

Avatar 1671

Chapter 1671: Counterattack Timing

Ding ding!

Empty Waves knocked aside the two spear shadows.

Double Stab as a counterattack. Jiang Botao wasn't surprised in the slightest. He had been ready for this sort of attack.

While using "Guard", Jiang Botao had Empty Waves step back. Sure enough, after the Double Stab, Soft Mist stabbed again.

With Tang Rou's skill, stabbing four times during her jump wouldn't be a problem for her. Since she had started with Double Stab, there would definitely be another two following.

After Empty Waves stepped back, Jiang Botao had more room to maneuver. Seeing that the stab was just a normal attack, he had Empty Waves swing his sword and parry the strike.

Soft Mist landed on the ground.

She didn't follow with a Dragon Tooth after the normal attack. Tang Rou had seen Empty Waves block her attacks in succession, letting her know that anything further would likely be blocked as well.

Falling Flower Palm!

As soon as she landed on the ground, she launched a new attack. Falling Flower Palm could be charged, and could also be used while sliding on the ground. The distance between Empty Waves and Soft Mist was perfect for a slide.

Empty Waves retreated again, taking another step back. Tang Rou's follow-up had been within his calculations as well.

Boom!

The magic shockwave from Falling Flower Palm hit nothing but air. Empty Waves was very very close to Soft Mist, but he was still just a bit too far.

Empty Waves swung his sword.

The distance was too close. Although Wave Slashes were instant-cast spells, its start-up was slower than close-ranged skills. As a result, Jiang Botao chose to use a normal attack instead.

Normal attacks dealt little damage and had weak priority, but if they landed, they would still hinder the opponent's movements. Tang Rou couldn't completely ignore the attack. Soft Mist swayed to the right, dodging the slash. At the same time, she thrust her spear.

Tyrant's Destruction?

Jiang Botao saw Soft Mist sway to the right and immediately thought of this skill. After moving to the right, whether it was her posture or her angle of attack, both were perfect for a Tyrant's Destruction.

Sure enough, Dancing Fire Flowing Flames tore through the air, Tyrant's Destruction!

Empty Waves jumped back to dodge the Tyrant's Destruction. This time, the distance between them was enough for a Wave Slash.

Divine Chains slashed out.

Ice Wave Slash!

Ice crystals formed wherever the blade passed through, sweeping across the ground.

Empty Waves had attacked, but Soft Mist was in a good position after the Tyrant's Destruction, giving her enough time to react.

Dodge! Attack!

Empty Waves' offense was quickly put to a stop, and in the blink of an eye, Tang Rou held the initiative again.

The Samsara fans let out sighs of regret. The way things were going worried them.

However, through glances with each other, the pro players had a different opinion.

It was true that Tang Rou held the initiative, but that was from an attack and defense perspective. In terms of the flow of the match, then that might not be the case. Tang Rou was on the offensive, but it mainly because Jiang Botao was letting her.

It had only been a few exchanges since Tang Rou's opening with Dragon Breaks the Ranks. If Jiang Botao had wanted to seize the initiative, there were at least two opportunities for him to do so.

However, Jiang Botao had only counterattacked after dodging Dragon Breaks the Ranks and Tyrant's Destruction. The other two times he could have counterattacked, he hadn't.

Was it because Jiang Botao hadn't noticed these two other opportunities?

It didn't seem like it because neither of those two opportunities had been hard to see. Most of the normal players had noticed them.

In that case, why did Jiang Botao choose to give up on these opportunities? The pro players didn't understand at first, but after seeing Jiang Botao's Empty Waves try to counterattack after dodging the Tyrant's Destruction, they had a rough idea of Jiang Botao's strategy.

He wanted to make things simple. He didn't want anything too complicated.

Just take those two opportunities that he gave up on. If he had succeeded, he would have been the one on the offensive, but if he had failed?

For those two opportunities, Tang Rou had too many options available to her. There was no way for him to take them all into consideration.

As for the two opportunities that he did take, he had completely read what Tang Rou would do and easily dealt with whatever she responded with.

This was Jiang Botao's general strategy for this match.

Make things simple, so his opponent only had a few choices, and then take control.

Only a few exchanges had happened. Jiang Botao had spent most of his efforts on thinking. The Ice Wave Slash had missed, and when Tang Rou's Soft Mist started her offense again, Jiang Botao's Empty Waves retreated.

Dragon Tooth or Circle Swing? Or maybe even Draconic Crusher.

Jiang Botao thought of Tang Rou's possible choices.

Dragon Tooth!

The more that he saw Tang Rou stay within his predictions, the calmer Jiang Botao became. He wasn't at all worried like the fans outside were.

Dragon Tooth missed!

Okay, next is Furious Dragon Strikes the Heart.

Sure enough, Furious Dragon Strikes the Heart.

Miss again!

Dragon Rises from the Sea? Or Cloud Whirling Windstorm?

Oh, Dragon Rises from the Sea.

Dodge!

Soft Mist attacked several times, and each time, Empty Waves retreated.

The fight looked completely one-sided. The moment a potential counterattack from Empty Waves appeared, Soft Mist instantly crushed any chances of it happening.

But even the ordinary viewers had started to notice that even though it looked like Jiang Botao was losing, the one who should be worried probably wasn't Jiang Botao. Tang Rou had been on the offensive for quite a while now, yet Jiang Botao's defense looked to be unbreakable. It was as if didn't see any of her attacks as a threat. Soft Mist had attacked for so long, but had only taken out 7% of Empty Waves' health. She was still very far from wiping away the lead that he held!

It's about time for him to counterattack.

The pro players who understood Jiang Botao's plans took another step ahead of the normal viewers. Jiang Botao was playing this fight very intelligently. He understood clearly that Tang Rou wasn't an opponent he could deal with through brute force. Facing her fierce offense, no one could be completely confident. Tang Rou was playing incredible today as well. Even the slightest slip-up, and she would punish you heavily for it.

As a result, Jiang Botao was using defense as his offense. From the start, he had been guiding Tang Rou's attacks. All of her attacks had been within Jiang Botao's predictions. Not only did it make it easy for him to defend, it was a mental test for Tang Rou as well. Having completely seen through her, Jiang Botao knew when exactly his counterattack would be most destructive.

It was about time.

The pro players all thought the same. Through Jiang Botao's control, Tang Rou's mix-ups were becoming less and less varied. At this point, her attack pattern was practically linear. What attack she would do next was something everyone could shout at.

Falling Flower Palm?

Everyone guessed.

Boom! Soft Mist used Falling Flower Palm.

Draconic Crusher?

Sure enough, Dancing Fire Flowing Flames pressed down, Draconic Crusher.

He can counterattack whenever. Everyone thought. His opponent could be read like a book. Making a counterattack was no different than children's play, no? Right now, it was just a matter of when the counterattack would be the most harmful to Tang Rou.

Dragon Tooth!

The crowd shouted out Soft Mist's next attack, which Empty Waves dodged.

Counterattack!

Quite a few people shouted inwardly. They felt like a counterattack now would be quite good.

But Jiang Botao didn't seem to be satisfied with it. Empty Waves rolled backwards, dodging the following Circle Swing.

How greedy!

Everyone thought to themselves. He wasn't even going to take that? Was Jiang Botao really going to wait until an opportunity where he could kill her in one combo?

Circle Swing was dodged. Dancing Fire Flowing Flames leapt into the air, Sky Strike.

Empty Waves leapt back, while also putting up his Divine Chains in front of him just in case.

The weapons clashed. A Light Chaser formed behind Soft Mist and shot directly towards Empty Waves.

The distance was too close. The Chaser was too fast. This time, Jiang Botao couldn't dodge the attack, and was hit with a face full of sparks.

"Hahahaha!" The pro players laughed out loud.

"Jiang Botao is being too careful!" Someone said.

“If he hadn’t put up his sword, there wouldn’t have been a Chaser. He just gave her a free hit.”

“Yeah, and it’s a Light element one. It’ll increase her attack speed.”

Some of the pro players remarked in this way, but some of the others had a change in expression at this moment.

Had the parry been unnecessary?

The stadium screen coincidentally showed a replay of this scene to show the Light Chaser hitting Empty Waves again, but the pro players were more interested in how the Chaser was formed.

Sky Strike...

The distance... the parry wasn’t necessary!

Everyone thought to themselves. The Dancing Fire Flowing Flames quietly inched forward a bit as it arced upwards.

Quite a few people blinked their eyes, confirming that they hadn’t misjudged.

Yes... Dancing Fire Flowing Flames had inched forward. This Sky Strike wasn’t the same. Tang Rou had intentionally left some room for her to change things up a bit.

Because when facing a Battle Mage, it was best to avoid parrying or blocking the five low-level Battle Mage skills. If the skills hit, Chasers would be formed. Blocking and parrying were considered as hits.

Tang Rou had used this common knowledge to her advantage. She had intentionally made it so that it didn’t seem like her attack needed to be parried, but just as the attack was made, she suddenly changed the trajectory...

It wasn’t as simple as it sounded. It required very precise inputs to make these sudden changes.

The Light Chaser hit, and Soft Mist continued to attack. Even though Empty Waves was able to dodge her attacks, he was clearly having a harder time than before.

Still not counterattacking?

Someone was still thinking.

But a portion of people were now thinking: could he still counterattack?

The mix-up from the Sky Strike hadn’t been accidental, but was this the only time she had made this mix-up?

Whether it was the broadcast or the live stadium replay, none of them would rewind too far back. The pro players had only noticed the problem with this Sky Strike. They had no way to go back right now and check if she had done it before too.

Could it be that... Jiang Botao had not counterattacked, not because he was waiting for the right moment, but because he was actually being suppressed?

This... from when did this start?

Chapter 1672: Top Rookie

When did it start?

Jiang Botao was also asking the same question. He had been leading Tang Rou around, controlling the pace of the match. He had always felt like his strategy had been successful. Everything was in his grasp. He could read every mix-up that came at him. Not once did any of Tang Rou's actions fall outside of his predictions.

He had planned in advance, waiting patiently for an opportunity. He hoped to finish the match decisively with an overwhelming counterattack. This sort of finish would be more reliable, and it would improve the team's morale. Two birds with one stone.

However, the opportunity never came. Jiang Botao couldn't help but admire Tang Rou. On this grand stage, in the decisive game three of the finals, she was attacking and attacking but with no success, yet she didn't become impatient and persevered. Let alone a rookie, even an experienced player might not have such strong mental toughness.

She persevered. Jiang Botao didn't back down either. Keeping this same pace would be favorable for him in the long-run. The flow and tempo of the match was completely within his grasp. All he needed was one reliable opportunity, whether that was a mistake on her part or a slight lapse in concentration, just one was enough.

But there was none...

The previous Dragon Tooth, Circle Swing, and then Sky Strike, Jiang Botao predicted them all. After the Dragon Tooth, many people felt like he could counterattack, but Jiang Botao hadn't.

It hadn't been because he felt like the opportunity wasn't good enough, but rather in his eyes, he hadn't seen an opportunity.

At that moment, he felt a shock go through his heart.

Dragon Tooth into Circle Swing, it had been a quick follow-up. If he had counterattacked after the Dragon Tooth, he would have been caught by the Circle Swing. As a result, he couldn't counterattack, and could only dodge.

Dragon Tooth and Circle Swing had been both easily evaded by Jiang Botao. Then, Sky Strike...

As expected!

Jiang Botao's Empty Waves hadn't stopped to take a rest. After rolling away from the Circle Swing, he had jumped to avoid the following Sky Strike.

If he didn't need to parry, he wouldn't. This sort of common Battle Mage knowledge wasn't something he would overlook.

But at that moment, Soft Mist's spear had suddenly extended forward.

Had he seen that wrong?

Jiang Botao didn't know if he had seen it wrong but he wasn't going to take the risk. He had parried, giving Tang Rou a Light Chaser. But compared to getting knocked into the air by Sky Strike, he definitely preferred the former.

Thus, he had put up his sword Divine Chains.

His question was answered.

Soft Mist's Dancing Fire Flowing Flames struck Empty Waves' Divine Chains. The Light Chaser shot out. Even if Jiang Botao had wanted to dodge, Chasers had auto-targeting!

The Chaser hit, and Soft Mist's attack speed increased. Her offense continued.

The single Chaser hitting hadn't been enough to give Tang Rou much of an opportunity to injure his opponent. The normal players didn't think too much of it. After all, she had been on the offensive the entire time. It wasn't possible for Jiang Botao's Empty Waves to take absolutely zero damage. Even though he had dodged most of the attacks, he had still lost 7% over the course of the battle so far.

However, the pro players knew that this time was different.

Because this time, Jiang Botao had lost his calm. He didn't have the same foresight as before. The parry had been in haste, meaning it had been outside of his expectations.

The tempo was no longer in his control. The flow of the battle was no longer completely dictated by him.

Pu!

Not long after the Chaser hit, Jiang Botao's Empty Waves was suddenly hit again. Even though it was just a normal attack with low damage, the pro players were no longer looking at the numbers. Jiang Botao's control over the fight was slipping.

Had Jiang Botao not been able to think of this normal stab?

No, impossible.

The attack had been obvious. Even a normal player understood that this follow-up would be next.

He knew, but he couldn't avoid it.

It wasn't just a slight shock through Jiang Botao's heart, but rather a deep sense of danger.

It wasn't any sort of crazy mix-up, nor was it anything new. This was a change done through force by relying on one's reaction speed and technique. This was what it meant to have talent. And right now, Tang Rou was putting her talent on display. She wasn't just recklessly erupting with hand speed, but meticulously manipulating the details to create changes.

"Incredible..."

No one knew who said it.

No one responded, but everyone knew that this praise wasn't towards Jiang Botao, but Tang Rou.

At this moment, everyone realized that Happy's rookie could no longer be seen as a rookie. This rookie had probably already established herself among the top players of Glory.

Compared to the top rookies each season: Season 2's Blossoms and Blood, Season 3's Wang Jiexi, Season 4's Golden Generation, Season 5's Zhou Zekai... during their debut season, all of them had already reached the level of Gods. However, as the competition got fiercer, and the Alliance grew, the luster of the top rookies seemed to decline with each season. After Season 6, only Sun Xiang had been given the title as one of the Gods after his rookie debut in Season 7. As for the ones after?

Season 8's Best Rookie, Zhao Yuzhe? He wasn't even an All-Star!

Season 9's Best Rookie, Lu Hanwen? He had attracted a lot of attention because of his age. The mental fortitude and maturity at his age won much praise. Everyone was certain that he would have a glorious future, but no one thought that he was at the level of the Gods yet.

As for Tang Rou?

When comparing these rookies, everyone suddenly realized that Tang Rou's situation was similar to Lu Hanwen's, but also different.

Lu Hanwen had been given some lenience because of his age. Everyone's expectations for him were naturally lower.

As for Tang Rou? Because of the 1v3 fiasco, a whole bunch of people cursed her the entire season. Everyone's expectations for her were very harsh. If she didn't do a 1v3, then all sorts of criticism and ridicule were thrown at her.

But 1v3... what sort of criteria was that? Using a 1v3 as a criteria wasn't just harsh but deliberately making things difficult for her.

If people had looked at her performance over the entire season without bias, then the Alliance giving her the title of Best Rookie should have been indisputable.

High ambitions, strong mental fortitude, frightening talent, and constantly improving in Glory knowledge and technique...

Of the many traits that Tang Rou possessed, the only flaw that she had was her age.

Tang Rou wasn't too young of a player at 23 years old. In the early years of the pro scene, many players this age would choose to retire. In the current scene, her age was where her skill and experience should be at its peak. As for how long this peak period lasted, it depended on the person. On average, there would usually be a decline after one or two years.

...

But for Tang Rou, this was her first season. Her skill was still increasing, but her age wouldn't be able to carry her to the peak...

Truly a pity.

Everyone thought to themselves.

But a part from pity, there was also a bit of... joy.

After all, she was an enemy. Even though it wasn't the manliest of thoughts, who cared if you were born at the wrong time? Those retired top players during Ye Qiu's reign probably all had thoughts of "if only there was no Ye Qiu".

At this moment, Tang Rou had unexpectedly given them thoughts of running away.

Everyone wanted to run, but Jiang Botao couldn't.

He can't hold on!

When everyone's focus went back to the match, they saw Jiang Botao's Empty Waves continuing to retreat in defeat. His previous retreat had been out of free will. He had been guiding Tang Rou along. But his current retreat was out of helplessness. He didn't have a second choice.

I can't keep retreating any longer!

Jiang Botao was clear about this point. If this continued, Empty Waves would lose too much health. An explosive counterattack might not be enough to win. Right now, he needed to be unyielding. He needed to fight against Tang Rou blow for blow.

There should be an opportunity to do so, no?

Jiang Botao observed and thought.

He had been giving in to her offense the entire time. Tang Rou should have formed a certain mindset by now. If he suddenly rushed forward, even if he couldn't make it an explosive counterattack, it should at least mess up her rhythm.

Tyrant's Destruction!

Soft Mist's Dancing Fire Flowing Flames swept outwards again. Jiang Botao had also finished formulating his plan.

Now.

He had to do it now. Too much thinking and too much preparation would actually make it easier for Tang Rou to be on guard. He needed to move suddenly and unexpectedly. He needed to create an opportunity when it wasn't one.

Empty Waves jumped forward as if he were planning on crashing straight into Tyrant's Destruction, but when he jumped, Empty Waves curled up his legs so that Soft Mist's spear would be beneath him.

Just this isn't enough!

Jiang Botao knew it clearly. He had experienced Tang Rou's speed from a close distance. Although it looked like he had already dodged Tyrant's Destruction, Tang Rou could definitely adjust in time.

But he wasn't afraid because Empty Waves had made his move. Jiang Botao wasn't looking for a breakthrough with this attack. He just wanted to shake things up, make a trade. For him, the trade would be favorable for him.

Unyielding!

Jiang Boyao showed that he could be unyielding too.

Tang Rou didn't retreat. She obviously wouldn't. As long as she was still fighting, there was no such thing as retreat.

Sword light flashed, magic waves jumped, Empty Waves' Wave Wheel Slasher arrived.

As for Tyrant's Destruction?

Tyrant's Destruction seemed to have stopped, but there was no change. Soft Mist raised her other hand. Magic quickly began to flow around her.

Not good!

Jiang Botao realized what it was. His heart burned with worry. He just hoped that his attack would reach in time. But in the end, the magic waves surged, locking in place an afterimage...

Teleport.

The bonus skill on her weapon.

A Battle Mage choosing Teleport wasn't anything surprising. Sung Xiang often chose this skill. Jiang Botao hadn't overlooked this possibility, but he just didn't think she could Teleport at this distance. The attack was already upon her, and she actually used Teleport?

This confidence and bravery exceeded his imagination. It seemed more likely that the Teleport wouldn't go through in time, but Tang Rou wasn't afraid of the outcome. What she showed was her determination to win even if the Wave Wheel Slasher had hit!

Only by having this determination would she be so decisive during these moments, and it was only by being decisive was she able to successfully dodge the Wave Wheel Slasher with Teleport.

Soft Mist instantly vanished from Jiang Botao's sight.

Behind...

Jiang Botao immediately guessed. However, Empty Waves was in the air. He immediately cancelled the skill and used Falling Light Blade to try alter his fall, but he was too late...

Dancing Fire Flowing Flames struck his waist, Circle Swing!

Empty Waves was thrown back, but he didn't slam into the ground. Tang Rou had thrown aside the Circle Swing's damage, using it just to get Empty Waves closer.

The skill was cancelled, and Empty Waves regained his mobility. Jiang Botao reacted quickly, using Falling Light Blade again.

But what welcomed was him... Hundred Dragon Meteor Strike!

Afterimages of Dancing Fire Flowing Flame appeared all around him. Tang Rou didn't think about where he would dodge to. She used this skill to block all of Jiang Botao's options.

Falling Light Blade immediately collapsed in front of Hundred Dragon Meteor Strike. Empty Waves was instantly skewered countless times.

Empty Waves was knocked back, and Soft Mist chased after him, attacking as she moved to deal as much damage as possible with Hundred Dragon Meteor Strike.

She wasn't done yet...

Dragon Tooth!

After the Hundred Dragon Meteor Strike, she followed with a Dragon Tooth.

Hit, stun, there was no need to ask whether the next attack would hit.

Dragon Breaks the Ranks!

Tang Rou followed with a high-level skill. Soft Mist wielded Dancing Fire Flowing Flames, pressing against Empty Waves. Forward, forward, forward, there was only forward!

With unstoppable momentum, Empty Waves was pushed far back.

Jiang Botao was waiting, waiting for the instant the skill ended...

Boom!

Dragon Breaks the Ranks reached its end, the condensed magic burst apart in the air, creating an explosion.

Empty Waves flew back from the shockwave, but he didn't miss this opportunity to attack.

Light Wave Slash!

The fastest wave slash instantly formed, slicing towards Soft Mist.

Jiang Botao reacted extremely fast, his timing was on point.

But Tang Rou didn't lose out. After Dragon Breaks the Ranks ended, Soft Mist jumped back and pointed with her spear.

Furious Dragon Strikes the Heart!

Dancing Fire Flowing Flames passed through the Light Wave Slash. One was physical, while the other magic. The two skills collided, neither interfering with each other.

Pu! Pu!

Soft Mist was hit by the Light Wave Slash, leaving a sword mark on her leather armor.

Empty Waves wasn't able to dodge the pursuit of Furious Dragon Strikes the Heart. The magic pierced through his back.

Soft Mist stumbled, but quickly steadied herself.

Empty Waves had been hit by the Furious Dragon Strikes the Heart while in the air, and was sent flying back.

Land, roll, he immediately steadied himself, but the scene to his left and right made Jiang Botao feel a little strange.

In front of Empty Waves was a wooden sign.

He was looking at the back of the wooden sign. It was very rough, and there was nothing there.

What he couldn't see was the front of the wooden sign, the three words: Death to Intruders!

Chapter 1673: Good Thing There's No More

There were no words on the back of the crude wooden sign, but Jiang Botao already realized what this was.

He had actually retreated for so long, for so far. And now, he had taken one step inside. Could he still leave?

Empty Waves didn't immediately die. It was like Wei Chen had predicted. The design of this map did not include "insta-kill."

Previously, Fang Rui's Boundless Sea had taken one step into the forbidden zone, causing the NPCs to appear and attack him.

And Jiang Botao's Empty Waves had actually let his entire body enter the forbidden zone.

In just one second, the NPCs appeared.

In just one second, Empty Waves was surrounded.

In just one second, the back of the wooden sign vanished from Jiang Botao's sight, because sword slashes and all sorts of attacks now blocked his view.

The situation was very bad, but Jiang Botao didn't plan to give up so easily. One second for the NPCs to appear and attack; one second was enough for a skilled pro player to make many judgments and complete many controls.

Nebula Wave Slash!

At the same time as the NPCs attacked, Jiang Botao's Empty Waves was also already attacking, without holding anything back.

Surrounded on all sides, that was the perfect time to use the powerful Nebula Wave Slash, that both attacked and defended.

The wave energy swirled, expanded, enveloped, hit!

With Empty Waves at the center, a half-sphere steadily grew.

In the system statistics, Empty Waves' combo count was leaping like crazy. In this moment, unleashing such a powerful attack, who knew how many targets he'd struck simultaneously.

It was very satisfying, very cool.

But no one could smile.

Even though he'd used this powerful attack, Jiang Botao had only managed to prevent Empty Waves from getting trapped in the encirclement of NPCs. But now? Now, he still had to continue to struggle with these NPCs. This one powerful attack couldn't completely clean them up.

Moreover, there was still Tang Rou.

Correct, Tang Rou was still there.

One second, the NPCs appeared, the NPCs attacked.

One second, Jiang Botao controlled Empty Waves to use Nebula Wave Slash, breaking the encirclement.

One second, Tang Rou's Soft Mist charged forward...

Stop and watch?

No, not at all.

If not for sending Empty Waves flying with an attack earlier, which put some distance between them, she might have beaten the NPCs to attack him now.

In the end, Soft Mist's attack was only late by this one second.

Nebula Wave Slash still hadn't ended. The wave energy was still rippling along Empty Waves' short sword.

A red silhouette suddenly appeared above him.

No retreating, no dodging, Soft Mist charged forth, Shattering the Lands, a Level 75 Battle Mage skill, shaking against Empty Waves' Nebula Wave Slash!

Boom!

Soft Mist was like a scarlet comet piercing through the nebula. She couldn't help but take some damage, but the Shattering the Lands continued forth.

Jiang Botao had no way to dodge, and Empty Waves had nowhere to dodge.

Shattering the Lands, the magic energy barreled forth, hitting Empty Waves and carrying the NPCs.

Tang Rou didn't care about all that. She let everyone witness her plan. But in this moment, what everyone saw was her letting everything out, from top to bottom, so much so that Jiang Botao's Empty Waves seemed like a dead man.

Empty Waves wasn't a dead man, but he wasn't far from it now.

When attacking by defending, Soft Mist had whittled away some of his health. Then after losing the initiative, many of Soft Mist's attacks had landed upon him. And now, fallen into the forbidden zone, he faced the focused fire of the NPCs, and then Soft Mist's powerful attack that ignored all else.

Too difficult...

Blasted by Shattering the Lands, Empty Waves staggered, and his control of Nebula Wave Slash slipped. The NPCs didn't care whether they lived or died, they didn't know where the flaw was in Jiang Botao's control of Nebula Wave Slash was. They ignored everything else and simply attacked in the most convenient way, and instantly there were countless attacks crashing in.

Tang Rou's Soft Mist was included as well. The Shattering the Lands had drawn the aggro of some of the NPCs, but she was as focused and determined as before as she continued to turn Empty Waves into a dead man.

Helpless...

Jiang Botao didn't give up, but Empty Waves' health was gone. Just like that, it was used up. Originally, he could have fought his way out of the crowd, circled around, perhaps even taken advantage of the NPCs like Fang Rui had.

However, Tang Rou's attack was only late by one second.

And this one second wasn't because she hesitated, but because Soft Mist needed this one second to reach him.

Tang Rou's resolve extinguished Jiang Botao's last hope.

One second, they were close; yet one second had decided who lived and who died.

Soft Mist lived, Empty Waves died...

The stadium was silent.

Tang Rou won? Happy won? This was a... 1v3?

After Fang Rui's diligent chase and Tang Rou's returned 1v3, the huge advantage that Zhou Zekai had won for Samsara with his 1v3 was erased just like that? Happy had made their comeback?

Before this round, the fact that Happy had closed the gap was already enough to cause the upset Samsara fans to boo their home team. And now, not only had the gap shrunk, they had lost. They'd had such a big advantage, such a big lead, and then Fang Rui, Tang Rou, two of Happy's players had completed a reversal?

Samsara's fans were beyond upset, they were upset to the extreme.

At this moment, a line of text suddenly appeared in the chat.

"Ah, no more opponents, I still have a lot of health..."

Soft Mist was going through the victory poses with the air of triumph. But behind her, Tang Rou was actually sighing, regretful. 1v3 still wasn't enough, did she still want to fight another for a 1v4?

How arrogant, how presumptuous!

But seeing how much health Soft Mist had remaining, Samsara's fans felt that they couldn't do anything.

Soft Mist still had 52% health left, a little over half.

Against Lu Boyuan, perfect win.

Against Du Ming, used 27% health.

Against Jiang Botao, used 21% health.

Not only had Tang Rou completed a 1v3, it was an extremely good 1v3. Killing 3 characters had required less than half her health. It wasn't any exaggeration to call this one-sided.

And the opponents she'd faced were strong. Du Ming's fame might have been a little smaller, but he was still part of Samsara's main, championship roster. Jiang Botao and Lu Boyuan didn't need to be talked about, these were All-Star level players.

And then, a mere rookie – even if she was the Best Rookie – using less than half health, had defeated all three of them?

This was an even stronger showing than Zhou Zekai. After Zhou Zekai completed his 1v3, Cloud Piercer had 45% health remaining, less than half. At that time, the whole stadium had been cheering for a 1v4...

So now, for Tang Rou with a character at 52% health to sigh about not having the chance for a 1v4, was it excessive at all?

The Samsara fans were extremely depressed!

Finally, Happy's fans came back to their senses. 1v3, Tang Rou had actually done it. In the group arena of the finals, she'd made a comeback against the championship team Samsara!

In just one moment, some people were laughing so hard they started to cry.

The image of Samsara's stadium cheering for a 1v4 after Zhou Zekai's 1v3 was still vivid in their minds! And now, seeing Tang Rou's sigh, they felt that it was extremely appropriate.

Thus, Happy's fans quickly began to shout in answer: "Good thing there's no more!"

It was common for fans in the stadium to spit trash talk at each other. Samsara's fans understood this kind of mockery.

They'd lost the battle, that was fact. They couldn't find anything to retort.

Their players weren't making a good showing! So, when the group arena officially ended and the two teams left the stage, Samsara's fans weren't polite. Boos!

Last round, Jiang Botao's outstanding performance had led the crowd to sing, but this time, they were extremely upset, seething with anger. The booing was non-negotiable.

They'd had such a huge lead, yet the opponent had caught up, and ultimately they'd been beaten by a rookie completing a 1v3. It was frankly a disgrace.

What were the players doing? Had they gotten too proud and complacent after their lead?

The crowd booted like crazy, not just to vent their frustration, but also to send a reminder to the team, to make their players wake up.

They couldn't continue like this in the upcoming team competition.

During the rest period between the group arena and the team competition, the stadium never quieted down. After the huge ups and downs of the group arena, both Happy and Samsara chose to return to their prep rooms to rest.

Both player areas were empty, yet the booing didn't stop.

And after seeing high point after high point during this group arena, the pro players watching had also gotten excited, and could no longer watch from a purely rational perspective.

"I'd place a bet, if Samsara really could send up one more person, Tang Rou would have actually gotten a 1v4!" Huang Shaotian's excitement right now was rather evident.

"Samsara's morale has definitely suffered a heavy blow. Their adjustment during this intermission is especially important." Xiao Shiqin liked to make general observations.

"Even Samsara's fans can't take it anymore." Zhang Jiale felt the atmosphere of the stadium. He was fairly sensitive to the mood of fans.

"This is the first time I've heard Samsara get booed here," sighed Yang Cong, who'd been competing in the pro circle for seven years now.

"Same for all of us," said a number of people.

"Honestly speaking, do you guys think Samsara was playing poorly?" Chu Yunxiu suddenly said.

"Sun Xiang was pretty good, Zhou Zekai doesn't need to be mentioned." There was no debate about these two players that Tang Hao named.

And after these two?

"Lu Boyuan's condition wasn't very good," said Han Wenqing.

"Du Ming's condition wasn't too bad, though," Wang Jiexi nodded.

"Jiang Botao's plan was fairly clear, and the execution was also quite good, but unfortunately..." Yu Wenzhou trailed off.

"Unfortunately, Tang Rou's performance was better!" After the three major captains commented, Zhang Xinjie finished the sentence that Yu Wenzhou had left unspoken.

Yes, that was how it was.

Whoever played better would win. The principle was just that simple.

Competitions really were decided by one side doing well and the other doing worse and losing. One side does well, yet the other side does better, this kind of helplessness was the main theme on the battlefield.

The pro players didn't really agree with the boos of the stadium, but there was nothing to be done. Tang Rou had played a 1v3. That performance was just too sharp, too powerful, too domineering. Even though Du Ming and Jiang Botao had been in good condition, they could only pale in comparison.

How would the two teams play the team competition?

Right now, everyone was already thinking about the team battle that would decide the final victor. The map for the team competition had already been randomly chosen. Because the two teams had both returned to their prep rooms to rest, when the map info was broadcast to the stadium, it was simultaneously sent to the prep rooms of the two teams.

Chapter 1674: The Team Roster to Sprint for the Championship

Abandoned Capital in the Heavens.

When the audience saw the information about the final team battle map, Happy and Samsara got the information at the same time in their respective prep rooms.

The digital display screen, the holographic projection, the televised broadcast, and the small screens in the two teams' prep rooms, they all simultaneously presented an overview of this map.

Everyone was shocked!

In the holographic projection, what appeared onstage was a circular island peacefully floating in midair, bathed in starlight.

The pro players immediately began discussing what they saw.

"Insta-kill map?"

This was the first thing they thought.

A so-called insta-kill map referred to a map that had areas where a character's health would instantly drop to zero. In the "Inevitable Confrontation" map of the group arena just earlier, both ends of the map had had an "intruders die" area, which made it seem like an insta-kill map. However, because those "intruders die" areas didn't directly kill the characters, but rather relied on the NPCs attacking them, this meant that the players could still defend themselves. Therefore, "Inevitable Confrontation" couldn't be considered an insta-kill map.

On the other hand, this Abandoned Capital in the Heavens map was floating in the air. If a character reached the edge of this map, they would fall off. This could be an insta-kill mechanism.

The final battle would take place on an insta-kill map?

The pro players all discussed amongst themselves.

The more important a match, the more a team would tend to be conservative and cautious. Unexpected things tended to happen on insta-kill maps, so if a team had the choice, they would tend not to select an insta-kill map for an important match. Everyone hoped to achieve victory through their own strength and hard work, rather than be suppressed by this kind of unexpectedness.

Yet now, the final battle of the playoffs was taking place on an insta-kill map?

Just as everyone was talking about this, they suddenly saw a veil of light expanding above the island, eventually enveloping the entire map. Next, a simple explanation appeared, and the first sentence ended the pro players' discussion.

This was not an insta-kill map. The shroud of light would protect characters from falling off of the island.

The pro players instantly starting booing.

Couldn't have said that earlier! Made everyone discuss for nothing.

The camera zoomed in, beginning to display the features of this map.

A bleak and desolate expanse of ruins appeared before everyone's eyes. Two structures that looked like Aztec pyramids were the most preserved features of these ruins. A quiet river flowed behind the two structures, and on the other side was a tranquil stretch of forest. Bathed in starlight, the tree trunks, leaves, the shades of gray all seemed to be tinted a faint blue.

In front of the two structures, trees were also growing out of the city ruins, quietly erasing the remnants of this ancient city.

As the various pro players saw this map, they automatically began drawing up strategies and how they would play, based on their team's style and class roster. And Happy and Samsara, after seeing this map, began to formally decide their roster for the team battle.

The atmosphere in Samsara's prep room had been oppressive this whole time. After being overtaken by the opponent performing that kind of 1v3, their morale would take a blow, no matter how strong or solid their confidence was. Right now, everyone was fairly depressed.

At times like these, someone needed to say something. But Samsara's captain was Zhou Zekai, who'd had a flawless performance in the group arena. Forcing him to say something now would just be too hard on him.

Vice-captain Jiang Botao was usually the one who led the motivational words and such before a match, but in the group arena just now, he had been the anchor who was unable to stop Tang Rou from playing a 1v3 and completing Happy's comeback. He was part of the reason for damaging Samsara's morale, so if he said something now, the effect probably wouldn't be very good. Jiang Botao clearly understood this point, and so he didn't say anything either.

So, when they returned to their prep room, the first to open their mouth was actually Sun Xiang.

"Everyone, get your spirits up! It's only one point, all we need to do is win it back in the team competition," Sun Xiang said.

These were the words, this was the logic, everyone nodded after hearing it, but after that... there was no after that.

Everyone heard Sun Xiang's words, and they tried to snap out of it, but ultimately this depression in their hearts couldn't be dispelled.

At that moment, the map that they would be using for the team competition was announced.

“Let’s look at the map first,” Fang Minghua said.

The prep room quieted down. Everyone watched the map introduction.

Very soon, the introduction finished.

Abandoned Capital in the Heavens, it floated in midair, very close to the stars, but the contents of this map weren’t especially new or unique. It was just another environment that they weren’t too familiar with.

But faced with this unfamiliar environment, they still needed some strategy and planning. Before that, they needed to decide on their roster, so that their plans could be specific.

Everyone realized what was about to happen next. Samsara’s reserve players, even though they knew that it was extremely unlikely that they would be appearing in this finals match, still couldn’t help but hold a sliver of hope in their hearts.

Who would be fighting in the final match?

Fang Minghua finally spoke once again: “Boyuan, your condition today isn’t too good.”

Lu Boyuan was startled.

He knew what Fang Minghua meant by these words, and he was saddened. Of course, he didn’t want to lose the chance to appear in the final battle, but he knew that Fang Minghua spoke the truth. Last match he hadn’t been in good condition, and during the two days’ rest he was in deep sorrow as he made up his mind to play well today. Yet, it hadn’t played out the way he’d hoped.

The team hadn’t immediately given up on him when they’d seen his subpar condition. They gave him time to adjust. But now, in the team battle that would determine the final victory, this truly wasn’t the time to place a bet on whether he could settle back into his normal condition.

“Yes...” Lu Boyuan was saddened, but he wasn’t surprised. He couldn’t let his subpar condition continue to drag down the team. He accepted Fang Minghua’s judgment, and he would respect the decision that was coming.

Fang Minghua discussed with Zhou Zekai and Jiang Botao for a few moments, and finally this decision was announced.

“Then, Boyuan, you can take a break during the team battle!” Ultimately, it was Jiang Botao, as vice-captain, who made the announcement.

“Understood.” Lu Boyuan nodded. He was unhappy, but the team’s victory was the most important. Individual feelings had to be set aside for now.

“Team competition, Wu Qi, you’ll replace Boyuan in the starting lineup,” Jiang Botao announced.

“Alright.” Wu Qi nodded.

Before Sun Xiang had joined, Lu Boyuan, Wu Qi, and Du Ming were all part of Samsara’s main roster. After Sun Xiang had joined and firmly taken up one spot, there were only two spots left for the three of them.

Lu Boyuan was an All-Star, somewhat more famous than the other two, so his spot was naturally a bit more stable. Thus, Wu Qi and Du Ming entered into rotation.

Last match, Wu Qi hadn't played. This time, now that Lu Boyuan's condition wasn't good, this player who'd also been a main part of their consecutive championship roster finally had the chance to play in the final battle. Even though his popularity was a bit lower than Lu Boyuan's, within the team, everyone had the same trust in him as they did for every other player.

"Play well!" Lu Boyuan was the first to go up, patting Wu Qi's arm.

"I will." Wu Qi nodded. He didn't seem very outwardly excited.

At this moment, Du Ming's heart was beating very rapidly.

Wu Qi's spot was confirmed, and Zhou Zekai, Jiang Botao, Sun Xiang, Fang Minghua, the spots of these four players were very set. Then for the final spot, would he be playing?

Even though Du Ming frequently appeared in the starting roster, his position wasn't stable. Even Lu Boyuan had been switched off, which instantly caused him to worry. After all, he had been 1v3'd in the group arena...

"Du Ming."

But just as he was worrying, he suddenly heard his name called. Du Ming immediately stood up.

"Team competition, you'll be sixth player."

"Ah? Oh!" Du Ming was overjoyed. But he was considerate of Lu Boyuan, who'd just been switched off, so all he did was quietly clench his fist.

After that, it was basically a formality to announce Zhou Zekai, Jiang Botao, Sun Xiang, and Fang Minghua. No one would think that these players would sit on the bench for such a critical match, unless they were in really bad condition.

"Then, let us six players chase that one point!" Fang Minghua said, after the roster was finalized.

No fierce speeches, no light humor. But in the very normal process of studying the map and deciding the roster, the mood of the Samsara players gradually returned to normal. When the roster was finalized and they announced they were going to win this point, everyone's spirits were jolted.

For the championship. Everyone was very clear on what they'd been chasing all this time.

Did it need to be said?

No.

All they needed was to walk onstage, and win.

They'd done this kind of thing once, twice, three times, many many times. In these past three years, they were the team that best understood how to win.

"Let's go!" In the end, the silent captain Zhou Zekai only said these two words. In this aspect, he really couldn't be considered a satisfactory captain. But after saying these two words, he walked at the very

front, leading all of Samsara's players, those who would be playing and those who wouldn't be. Together, they walked that player passageway that was neither long nor short, returning to the main stadium area.

Booing?

There was no more booing.

The booing had been to express their dissatisfaction with their earlier condition. And now, as Samsara walked toward the moments that would decide their final victory, what they needed was encouragement, and so what the fans gave them was encouragement.

Applause and cheers greeted Team Samsara's players.

And not long after them, Happy's players also returned to the main stadium area.

It wouldn't be long until the final team battle began. Everyone was paying attention to the player areas, guessing at the team rosters.

The judge appeared, and called for the two teams' players. In each of the two player areas, six players stood up.

Samsara: Zhou Zekai, Jiang Botao, Sun Xiang, Wu Qi, Du Ming, Fang Minghua.

Applause. No matter who from Samsara was playing, the Samsara fans in the audience would give nothing but support and well-wishes.

And Happy? They also already had six people walking toward the stage.

Ye Xiu, Su Mucheng, Tang Rou, Qiao Yifan, Bao Rongxing, An Wenyi.

Chapter 1675: We Will

When Samsara's six players went onstage, everyone instantly noticed that their roster lacked Lu Boyuan, but no one was too surprised. After all, everyone had seen that he wasn't doing too well, and so it wasn't unexpected that he would remain sitting in the player area.

But on Happy's side, when the six players came out without Fang Rui, everyone was shocked. Even Samsara's fans were confused as to why Happy didn't send Fang Rui up.

After all, in recent matches, Fang Rui's performance had been too eye-catching. Last match, MVP, just that was enough to prove this. And today, in the group arena, even though Tang Rou had been the one to complete the comeback with her 1v3, the sound of comeback had begun with Fang Rui.

Who had been the one to ultimately take down Zhou Zekai, who'd just completed a 1v3 and whose character was still at 45%? Fang Rui!

And who had been the one to knock away most of Chaotic Cloudy Mountain's health? Also Fang Rui.

Such an outstanding performance, yet he wasn't playing in the final battle?

Discussion began in the audience, and those who paid attention to news after matches immediately remembered the press conference of last match. They'd asked about Fang Rui, and Ye Xiu had indeed said, Fang Rui had worn himself out, and it was uncertain if he'd be able to play in the final match.

Most people had treated this as a misleading smoke bomb. Especially when Fang Rui did finally appear in the group arena, many people who remembered this started discussing it again.

But now, Fang Rui was still sitting in the player area. As Happy's players began their final sprint toward the championship, this player on their team with the highest salary and the strongest character was watching from the sidelines.

Watching the backs of those six as they walked onstage, Fang Rui was also saddened. But he knew clearly that now wasn't the time to challenge his own spirit and stamina. He would be better off trusting his own teammates. Happy's players were all outstanding. Who said that they couldn't do this without him?

"This excellent chance to shine, I leave it to you youngsters!" After returning to the prep room, this was what Fang Rui grandly announced.

He couldn't see it himself, but from the worry revealed in the eyes of his teammates that couldn't lie, he knew that he couldn't hide his condition from them anymore.

"Great, leave it to me!" Steamed Bun said enthusiastically.

Fang Rui was gratified. If everyone could be like Steamed Bun, he thought, this would certainly be a very sweet world.

"Senior, you've worked hard." Qiao Yifan was always rather sincere. He clearly understood the reality of the situation.

Fang Rui patted Qiao Yifan, and his attitude was also very sincere. "Without me, you guys will be the ones working very hard."

Everyone laughed. But after laughing, they felt that these words, although shameless, were true. Fang Rui's strength, Boundless Sea's strength, were stronger than the new players and new accounts of Happy. Without him, the rest of them really would have to work very hard.

"Then we'll work harder." Ye Xiu nodded, and began listing names. "Team battle, me, Mucheng, Qiao Yifan, An Wenyi..."

He named four first, and those who'd been named all nodded.

Ye Xiu's gaze turned to Tang Rou. "Tired after that 1v3?"

"I'm still sunk in regret!" Tang Rou said.

Yes, regret! Those words that Tang Rou had said after that 1v3, almost everyone thought that it was mockery, but in reality, it really was regret, pure and simple. She felt that she could still challenge more players, but unfortunately, because of the match format, there'd been none left for her to fight.

“Alright, you’re about to have five – no, six more opponents,” Ye Xiu said. “Team battle, we five will start, and then, sixth player...”

His gaze swept over. Luo Ji’s heart rate quickened, and it became difficult for him to breathe. Will it be me? The finals? Final battle? Me? I’m nervous! But, I’m excited...

These imaginings were suddenly shoved into the wall by Steamed Bun.

“Move aside, this sort of thing should obviously be left to the eldest brother!” Steamed Bun said.

“Mm, sixth player will be Steamed Bun!” Ye Xiu announced, and then he quickly explained to Luo Ji, “But it’s not because you can’t beat him!”

“I understand...” Luo Ji nodded. And standing in the corner, Mo Fan, who always had an emotionless expression, now showed a flicker of disappointment across his face. But he didn’t step forward to try and argue anything, and only squeezed his hands into fists.

Ye Xiu saw it, and he knew that Mo Fan was very dissatisfied. Of the five people who’d appeared in the group arena, he was the only one who’d accomplished nothing, all because he didn’t know the design of the map and accidentally triggered the ambushing troops. In the end, no matter how hard he tried, he’d still lost completely.

Mo Fan wasn’t in poor condition. If not for that accident, no one knew how that battle would have played out.

But in the end, Ye Xiu still chose not to have Mo Fan appear in the team battle.

Mo Fan didn’t say anything, but Ye Xiu still gave him an explanation. What he said was simply what he’d told him long before, a sentence that was very simple and very ordinary: “For now, you’re still not used to playing in the team battle.”

Mo Fan’s face was still expressionless, like every time Ye Xiu said anything to him. But this time, his fists, which were already clenched, tightened further.

It wasn’t that he hadn’t played in a team battle before. During the regular season, Ye Xiu would still sometimes put him into the team battle. But unfortunately, after this season, although Mo Fan had made breakthroughs in his individual technique, he was still lacking when it came to playing in a team. Perhaps it was because of his natural personality, but even though he understood that team battles required teammates to coordinate, his performance was still extremely mechanical and clumsy.

Not used to it, not suitable for it...

Other people could see it, and Mo Fan himself could feel it even more clearly. Ye Xiu only repeated this point, but it was convincing enough, because that was just the reason.

And then, Wei Chen.

For him, Ye Xiu also had an explanation, but it was only two words.

“You understand,” Ye Xiu said.

“You bastard, don’t you dare lose!” Wei Chen slapped Ye Xiu.

“Every season you were here, I was the champion,” Ye Xiu said.

“Fuck!” Wei Chen’s expression darkened, but it was the truth. During those two seasons, he and Ye Xiu had still been enemies.

“So this time, it should be the same,” Ye Xiu said.

“As long as we win, I’ll be your mascot,” Wei Chen said vehemently.

“Mascot...” Everyone stared at Wei Chen.

“How disgusting, just give me a cigarette!” Ye Xiu said decisively.

Let’s go, the final battle!

Happy walked out of the prep room. And now, Ye Xiu was walking with five others onto this ultimate battlefield.

Once again, standing in this moment.

Ye Xiu felt it was very familiar, and yet at the same time, not.

Cheers, shouts, applause, it was all for the title that was about to be claimed.

Who will be the champions?

“We will!” Samsara’s six players said.

“We will!” Happy’s six players also said.

The battle began.

Chapter 1676: Came, Left

The battle began, the map loaded, the characters loaded.

The abandoned capital floating in the sky seemed so close to the stars. The entire world seemed to be in only one color, that gray-white suffused with a hint of pale blue. Under this starlight, even the multicolored equipment of the characters who had just loaded in seemed to be layered over with this light.

Soft Mist lifted her spear, One Inch Ash gripped his tachi, and they waited for Ye Xiu’s instructions.

Ye Xiu was a seasoned veteran, from the Glory game to the professional stage, there was nothing he hadn’t experienced before. But in this moment, he couldn’t help but feel emotion swelling in his heart.

From a small Level 1 character in the new server, after two and a half years, he was finally standing here once again. Right now, the two standing in front of him were the ones who had been walking alongside him since that very beginning. Aside from them, there was also Steamed Bun, still waiting in the substitute area, ready to come onstage at any time. And Su Mucheng, who had experienced with him the defeat they’d suffered the last time he was in this moment.

It was this group of people. Two and a half years ago, they were still in the new server of Glory, fighting with the pioneers of the other team guilds for dungeon records.

Today, after two and a half years, they were directly engaged with Glory's top team, striving for that proof of ultimate glory, the championship.

They did it!

Ye Xiu knew that, in this moment, there were certainly countless people who thought this. Starting from a new server, starting from zero, starting over, and at last, reaching the finals. It was simply incredible.

Yes, it was indeed incredible.

But, did that mean that they'd done it? Did this count as success?

Not yet.

The standard dictionary definition of "success" was obtaining the anticipated outcome. Achieving a goal, that was called success. The result they'd anticipated, the goal they wished to achieve, there was only one: winning the championship!

Thus, they were still one step away from success.

"Start!"

Ye Xiu's order came down, and Lord Grim took the first step outward, closely followed by the other four Happy players.

"Start! Is Ye Xiu treating this as running a dungeon or killing a Boss? Still saying 'start'?" In the broadcast, Pan Lin was chuckling, ridiculing Ye Xiu's choice of word.

"Heh, these people here, most of them were players Ye Xiu pulled from in-game!" Li Yibo said. Happy had been playing the Alliance for a year now, and they'd garnered such attention as they fought their way into the finals. They'd accepted a number of interviews by now, and everyone knew a lot about their history. Aside from Su Mucheng and Fang Rui, who had officially transferred, the rest of them, including Blue Rain's former captain Wei Chen, were all people that Ye Xiu had encountered in-game and pulled together to build this Team Happy.

In the beginning, they might have really been like what many ordinary gamers were familiar with, just a group of close friends in-game. But after they'd fought down this road together, this group of close friends was already standing on Glory's highest stage.

Start!

This time, their goal was no longer any dungeon record, or a wild Boss; it was Team Samsara, it was the championship.

Happy's spawn point was on the west, and right now, the five of them were moving eastward in formation. There weren't any clear road signs or markings on the map, but Happy's direction was quite clear; they were headed toward the western Aztec-style pyramid. Once they were close, however, they

didn't stop below this pyramid, nor did they climb it. They turned north and circled around to the back of the pyramid.

The back side winked with light. It was impossible to see if the tranquil river was flowing. Happy tested how deep the water ran, but they didn't take the water route. They simply continued east along the back of the pyramid.

From this moment, everyone became even more vigilant. The five characters' views were pointed in five different directions, covering every inch of their surroundings. Theoretically, even if the two teams were moving toward each other at the highest speed, it was still too early for them to meet. Even so, after the experience of last round, where the teams' spawn points were random and not necessarily opposite each other, both Happy and Samsara included this possibility in their calculations, and entered battle condition early.

Soon, Happy's five reached the end of the pyramid's back. The other pyramid that was still intact now entered their sight, and then, they saw the silhouettes of Samsara's five.

Samsara's choice in the beginning of the match was also to first reach the pyramid that was close to them, but afterward, unlike Happy, they hadn't continued to advance. After reaching the pyramid, they began to investigate the surrounding area. Right now, the five characters were all studying, and although they seemed to be scattered, in reality, they maintained a formation that allowed them to coordinate battle at any moment.

When Happy walked out from behind the pyramid and saw Samsara, Samsara also immediately saw Happy. In that moment, both sides stopped moving. They maintained their distance and observed from afar.

The scene was still, but their chats instantly began flying with messages.

Because it was a completely unknown map, they couldn't make any detailed plans based off of the simple introduction given right before the battle. In battles on random maps, there was significantly more communication and direction. Now that the two teams saw each other, Samsara's side instantly began laying out plans, messages flashing out one after another. There was rapid discussion, and a final conclusion. But the players' characters didn't move, not until the messages practically filled the screen. Finally, there was a message: "Go!"

Everyone had read every line of instructions. When the final order came, the five players and the five characters began moving simultaneously.

Long-range, short-range, healer, each of the classes performed their duties and joined together, taking advantage of the special characteristics of the map that they'd observed so far. They swiftly arranged themselves in a satisfactory formation.

And then, on Happy's side, an order was finally issued as well.

"Retreat," said Ye Xiu.

Happy left.

They'd arrived casually from the back of the pyramid, without probing, without spying. The five characters had rushed out as though pressed for time, and stopped as soon as they saw Samsara.

And then Samsara had carefully arranged themselves, making all sorts of preparations for battle, able to advance and attack, able to retreat and defend. They'd taken everything into consideration.

And then Happy retreated.

Samsara had actively prepared everything, but they didn't have an opponent...

"..."

In the channel, Zhou Zekai sent a rare message. It was just a string of ellipses. Even though he didn't speak much in the first place, "reticence" and "speechlessness" were still two very different moods.

"What's Happy doing?" Pan Lin exclaimed. Over on Samsara's side, because of the numerous communications and instructions, even though there were many code-like abbreviations, everyone could still understand the basics. But Happy's side had no communications. Ye Xiu said "start," and they'd set out; Ye Xiu said "retreat," and they'd withdrawn.

"Mm, watch for now," Li Yibo said. It wasn't clear whether "watch for now" referred to Happy's plan, or was directing the audience to simply watch for now...

Right now, the ones who wanted to understand Happy's plan the most was still Samsara. But they didn't make any move. After expressing speechlessness, they immediately resumed their investigation of the area, as though Happy had never appeared.

No clash, just a sighting.

The ordinary gamers were baffled, and the broadcast commentators needed to "watch for now," but the pro players were already beginning to discuss.

"Happy... probably wants to sound out Samsara's mood?" Yu Wenzhou said. Happy's plan, that basically meant Ye Xiu's plan. It wasn't just Pan Lin and Li Yibo, even Yu Wenzhou, a master-level player, didn't dare to speak confidently.

"Samsara seems very steady," Xiao Shiqin said. Things on the psychological level weren't easy to see through. But just from the way that Samsara ignored Happy's baiting-like movement, at least they weren't carelessly led by the nose by Happy.

Then, what next?

Next, the broadcast screen and the live projection were both split in two, so that everyone could clearly see both sides' movements.

Samsara continued to investigate that area, Happy began to move upward along the pyramid from the back side. But Ye Xiu's Lord Grim, after walking about halfway up, suddenly circled around from the back of the pyramid.

Samsara, naturally, was waiting for any movement from this side. As soon as they saw Lord Grim appear, they immediately had preparations.

“Don’t panic!” Ye Xiu actually sent a message in the chat.

“I just came to take a look,” said Ye Xiu, and then his Lord Grim actually just sat down right there on the eastern slope of that pyramid...

“You guys keep working,” Ye Xiu continued.

“Little Zhou, look at 3 o’clock behind you, isn’t that platform perfect for some sniping cover?” Ye Xiu actually began to point out things to Samsara.

Chapter 1677: Hitting the Mountain to Warn the Tiger

Everyone was stunned!

This was the finals, the final battle, the moment that would decide the outcome of a year of hard work!

Unity, tension, seriousness, those should all be expected, but surely they could pass on liveliness?

Yet now, while Samsara was very seriously studying the environment and preparing for battle, what was Ye Xiu’s Lord Grim doing? He was like a hooligan. A hooligan would be squatting at the intersection just next to the school and whistling at the cute girls that passed by; Lord Grim was sitting on the pyramid and throwing all sorts of critical comments at Samsara.

This scene wasn’t right. It wasn’t serious!

But no matter how wrong it was, Ye Xiu was doing just this, and the words were already spoken. This match simply had this kind of style and rhythm. It still had to be watched, and the explanation and analysis still had to be made, no?

And so the broadcast followed what Ye Xiu said, cutting to a close-up shot of the 3 o’clock direction behind Cloud Piercer, particularly that “platform” that Ye Xiu mentioned.

Once this close-up was given, everyone took a look, and those that understood realized that Ye Xiu’s words were completely correct. This location really was a very good sniping point.

“Ah, Little Jiang, your Wave Slash can completely lock that path on your left, did you realize?”

“Wu Qi, that ambush point in the 11 o’clock direction is a pretty good place to hide!”

“Minghua, did you find the best place to heal from? If you found it, then go and stand there, what are you still spinning around for?”

“And also, guy using One Autumn Leaf, did you notice the distance between those two broken walls behind One Autumn Leaf? If Evil Annihilation is held horizontally, it can’t pass through that space. Did you guys increase Evil Annihilation’s length? It wouldn’t have been like this before.”

In an instant, one sentence per person. The broadcast couldn’t even keep up switching back and forth between shots, and ultimately just split the screen into multiple sections. These four people who were pointed out by Ye Xiu, each got their own section of the screen...

Everyone immediately realized, just like when he'd been talking to Zhou Zekai, Ye Xiu wasn't just making things up. The things he'd pointed out about these four players, whether big or small, were all very real issues.

But would the Samsara pros really be incapable of discovering these things themselves? Of course not. After all, they'd been investigating this area for longer than Ye Xiu had. But the thing was, Ye Xiu's Lord Grim had just casually sat down on the pyramid and casually said these things, yet every needle he'd sent had drawn blood. This demonstrated his skill. Added on to his bearing, it really felt like he was giving pointers to Samsara.

"Immature!"

"Shameless!"

"Disgusting!"

A few Samsara fans decried Ye Xiu's actions. It had to be said, trash talk could sometimes attack even the audience.

But those who were at a higher level, especially the pro players, knew that this wasn't that simple. Ye Xiu's actions weren't just to show off from above. He was hitting the mountain to startle the tiger, warning Samsara by saying: be careful, I can see through all of your plans.

And to be able to do this, Ye Xiu had made good use of the map.

The two pyramids on this map could be called the high points, but because they were so large, even a Launcher, the class with the longest attack range, could not effectively use supportive attacks when standing on the very peak. Furthermore, attacks from halfway up the pyramid would be extremely limited. Therefore, the high points of these pyramids could only be used as observation points, not any strategic points.

Thus, Ye Xiu discovered the reconnaissance use of this location, and looking down upon them, he began to analyze Samsara's deployment. Before anything else, he was attacking Samsara on a psychological level. If Samsara could not restrain themselves and immediately came to attack Ye Xiu's Lord Grim, then they would definitely suffer for it.

Lord Grim didn't need to be mentioned, and the other four Happy players were already prepared at another side of the pyramid. If Samsara came their way to attack, Happy would have the map advantage.

But when it came to pro players, the chances of that happening were far too small. In this kind of critical battle, Samsara definitely would not take an action like this that would put them at a clear disadvantage.

But Happy still prepared for this possibility. Even though this was such a small chance, they would not pass it up.

Samsara, as expected, was not so hasty. After being criticized by Ye Xiu, they only hesitated for a moment, but afterward, everyone began to carefully discuss in their team chat. Directly charge Lord Grim, sitting halfway up the pyramid? That possibility wasn't even mentioned.

The match seemed to be locked in a stalemate.

The small chance that Happy had hoped for didn't happen, and Samsara, having had all their plans and strategies exposed by the opponent, weren't sure how to continue.

Switch to an area that Happy couldn't observe? Then what if Happy just didn't come? Would this battle of this match be triggered by the judge getting involved and forcing the two teams to meet?

Happy was patiently waiting for Samsara's movements, and Ye Xiu wasn't idle. He helpfully named another few places on the map for Samsara to use, even some that accounted for strategic coordination between the players.

Samsara was finally no longer silent.

"God Ye has seen through us completely!" Vice-captain Jiang Botao spoke.

"What, like it's hard?" Ye Xiu said.

"Since you've seen through us, why not come give it a try and attack?" Jiang Botao said.

It was a very clear provocation, so clear that it was uninteresting.

"Sure, coming."

Who would have thought that Ye Xiu's Lord Grim actually just stood up, and Happy's other four players immediately appeared on the side of the pyramid and began to charge down.

"Beat them at their own game, make the opponents second-guess." Watching the match, Tiny Herb's Wang Jiexi guessed at the intent behind Ye Xiu's actions.

Such a clear provocation, yet Happy had actually directly accepted it. In Samsara's shoes, who wouldn't be second-guessing? Wang Jiexi had the omniscient view, and could see Happy's team chat, so he knew that Ye Xiu hadn't given any detailed strategic instructions to Happy. If not for that, he might also be wondering whether Ye Xiu actually had a strategy that could break through their arrangement.

"He definitely doesn't. If he did, he would have attacked way earlier."

"Right, and Happy doesn't have any plans in their team chat. This is a random map, they only just saw this map for a bit from above. Their communication through glances isn't that incredible, right?"

"Yeah, it's just a false show of strength, to make Samsara worry."

"Then after that?"

The pro players were all discussing, and their opinions were essentially the same as Wang Jiexi's. But after that, they all got stuck on this question.

After that?

Let Samsara second-guess, and then? And then Happy would just charge forth and chaotically fight, without any sort of plan?

That was completely illogical!

This was an advantage of random maps for the audience. Because the teams couldn't make any secret preparations before the match, more directions were needed during the battle. The strategic plans of the two teams could be completely seen from their team chats.

But right now, Happy had actually had no plans. This was simply too irrational.

What were they trying to do?

Chapter 1678: Wording

Was it a feint? Or was it a bluff?

There seemed to be only these two possibilities. Which one was it?

The viewers were merely guessing for the fun of it, but for Samsara, the guessing would affect whether they won or lost this match.

As a result, Samsara's guess was crucial. Everyone was staring intently at Samsara's team chat, observing the rapid discussion taking place there.

Samsara didn't hesitate. They didn't waver because of these possibilities because they didn't even bother discussing whether it was a feint or a bluff. From the beginning, the direction of Samsara's discussion was to look for a solution to both possibilities.

Samsara rushed out.

Whether it was a feint or a bluff, Ye Xiu was targeting their understanding of the terrain. Samsara had given up on utilizing the area that they were familiar with. Instead, they chose to leave and welcome Happy directly.

Did Ye Xiu's words really have that much of a psychological impact on them?

Not necessarily!

But Samsara didn't lower their guard. It was similar to when Happy had been on top of the pyramid, fully prepared in the unlikely scenario that Samsara would brainlessly charge up the pyramid. In contrast, instead of just being prepared, Samsara wanted to eliminate even the unlikely of scenarios.

Because of Ye Xiu's imposing air, everyone felt like the atmosphere of the match had been ruined. In reality, from these small details and from the way both teams approached this fight, the atmosphere wasn't ruined at all. It was completely in line with how the finals should be: careful and cautious as if this was their last hope, refusing to let even the slightest possibility go.

Finally, the two teams met.

Samsara charged out from the ruins, while Happy charged down from above the pyramid, losing their height advantage.

The two sides gradually approached, intentionally controlling their pace. Their footsteps were neither too fast nor too slow.

Dancing Rain raised her handcannon. Cloud Piercer raised his dual guns. These two long-ranged classes were about to enter each other's attack range.

But the first to erupt wasn't the two long-ranged attackers, but Happy's team chat.

"An, fall back."

"Tang, right, go around 3."

"Qiao, right, follow 2."

"Su, stay back, go high."

Four orders in quick succession. Go around three? Follow two? Most of the viewers were confused. A few of the more attentive ones, who paid attention to how teams communicated with each other, could understand the general meaning behind these two phrases.

Pan Lin and Li Yibo, the two commentators, had to be mentioned. Even though the two often made mistakes in their analysis, the two were quite diligent with their work. If they weren't skilled enough to understand the team's intentions, then there wasn't much they could do about it. However, the two had spent time going over things that could be studied like how the team shot callers worded their orders to the team.

Although Happy was a new team, their shotcalling style and wording wasn't too strange. After all, their shot caller was Ye Xiu, who had led Excellent Era for close to eight years. His same shotcalling habits had been brought over to Happy, so Pan Lin and Li Yibo didn't need to put in much effort to grasp it again.

Most people were confused by the phrases like "go around three" and "follow two", but Pan Lin was already yelling in astonishment: "Go around three? Follow two? This map..."

Pan Lin's astonishment wasn't towards Ye Xiu's arrangements but the way he worded his orders. Because from what he understood, the phrases "go around three" and "follow two" were frequently used in their home game matches. In other words, they really only used these phrases in maps that they were familiar with.

The numbers "two" and "three" weren't coordinates, but rather an agreed upon direction. It was suitable for some maps, while unsuitable for others. But for a random map...

A random map?

Pan Lin blanked. Li Yibo had realized it faster than Pan Lin. He had been trying to piece together his understanding of these two phrases and the map's terrain, and he soon discovered that the pieces fit together perfectly.

"This terrain..."

"Happy had observed this terrain from up on top of the pyramid," Li Yibo said.

"But they never communicated anything about it in the team chat!" Pan Lin said.

"Certain agreed upon things don't need to be communicated..." Li Yibo said.

Changes had begun happening in Happy's formation. Tang Rou and Qiao Yifan started moving towards the right, while Su Mucheng and An Wenyi had started moving back. Ye Xiu's Lord Grim started moving to the left, leaving the front completely open.

For a moment, Happy's healer was in Samsara's direct line of sight. This seemed to be a good opportunity for them to charge right through the middle to him, but Ye Xiu, Tang Rou, and Qiao Yifan were clearly planning on surrounding them.

A pincer?

It looked like one!

But seeing the orders "go around three" and "follow two," Li Yibo explained that Happy's intentions were to "separate the enemies!"

A random map has its advantages!

Li Yibo sighed with emotion. His eyes were practically brimming with tears of excitement. If every match had shot callers clearly listing out their team's every move, then he would never make humiliating mistakes in his analysis. Communication through glances, tacit understanding, Li Yibo hated those deeply.

"Let's see how Samsara will respond. Right now is indeed a good opportunity for them to directly go for Happy's healer, but that would only be the case if Happy's goal is to pincer them. In reality, Happy's goal is to separate Samsara, as a counter to Samsara's attempt to charge straight through the middle..." Li Yibo said.

"What will Samsara do... they haven't said anything in their team chat, but they're starting to make adjustments too..." Pan Lin shouted, "Cloud Piercer is lined up in the middle, One Autumn Leaf in front, healer at the center, Jiang Botao and Wu Qi behind... Samsara is planning on engaging in a frontal assault!!"

A frontal assault?

The expressions on the spectating pro players were grave.

That was what their formation looked like, but it was too early to tell if that was their plan. Pan Lin elaborated on the positions of each of Samsara's players, but he didn't go in order of when they moved into position.

This ordering was crucial. Communication through glances was done starting from one character, creating a butterfly effect where everyone else would react and fall into place. Samsara's change in formation had started with Zhou Zekai's Cloud Piercer, and Pan Lin had mentioned him first. By the time he had started discussing this point, Samsara's formation had been completed. He had just been going in order from front to back. But if you looked more closely, there was a difference in who moved first and who moved later. Zhou Zekai had been the first to move because he was the team's core. Next was Jiang Botao's Empty Waves, and then Fang Minghua, Wu Qi, and finally Sun Xiang.

Sun Xiang moving last wasn't because he was the new player on the team or because he was the most lacking in synergy with the team.

It was actually the opposite. Sun Xiang moving last was precisely the reason for why the ordering mattered.

If Samsara had truly been planning on a full frontal assault, Sun Xiang's One Autumn Leaf, the team's spearpoint, should have been the fastest to react to Zhou Zekai's Cloud Piercer. Because this frontal assault would be led by him. He needed to be the first to act so that the others could respond to his actions accordingly.

But he moved last. The average viewer might not find anything strange about it, but to the pro players, it was suspicious. If Samsara's intentions were for a frontal assault, then this would be considered a mistake on Sun Xiang's part for being absent-minded.

However, this wasn't a mistake!

The steadiness that Samsara displayed in their formation gave the pro players a sense that Sun Xiang's lateness was to cover up something.

But what was it?

There wouldn't be a replay for it. For a moment, no one could see through it. They could only wait and see what would happen next.

Samsara continued forward!

It really did look like they planned on charging straight for Happy's healer.

Happy's left and right flank had formed and were beginning to converge...

Charge!

A character suddenly rushed out from Samsara's formation towards Happy's healer.

One Autumn Leaf?

No, Cloud Piercer!

Samsara's offense had begun, but the one at the front was Zhou Zekai's Cloud Piercer!

Chapter 1679: Interrupt

The sound of a gunshot wasn't surprising to anyone.

Long-ranged classes almost always made the first attack. However, Zhou Zekai's Cloud Piercer didn't just attack, he charged forward. In the blink of an eye, Sun Xiang's One Autumn Leaf was left behind.

What kind of rhythm was this?

Everyone watching was astonished, but their doubts didn't last long. Zhou Zekai's Cloud Piercer started attacking, and the rest of Team Samsara soon followed.

Did they attack too?

No!

None of the other four players coordinated attacks with Zhou Zekai. The four characters contracted the formation.

One Autumn Leaf, Laughing Song, Cruel Silence, the three of them formed a triangle, protecting the one in the center: Jiang Botao's Empty Waves.

Empty Waves began casting. Magic started to emanate around his shortsword, Divine Chain, as if it were trying to establish a connection with some sort of power.

Lightning Wave Formation!

The experienced players noticed the sparks of lightning flashing from Divine Chain and its surroundings, and deduced what Empty Waves was casting.

The pro players immediately figured out Samsara's plans.

It didn't matter whether Happy was trying to surround or separate them with a pincer. Under the protection of the Spellblade's Lightning Formation, Samsara would not be in danger. Zhou Zekai's Cloud Piercer became Samsara's main attacker, while the other four became his support. Samsara wasn't going to give Happy even the slightest opportunity.

"Can Happy interrupt it?" Pan Lin spoke. He realized where the crucial point lay.

The cameraman quickly switched viewpoints. The focus was first given to Su Mucheng's Dancing Rain. Then, the camera moved towards Empty Waves. Empty Waves' position was very subtle. It was just outside of Dancing Rain's range.

The camera turned again to Happy's other long-ranged character: Lord Grim.

Ye Xiu. Countless people were looking forward to what he would do. He always seemed to be able to do the impossible. Sure enough, Lord Grim started to move. He had originally been hiding in the ruins. Suddenly, with a flicker, he came out from behind a broken wall.

Gunshot!

But no sound could be heard.

Because gunshots had been ringing the entire time. Zhou Zekai's Cloud Piercer had open fired. Ye Xiu's Lord Grim sudden gunshot was perfectly in line with one of Cloud Piercer's gunshots. The two overlapped, one obscuring the other. The only sign that Lord Grim had fired his gun was a flash of light.

Everything had happened in an instant. The broadcast couldn't keep up with these changes just by switching between viewpoints.

Fortunately, for the live audience, the stadium's projection technology allowed them to see a more comprehensive view of the battlefield. It was just that the details needed to be caught by the viewer themselves.

Bang!

A seemingly silent bullet shot out and exploded.

Lightning was still crackling around Empty Waves' Divine Chains. Lightning began to gather around, creating a net of electricity.

The interrupt failed!

The bullet had been blocked by a jet-black streak of light.

Spear, Evil Annihilation!

The awe-inspiring One Autumn Leaf stood in Ye Xiu's way, putting a stop to his plans. This wasn't the first time, but no matter how many times Chen Guo saw this scene, she would always feel uncomfortable.

The gunshot was blocked, and it was no longer possible for Ye Xiu to try again. Lord Grim couldn't even see Empty Waves anymore from his position.

Move, get to another position...

But the cast time for Lightning Wave Formation wasn't very long. There wasn't much Ye Xiu could do in that short window.

There wasn't anything more Lord Grim could do...

But Happy's plan was to pincer Samsara from two sides. The left wing had been blocked, but the right wing had only just started.

The two players on the right wing didn't have long-ranged capabilities. To interrupt Empty Waves, they needed to get close.

Tang Rou's Soft Mist rushed forward!

"Too impulsive!"

"How crazy!"

The pro players let out sighs. They clearly didn't agree with Tang Rou's decision. The other side had four people in a fully defensive formation, yet she wanted to get close and break through it? She was practically sending herself into the tiger's mouth. Even if she successfully interrupted Empty Waves, what next? Soft Mist would be surrounded by four players. Even if Ye Xiu and Qiao Yifan were close by, Happy would be in a very bad position.

Dragon Breaks the Ranks!

Soft Mist charged forward as if she were unstoppable, bringing her unrelenting momentum from her 1v3 in the group arena.

"Uh, maybe actually?"

Seeing her grandeur, some of the people who felt like Tang Rou had been too impulsive suddenly weren't sure anymore. They felt like maybe she really could break through Samsara.

Samsara responded as if they were facing a huge threat. They needed to put their all into their defense, but the one who stepped forward to face Soft Mist made everyone surprised.

Laughing Song?

Fang Minghua's Laughing Song, Samsara's healer, looked like he was planning on stopping Dragon Breaks the Ranks.

"How is that possible?" Countless people cried out in astonishment. Laughing Song raised his cross, Angel's Protection, and began casting a spell.

This is...

A white light flew out in front of Laughing Song.

Halo Smash!

A Paladin skill. At max rank, it was an unbreakable shield whether it was magic or physical, no attack could break past it.

But Laughing Song was a Cleric. This Halo Smash was a bonus skill on his weapon, and could only be at rank one. How could a rank one Halo Smash stop Soft Mist's Dragon Breaks the Ranks?

The pro players quickly calculated in their heads.

Halo Smash. Even at max rank, it would only be able to just barely block the attack. But at rank one? Dragon Breaks the Ranks would be mitigated somewhat, but Laughing Song would certainly take a huge hit.

But then again, looking at his positioning, as long as he could mitigate the blow, Empty Waves would be protected. Soft Mist would no longer be able to interrupt Empty Waves' cast. Then... there was no then. Her attempt would be done. The cast would be completed. Soft Mist's Dragon Breaks would be stopped, and she would no longer have any more opportunities.

Samsara was different though. Wu Qi's Cruel Silence had his dagger ready for when Soft Mist and Laughing Song collided.

Silent Thunder!

This was the name of the dagger in his hands. It kept a low-profile, almost invisible inside Cruel Silence's sleeves.

"As expected, it won't work..."

Seeing Samsara's response, everyone who had thought that maybe Tang Rou could do it suddenly changed their minds.

But to everyone's surprise, just before Soft Mist's Dragon Breaks the Ranks collided with Laughing Song's Halo Smash, Tang Rou cancelled the skill.

Turn, sidestep...

Using the leftover momentum from Dragon Breaks the Ranks, Soft Mist suddenly slid to the side.

Was there an opening there?

The sudden change had astonished everyone. The others on Samsara had to put their attention on Soft Mist.

But Empty Waves wouldn't be interrupted!

The surrounding electricity suddenly formed a net. Lightning Wave Formation had been set down.

But at the same time, on the ground where the lightning crackled, a flower of darkness quietly unfurled.

Chapter 1680: Unevenness and Surprise

Phantom Demon! One Inch Ash!

Even though the live audience had the projections in the center of the stadium, giving them a comprehensive overview of the battlefield, many of them had still overlooked Qiao Yifan. No one had expected that from Ye Xiu to Tang Rou, both of them had only been trying to get the enemy's attention. The one to complete the attack was Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash.

And One Inch Ash's attack target clearly wasn't to interrupt, but to trade.

The Lightning Wave Formation that Jiang Botao's Empty Waves placed down was primarily for defense. It was to stop Happy from getting close to them.

In this sense, Samsara had succeeded. Neither Ye Xiu's Lord Grim nor Tang Rou's Soft Mist could get close. After Tang Rou cancelled Dragon Breaks the Ranks, she quickly moved away. Instead of trying to force her way in through another opening like everyone thought she would do, she ran as fast as she could out of the Lightning Wave Formation's range.

Then, there was Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash. He didn't get close. He didn't need to get close. While Ye Xiu and Tang Rou attempted to interrupt Jiang Botao's cast, he hid himself and quietly began casting his own spell. Whether the interrupt succeeded or failed, Samsara's attention would be drawn away from him. By the time One Inch Ash appeared, he would be done casting, and it would be too late for Samsara to try and interrupt him.

Dark Boundary!

Darkness descended. The screens of four of Samsara's players went black as if the power had been cut off.

The crowd went into an uproar.

The battle had just begun. After only a single clash, the kings, Samsara, had suffered a huge loss. There were only five of them on the field, and four of the five had been caught in the Darkness Boundary. It was truly a rare sight.

Samsara had overlooked Qiao Yifan's existence. This was absolutely a mistake on their part. However, at the same time, Happy's ingenious ploy had to be given credit as well.

Because of how uneven it felt!

An unevenness in skill between players was a common issue in new teams. Happy was a new team. There was Ye Xiu, one of the greatest players of all time, leading the way. Then, there was Su Mucheng and Fang Rui, two All-Stars. After that, there was just a bunch of rookies. This unevenness was extremely apparent. An Wenyi was considered Happy's weakness precisely because of this disparity in skill.

However, Happy took advantage of this problem, creating a lot of strategies revolving around it. In this match, they once again utilized it.

Compared to An Wenyi, Qiao Yifan had never been viewed as Happy's weak point. In fact, he was looked upon quite highly. Many Tiny Herb fans criticized the team for letting of such an outstanding player.

Qiao Yifan shouldn't have been overlooked. The gap in skill between him and the top players on the team shouldn't have been so apparent. However, Happy set their own pace, creating this false image.

First, Ye Xu's Lord Grim charged out. Samsara had to focus their attention on him and answer back.

Next, Tang Rou's Soft Mist charged out like a fierce tiger. Tang Rou had just achieved a 1v3 against them. Samsara obviously couldn't relax against her.

The two of them quickly drew in all of Samsara's attention. In front of their imposing presence, Qiao Yifan seemed to be invisible. It was almost inevitable.

Qiao Yifan didn't disappoint. He seized this opportunity well. There hadn't been any communication in Happy's chat during this time, but each of them seemed to naturally know what to do. The pro players, who paid attention to the details, also noticed that An Wenyi's Little Cold Hands had drawn in the attention of Zhou Zekai's Cloud Piercer. Su Mucheng's Dancing Rain couldn't be ignored by him either. Not only were An Wenyi and Su Mucheng defending against Zhou Zekai's one-man assault, they were also taking away his attention. They had lured him to a position, where he wouldn't be able to see One Inch Ash unless he turned his head back.

It seemed to just be a mistake from Samsara, but how could it be so easy for such a low-level mistake to happen to Samsara?

This was a match between the two top teams in the Alliance. Most of the time, mistakes didn't just happen. The opposing team made the mistakes happen.

Happy had successfully set up a situation that led to Samsara making a mistake. Now, four of Samsara's players were blinded.

"Don't leave anyone out!" Fang Minghua reminded everyone in the team chat. Although the four of them had been blinded, they could still use the team chat.

"Everyone, forward!!" Jiang Botao shouted.

Forward? Which way was forward?

Zhou Zekai's Cloud Piercer was forward.

It seemed to be a fairly vague order, but everyone on Samsara immediately understood. The ones who hadn't been facing forward turned around. Despite being blinded, they were pretty close.

Afterwards, move.

No disorder could be seen. The team moved together as one. Jiang Botao's Empty Waves swung his sword again.

Nebula Wave Slash!

He unexpectedly went with this Level 75 skill. It could be considered as quite wasteful just for defense, but wastefulness had its value. Tang Rou had originally been planning on rushing into the Lightning Wave Formation to attack them, but she had no choice but to change her mind. Although Jiang Botao was blinded, he was able to create a powerful barrier around the four of them with Nebula Wave Sword.

However, moving together as one wasn't exactly the wisest choice to escape from a ghost boundary. This was because the enemy Ghostblade could just set up another ghost boundary wherever they were going towards, catching them in another net.

Samsara did it anyways because they had one person who had not been caught.

Zhou Zekai, Cloud Piercer.

After seeing his teammates' movements, he immediately started assisting them. His first task was to stop Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash from placing down another ghost boundary.

Turn fire!

The bullets flying towards Little Cold Hands instantly shifted towards One Inch Ash. However, Cloud Piercer couldn't actually see One Inch Ash from his position. Even so, with the help from his teammates, he could get a rough approximation of One Inch Ash's location. His attacks might all miss, but they would still seal off the areas where ghost boundaries could be placed.

One step, two steps...

Samsara's four players stayed together, and it looked like they would soon exit the range of the Darkness Boundary. Zhou Zekai didn't need to protect them for long.

Su Mucheng's Dancing Rain fired artillery shells at him to interfere. Tang Rou's Soft Mist dashed over. It looked like she wanted to body block Cloud Piercer's bullets.

Troublesome!

Zhou Zekai immediately had Cloud Piercer move. No matter what, he needed to stop One Inch Ash from placing down another ghost boundary. This moment was crucial!

It's coming!

One Inch Ash stopped moving. Only a tiny bit of it peeked out. He had a clear view, and he was positioned at the right angle. He had finished casting his ghost boundary. He just needed to set it down. He swung his tachi, and Soft Mist was just about to reach him.

A gunshot. The ghost soul's power began to spread from One Inch Ash's blade.

It's impossible!

The stadium screens and the broadcast showed Cloud Piercer's perspective. There was no One Inch Ash in his line of sight. Tang Rou's Soft Mist had covered him completely. This bullet would definitely be blocked.

Pu!

A hit.

Blood spurted into the air from the bullet wound. Tang Rou didn't feel Soft Mist get hit, but then, the ghost god's power began to fade from One Inch Ash's weapon.

It hit?

Qiao Yifan himself couldn't believe it, but the wound on One Inch Ash was real. The damage wasn't much, but his ghost boundary had been interrupted.

Where did the bullet come from? Qiao Yifan was puzzled. Tang Rou was clearer than him. The bullet had gotten past Soft Mist, yet Soft Mist and One Inch Ash had been perfectly lined up.

Curve Firing...

The stadium screens put on a slow-motion replay. Cloud Piercer had activated Curve Firing. The curve of the bullet had been extremely small. The extra time that it took for the bullet to curve was short enough that it could still reach One Inch Ash in time. If he had acted slightly slower, One Inch Ash wouldn't have been interrupted.

Fortune had come!

Even Zhou Zekai couldn't help but let out a sigh of relief. He had dealt with this predicament.

The final step!

Samsara's four characters finally rushed out from One Inch Ash's Darkness Boundary. Their eyes finally saw the light of day, when their screens suddenly turned black again.

What?

In that instant, the four on Samsara were wondering if their computers really had lost power. They had clearly seen the light. How could it have turned dark immediately afterwards? Even if One Inch Ash's ghost boundary hadn't been interrupted, it couldn't have been another Darkness Boundary. He had cooldowns.

Wait, Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash couldn't use Darkness Boundary again, which meant it had to be...

Ye Xiu! Lord Grim!

Their screens had been dark, so how could they know what Ye Xiu was doing? And by the time Zhou Zekai noticed it, it was too late. Ye Xiu's Lord Grim had patched up the gap, placing down his own Darkness Boundary.

Samsara had overlooked another person, and this time, it was Ye Xiu, the person who they should never overlook.

But the pro players could completely understand. No matter how amazing Zhou Zekai was, he was only one person. Happy had put up a nearly impenetrable defense for One Inch Ash. He had miraculously interrupted him with a Curved Firing. There hadn't been any time for him to look at Ye Xiu's Lord Grim even if just a glance.

That bastard was simply too shameless. He had added a ghost boundary to his umbrella: Darkness Boundary.

Dual Linking Ghost Boundaries!

The pro players looked towards Team Void's two Ghostblades. Because this was exactly like Team Void's signature move, including the unexpectedness of it.

Of Team Void's Ghostblade Duo, Li Xuan's Crying Devil was a standard Phantom Demon, primarily using ghost boundaries. On the other hand, Wu Yuze's Carved Ghost was a hybrid class. What ghost boundaries he used were a mystery in every match.

In the pro scene, Wu Yuze's Carved Ghost was absolutely the craziest about resetting his skill tree. Every single match, he would reset his skill tree. No one knew which ghost boundaries he would coordinate with Li Xuan in their Dual Linking Ghost Boundaries.

Wasn't this sort of unexpectedness the same as what Ye Xiu's Lord Grim was giving to Samsara?

Right after exiting a Darkness Boundary, Samsara's four had entered another Darkness Boundary...