able to deal against Troubling Rain through his counterattack.

It was already quite an impressive number. The spectators felt a bit disappointed at Huang Shaotian. Quite a few people felt like Huang Shaotian's performance was rather poor. If he had been a bit tougher and directly traded, he definitely wouldn't have lost that much health.

But the true experts knew better. No one could have handled it better than Huang Shaotian did.

Ye Xiu's final words weren't meaningless trash talk. If Huang Shaotian had been a fierce and relentless warrior that traded, perhaps the amount of damage he would have taken would have been above Ye Xiu's expected number.

The opponent was Ye Xiu!

Those who thought Huang Shaotian could have done better were all blabbering armchair experts.

As Ye Xiu came down from the stage, the stadium was filled with applause.

His Lord Grim had started off with 44% health, and in the end, he was only able to trade it for 20% of his opponent's health. It looked like a loss, but Glory was never about pure numbers.

Ye Xiu hadn't disappointed anyone. He had been suppressed to the point of suffocation, yet he had still been able to beautifully bare his fangs and fiercely bite his opponent back. If it had been anyone else facing Huang Shaotian's dominating play, they would have most likely given up.

What's more, Ye Xiu had already taken down two of the opposing side's players. Huang Shaotian had been his third opponent.

Applause. His performance was absolutely deserving of such fervent applause.

That was what every Happy fan thought. As they clapped, they were afraid that they weren't loud enough and continued to clap louder. As Ye Xiu walked back to his seat, the applause crescendoed, becoming louder and more resonant.

"Good work!" All of Happy's players stood up and welcomed Ye Xiu.

"The rest is up to you guys," Ye Xiu said.

"No pressure!" Fang Rui grinned. Happy's second player appeared on the big screen.

Mo Fan, Deception.

"No pressure, right? Little Mo!" Fang Rui hollered. Mo Fan had already left. He didn't even look back.

“It’s the playoffs, and he’s still gotta act like that!” Fang Rui mumbled.

Chen Guo wasn’t feeling as playful as Fang Rui.

Mo Fan. He was the first of Happy’s rookies to stand on the playoffs stage.

How will he perform?

Will he be nervous?

Will he make mistakes?

His first opponent is Huang Shaotian. Such a large step won’t be too challenging, right?

Chen Guo stared at Mo Fan’s back. Because Mo Fan practically never talked, she had no idea what he was thinking. She could only worry more.

“Happy’s second player is Mo Fan,” Pan Lin introduced, “He’s a very patient but also very explosive player.”

Patience came from Mo Fan’s incomparable patience in seeking opportunities. Explosiveness came from the mere three ways he knew how to attack.

“Speaking of which, Mo Fan and Huang Shaotian are similar players!” Li Yibo said.

“Uh... I guess so!” Pan Lin said, “There’s a clear difference between them though.”

“Yes. Both are adept at seeking opportunities. But in comparison, Mo Fan is better at waiting while Huang Shaotian is more proactive,” Li Yibo said.

“Of course, if the team competition came and all he did was wait, how could he do well?” Pan Lin said.

“In the end, they come from different places. The habits that Mo Fan acquired aren’t easily eliminated,” Li Yibo said.

Mo Fan’s background was no secret. Anyone who played fairly often in the Heavenly Domain knew of the infamous scrap picker, Deception.

“Then let’s see how this match will turn out!” Pan Lin said, showing his interest in the match.

The new match began.

Troubling Rain had 80% of his health. With Huang Shaotian’s identity as a God against a rookie, this 20% disadvantage was nothing.

The vast majority of people favored Huang Shaotian to win this match.

But Mo Fan couldn’t be underestimated. After all, he had the glory of defeating a God like Sun Xiang. No one could ignore the possibility of an upset.

A scrap picker from the game! And now he was standing on the playoffs stage. Many spectators had complicated feelings. No one had any good feelings towards scrap pickers. However, it had been awhile since they had seen someone walk out from the game and make it to the biggest stage in the pro scene.

Tang Rou and Steamed Bun and all the other rookies had obviously started off in the game, but none of them had the fame that Deception had when he joined the pro scene.

Once a player's fame reached a certain level, the Club guilds would immediately notice and recruit them. These players would most likely step onto the professional stage before being able to achieve much of a reputation in the game. But Mo Fan was different. He had ignored countless offers and accumulated enormous fame before being pulled into the pro scene by Ye Xiu.

A legendary scrap picker wasn't a good reputation though. If not for this point, Mo Fan would have perhaps been an incomparably popular player, because he was someone who had truly been born from them. He would have been a symbol of the grassroots community!

Chapter 1400: Mo Fan's Plan

The match officially began.

The map was chosen by Team Happy, so Mo Fan was no stranger to it. He immediately chose to take a roundabout route through the right path just like Ye Xiu did last match.

Huang Shaotian did the same as last match too, taking the direct path to the center. The only difference was that this time, Huang Shaotian wasn't nearly as quiet as last match. As soon as his character loaded in, he began cheerfully chatting away with Mo Fan. Swoosh swoosh swoosh, words filled the screen, but not a single response came from Mo Fan, not even a punctuation mark or an emoji.

"Wow, so quiet! You're not saying anything? Kid, don't be nervous. Think of this as a normal match. Chatting is a way to relax!" Huang Shaotian was like a benevolent senior, kindly lecturing his junior. However, Troubling Rain's Ice Rain told a different story as it glimmered from time to time. On the big screen, Huang Shaotian's viewpoint was constantly shifting, carefully taking note of the sides of the road. No one had any doubts that the moment he met Mo Fan's Deception, any sort of kindness would disappear.

After several of Happy's matches, everyone had a certain understanding of the maps that Happy liked to choose.

The map layout was usually rather simple. There would be a wide path through the center, directly connecting the spawn points on both sides. It also served as a dividing line for the map. As for the left and right, or the east and west ends, consisted of two types of terrain. The north and south usually had a certain symmetry to it.

For example, Huang Shaotian had chosen the middle path directly to the center, and there were numerous ambush spots along the road. Ye Xiu always took advantage of these spots, and Mo Fan took advantage of these as well.

"The two sides are getting close!" Pan Lin said. In these situations, a bird's eye view of the map was usually displayed so that the viewers could see the two characters closing in.

“Which ambush spot is Mo Fan going to choose? To tell you the truth, I feel like Huang Shaotian has pretty much understood this map. No matter which side Mo Fan chooses to ambush from, it’s going to be difficult to surprise Huang Shaotian,” Pan Lin said.

“Yes, Huang Shaotian has chosen the central path like before, probably for this reason. He has a good understanding of the left and right side of this path. If he chose to directly fight from the east or west wings, there are probably gaps in his knowledge of the terrain there. As a result, it’s better to choose to fight in the places he’s most familiar with,” Li Yibo said..

“From what you’re saying, Mo Fan, who’s trying to ambush Huang Shaotian, is the one at the disadvantage?” Pan Lin said.

“If he insists on his current plans... but he should be aware of it. Even if he doesn’t have enough experience as a rooke, I believe the others in Happy would have reminded him,” Li Yibo said.

No one knew of Mo Fan’s personality other than those in Team Happy. From the matches, people could see that he didn’t like to talk, but how could they know that he was more quiet than even Zhou Zekai. It was like he was determined not to communicate.

As for what Li Yibo just said, Happy had obviously reminded him. Fang Rui, Su Mucheng, and so on all tried. In the end, they only got one word out of Mo Fan: Okay.

But as soon as Mo Fan started the match, he still chose to take a roundabout route and look for a spot to ambush Huang Shaotian. Happy’s Fang Rui had jumped to his feet when he saw it happen.

“This punk only knows how to act cold. He didn’t listen to anything I said!” Fang Rui shouted.

“He probably has his own plans!” Su Mucheng said. Mo Fan’s dislike for talking wasn’t fake, but he didn’t reject other people’s opinions. At first, he had been at heads with Ye Xiu, but his attitude towards him slowly changed. The others didn’t need to be said. If he didn’t want to listen to her and Fang Rui, then he would have just left instead of staying to listen. Even if all they got was an “Okay”, he definitely took their words seriously. Was Mo Fan the type of person who would elaborate?

“That punk, I wonder what he’s got in mind,” Fang Rui said.

The two sides grew nearer and nearer, but Mo Fan still hadn’t picked a spot yet.

“What’s wrong? Is Mo Fan not able to find the right spot because he’s nervous?” Pan Lin said.

“I feel like it should be because he’s not in a hurry to find a spot?” Li Yibo said, “It looks like he knows that his opponent has seen through the ambush spots along the central road, so he doesn’t plan on doing this sort of ambush.”

“Then why’d he bother taking the roundabout route?” Pan Lin said.

“He at least won’t get into a direct confrontation that way!” Li Yibo said.

“Okay... let’s keep watching,” Pan Lin said.

Five seconds later, Pan Lin suddenly thought of something: “Hey! Right, let’s take a look at Mo Fan’s equipment!”

“Of course!” Li Yibo slapped his forehead. He had forgotten too. Everyone had been completely absorbed into Ye Xiu’s pace that they forgot that Happy had upgraded their equipment. Quite a few of Lord Grim’s equipment had changed, what about Mo Fan’s Deception? When the characters loaded into the map, they forgot to check.

“Level 80!” The cameraman cut to a list of Deception’s equipment.

Silver equipment didn’t need to be clicked on. After all, the stats were all hidden. Only the name and the level were shown on the list.

The weapon was the most important, so it was listed first.

Ninja Blade: Sixteen Leaves.

“Sixteen Leaves, what a strange name!” Pan Lin mumbled. The Glory system automatically came up with the name for Silver equipment. Sometimes it would match the stats or the characteristics of the piece of equipment, and sometimes the meaning was more implicit and required more thought to understand the logic. All in all, the name didn’t mean much. However, it was unquestionably another piece of Level 80 equipment.

Deception’s Boots, Emblem, and Cape were also Level 80 equipment. He had fewer than Lord Grim, but it wasn’t anything strange for the core character to have more.

“Speaking of which, we haven’t really felt a difference in Lord Grim’s equipment!” Pan Lin suddenly thought. In the beginning, everyone wanted to know how much stronger Lord Grim would be with his set of Level 80 equipment, but after fighting three rounds, they didn’t see it giving Ye Xiu a huge advantage. Everyone felt like if Lord Grim didn’t have the upgraded equipment, the outcome still would have been similar.

“Lord Grim’s increase in attack power is very obvious. The minute changes in his other stats don’t seem as obvious right now. The bonus stats on the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella’s various forms isn’t clear either. As for the added-on skills, we’ve so far seen the Laser Beam from the Gun form and the Priest’s Wish Prayer.

“Ye Xiu... isn’t holding back, is he?” Pan Lin suddenly had a feeling, “The high-level skills tacked onto the Myriad Manifestations Umbrella make up the core of how he does battle. I believe that Team Blue Rain definitely wants to find out which high-level skills the current Myriad Manifestations Umbrella has, but in the end, Ye Xiu’s only used two. There’s too many that haven’t been used. Blue Rain can only be wary of them in the team competition,” Pan Lin said.

“That’s right,” Li Yibo nodded his head, “Ye Xiu won beautifully in the group arena, but the information he gave out was rather small. I wonder how much Blue Rain’s gotten out of it. But the skills added onto the Myriad Manifestation Umbrella’s various forms must be a headache for them.”

“Ah! Right now, Huang Shaotian’s Troubling Rain and Mo Fan’s Deception have passed by each other. Sure enough, Mo Fan decide to ambush Huang Shaotian,” Pan Lin returned to the match.

“Troubling Rain’s movements have become more careful. It looks like Huang Shaotian is very clear as to what possible ambush spots there are in his surroundings. Hm? Coach Li, if that’s the case, then when they first started, for a length of time, it wasn’t possible for him to ambushed, yet if I remember

correctly, Huang Shaotian had still been carefully taking precautions!” Pan Lin suddenly became doubtful.

“That wasn’t taking precautions. That was him giving his teammates more information on the map!” Li Yibo said.

“Oh, so that’s what it was. It really makes you feel like they’re a very attentive team!” Pan Lin sighed.

“Yes,” Li Yibo said.

On the battlefield, Troubling Rain had rushed past Deception’s coordinates and continued to push forward. As for Deception, he began quietly heading to the edges of the central road as if he wanted to choose an ambush spot.

“Is he planning on acting out when Huang Shaotian retraces his steps after not finding anyone?” Pan Lin guessed.

Li Yibo shook his head but didn’t say anything. He had no idea what Mo Fan was planning.

“What exactly is this punk thinking?” Let alone Li Yibo, even Mo Fan’s teammates, who had a better understanding of Mo Fan, were wondering the same thing!

But then afterwards, Mo Fan still didn’t choose a spot. It was just that after moving along the edges of the central road, he began running towards Troubling Rain.

“Is he trying to do a back attack?” Pan Lin wondered.

The back was the biggest dead angle. It also came with bonus damage, so circling around to the back to mount a sneak attack was the most advantageous option. But because of this, pro player would always be on guard for their rear, especially in 1v1s without any teammates to rely on and when no information was known on the opponent’s position.

“I hope he’s not just planning on sneaking up from behind... Huang Shaotian is on guard against it,” Ye Xiu said.

“Yes, when he looks left and right, he can also see behind him out of the corner of his eye. Even though he’s not looking carefully, it’s more than enough as a precaution against back attacks,” Fang Rui said.

Hearing their worries, Chen Guo suddenly became nervous. Seeing Deception catching up to Troubling Rain, she really wanted to jump over there and yell in his ears “Be careful! Don’t go up like that.”

“You punk, where are you hiding? You’re so patient! You’re still not going to show up?” Huang Shaotian said.

“It’s been so long already. Do you want a yellow card? Referee, give him a yellow card!” Huang Shaotian continued to type.

The yellow card immediately appeared. To Huang Shaotian.

“Uh...” Huang Shaotian didn’t retort and defend himself. He already knew why he had been given the yellow card.

This was the playoffs, not the All Stars. Even if the referee knew that he was just joking around, trying to lead the referee to make a call was absolutely an offense. As long as it was attempted, the player would definitely be penalized.

“Look, I ate a yellow card for you. Why don’t you hurry up and come out?” Huang Shaotian didn’t dare mention the referee again and started typing madly towards Mo Fan.