

Avatar 981

Chapter 981: New Stage and Final Stage

There would be ten days of rest after the completion of the group stage. The next stage of the tournament would begin on 5/16, a Friday night. There would be three rounds over the next three weeks until the Challenger League champion was crowned.

The teams eliminated in the group stage returned home one after the other over the next few days. Many player teams felt very satisfied because they had managed to reach this step. They received quite a chunk of prize money from the Alliance. Their trip could be considered worthwhile. The team most unwilling to leave was Team Mysterious Fantasy. After the end of the second day of the group stage, the press released news that Mysterious Fantasy's coach, Zhang Yiwei, had stepped down from his position. Reporters tried to contact him, but all of their requests were declined. The official statement from Mysterious Fantasy said that from their three seasons of experience, they felt like coaching wasn't suitable for the current Glory competitive scene.

The following 5/9 issue of the Esports Home also published this piece of news. However, most of the news was focused on Team Happy, the team that had eliminated Team Mysterious Fantasy from the tournament.

Chang Xian prepared a detailed introduction on Team Happy long ago. What's more, he had revised it multiple times after consulting Team Happy. Now that Team Happy had attracted so much attention, Chang Xian finally had the opportunity to bring out the article that he had been holding onto for so long. Team Happy had finally been introduced on the front page. Apart from that, how could they not want to know the team's thoughts? In the same issue, Chang Xian also did an interview on Team Happy. Chang Xian had finally made it into the spotlight this week. Through his relationship with Happy, he alone took up half of the space given for the Challenger League. The other two reporters, that had come specifically for the Challenger League, were filled with envy.

They had also grabbed onto Team Happy. They had looked to do interviews for Happy and had written also introductions for them, but how could they know as much as a team reporter like Chang Xian? The final articles chosen to be published were all Chang Xian's.

Becoming a team reporter for an Internet cafe grassroots team? In the beginning, the two had laughed at Chang Xian's decision, but now they couldn't even force a smile. "Let's see how long his pride will last!" The two thought venomously, and began cursing for Team Happy to hurry and get eliminated. If they couldn't profit from it, then the material was worthless in their eyes.

As for Cao Guangcheng, he deserved to be an experienced reporter. He didn't even try and fight with Chang Xian for Team Happy. He continued to insipidly write about his specific topic. This week, he analyzed Team Excellent Era's situation with the new tournament format.

The Challenger League entered the next stage, while this season's Pro League had entered the final stage.

5/10. The 34th round of season nine of the Glory Alliance. Team Tyranny and their four heavenly kings had steadily held the lead since the start. Even now, their position at the top of the regular season standings remained unshakeable. In addition, with their efficiency at earning points, breaking the record for total number of points won in a season was no problem for them. However, trying to beat Team Excellent Era's season two record would be practically impossible. That season, Team Excellent Era won a total of 276 points. It didn't seem like a very high number from a total points perspective, but that was because the Alliance only had 16 teams at the time. Back then, there had only been 30 matches in a season. Thus, comparing their total points would not be a good comparison, so comparing the average number of points won per match would be more fair. In that case, Team Excellent Era won 9.2 points per match on average during the second season. This record was ridiculous to the point of being untouchable. With only four rounds left the season, it was already hopeless for Team Tyranny to challenge it.

However, just being able to vie for the record already showed Team Tyranny's unquestionable dominance this season.

In second place was last season's champions, Team Samsara. This season, they strived to defend their title. Even though they had been suppressed by Team Tyranny in the regular season, the playoffs and the regular season were unrelated. Team Blue Rain pushed them down last year too, but who won the playoffs in the end? The regular season had more matches over a longer period of time. It tested a team's consistency, but the playoffs was an elimination tournament. Two matches would determine the winner. It tested a team's explosiveness.

Third, fourth, fifth place was Team Blue Rain, Team Wind Howl, and Team Tiny Herb respectively. The number of points between the three teams was very close, so it was not possible to distinguish which team was better than the other through placings. However, Team Wind Howl failed to even make it to the playoffs last season, yet now they had turned a new leaf this season, becoming a powerhouse no weaker than Team Blue Rain and Team Tiny Herb. Tang Hao's transfer had already been considered last summer's most successful transfer .

The fight for the last three playoff spots for the sixth, seventh, and eighth place team were very extremely intense. Team Misty Rain was in sixth place. They had no strong teams in the next four rounds, so their situation was looking up. Team Hundred Blossoms was in seventh place. They had lost too many points during the start of the season. They only started catching up after they managed to recover. Their situation was somewhat grave. Team Void was in eighth place. The ghost duo had lasted for so many years. They had always placed neither low nor high as if they were stuck at a bottleneck. Their performance this season had its ups and downs. Even though they still held onto their playoff spot for now, many people considered them as the team most likely to disappoint. If they lost their playoff spot, they might just keep falling from there.

What were the chances of Team Void losing their playoff spot? It was actually quite likely. Team 301 was biting at their heels. Team 301 was the model example of an average team. Their players weren't the best and their characters weren't the most powerful, but the team operated extremely well. Their team's performance was very consistent, and they frequently made it to playoffs. Their performance this season had been affected by Xu Bin's departure. If not, they might have forced the inconsistent Team Void out long ago.

The teams closely behind Team 301 were some of the great mysteries of the season.

Radiant, Conquering Clouds, Heavenly Swords, Parade. These four teams moved up and down the rankings together. They were neatly in order from 10th to 13th place. It was truly surprising. In the beginning, their initial impression was that they should be pacing back and forth between the relegation zone. Instead, they had actually run past it into the middle zone. It was even possible for them to make it into playoffs. Teams with All Stars like Royal Style and Seaside had been forced behind them. The original tenth place team, Team Thunderclap, also surprised many. Now, they had been pushed aside too.

These four teams benefited the most from the new game update. However, only the club guild elites competing for wild bosses in the game knew the real reason why they were performing so well. However, as the season proceeded towards the final stage, the focus of the teams shifted again. Many pro players withdrew from the game and began focusing more on their matches, especially the teams bordering on the edge like Hundred Blossoms, Void, and 301. How could they dare to be careless now?

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As soon as these teams started focusing on the matches, those four teams obviously met with trouble. From a points perspective, they could still make it to playoffs, but in reality, these four teams knew in their hearts that they had only been profiting at the other's expense. Taking advantage of them was just a one-time thing. They still didn't have the strength to rival them on equal footing.

The Pro League and Challenger League had reached their most exciting stages. However, because there was quite a wide skill gap between different teams in the Challenger League compared to the teams in the Pro League, everyone's attention was more focused. Thus, apart from a few teams, the majority of the teams weren't under much pressure. Team Excellent Era's opponents wouldn't go so far as to not sleeping, trying to figure out a strategy on how to beat Excellent Era. Everyone would laugh at them, treating them as silly people with their panties in a bunch.

Ten days passed by quickly. It was finally match day. Among the eight teams, the highlight match would be between Team Jade Dynasty and Team Trader. Group B's Team Trader made it past a former pro team. They were clearly the biggest dark horse in this offline tournament. They had spectacular performances against Group B's Team Happy and Team Mysterious Fantasy. In this match between Team Jade Dynasty, no one could be certain that Team Jade Dynasty would win just because they had once been a pro team.

The dark horse's journey ended here though. The highlight match ended dully. From the group arena to the team competition, Team Jade Dynasty seemed to be following a routine. They kept advancing step by step until Team Trader finally fell.

The matches for Team Happy and Team Excellent Era were without any suspense. Player teams were easily beaten by them, so the most interesting match was the one between Group C's first seed and Group D's second seed. The strength between the two teams was quite close. Even though the quality of match wasn't that high, it was at least exciting to watch. Unfortunately, if this type of excitement was enough to satisfy the crowd, why would pro teams need to exist?

The quarter finals ended just like that. None of the matches made anyone's blood race. Even the media reports towards the matches felt dispirited. However, thinking of the next confrontations, everyone's spirits rose. In the top half, Happy and Jade Dynasty would clash. This should be a fairly high-quality match. As for the second half, players who supported Excellent Era and had yet to tire from them winning would continue to be in admiration as their Gods crushed enemy weaklings.

"Two more matches!"

On the morning of the second day, Chen Guo woke up from her dream with a smile. Sunlight had already filled her room. The joy from her dream had yet to recede. She looked to the side and noticed that her roommate Tang Rou was nowhere to be seen.

She woke up so early?

Chen Guo muttered to herself. She got out of bed, washed up, tidied everything, and then left the room. The corridor was extremely quiet. Chen Guo reckoned that the others were still sleeping, so she didn't go to bother them. She went downstairs, ate breakfast, and then headed over to the Internet cafe practice room.

Excellent Era had booked their own hotel, while the liveliness at the start of the offline tournament was no longer as crazy. Of the nineteen teams at this hotel, only three remained. Everyone was together in the same place during this period of time, and everyone shared Glory as their passion. The players all loved to play the game, so even though they were here to compete against each other, they still became good friends off stage. Those who could make it to this stage of the Challenger League were outstanding players. As a result, Chen Guo was quite enthusiastic about recruiting these people for Happy.

But even if they were outstanding, many of them had their own foundations in the game. Most of them shrugged off her attempts to recruit them. Chen Guo had lots of experience with the game. She understood all of that, so she wasn't impatient. Her Chasing Haze added many friends in the game during this period of time. They could meet again in the Heavenly Domain!

In comparison, more people were more interested in Ye Xiu. What was surprising to Chen Guo was that Ye Xiu didn't seem to avoid many topics, even though he had always acted mysterious in the past.

"What's going on?" Chen Guo was puzzled.

"What do you mean? I was using someone else's name before. How could I not try to keep a low profile?" Ye Xiu said half jokingly.

Chapter 982: Team Jade Dynasty's Consistency

Was the fake identity the reason why Ye Xiu had always been hiding? Ye Xiu didn't seem to be serious when he said that this was the reason, so Chen Guo wasn't certain. Before Chen Guo met Ye Xiu, if it was said that God Ye Qiu didn't accept interviews or do endorsements in order to focus on competing, Chen Guo would have believed it. She knew him better now though. Chen Guo always felt like even though Ye Xiu's dedication towards Glory wasn't false, he wasn't so dedicated that he would refuse to do anything else.

After knowing him for so long, Chen Guo felt like Ye Xiu must have many reasons for hiding. For example, in the beginning, he didn't want his family to find him after running away from home. Keeping a low-profile because he was using a fake identity was a very understandable reason too. Ye Xiu was probably too lazy to deal with that stuff anyways. These may all be reasons for why he had molded his image as this mysterious God. But now, his family problems weren't as serious as back then. His fake identity problem had been resolved. Thus, of those three reasons, two were no longer problems. It made sense that Ye Xiu would push the boat along the current and stop hiding.

Chen Guo continued thinking about it as she walked towards Happy's practice area. It wasn't empty at all. Everyone in Team Happy, including Mo Fan, had gotten up even earlier than her. All of them were busy in front of their computers.

"Why didn't anyone wake me up!" Seeing how enthusiastic everyone was, Chen Guo felt very ashamed and grumbled to Tang Rou.

"I didn't think everyone would be up so early either!" Tang Rou said.

"Was this all a coincidence?" Chen Guo said.

"Yup." Tang Rou nodded her head, "When I got here, Ye Xiu and Old Wei were already here."

"What's everyone up to?" Chen Guo looked around in a circle. The majority of them were practicing. Only Ye Xiu, Wei Chen, and Sun Zheping were circled around a single computer. All three of them had their hands crossed over their chests. Their expressions were grave as they stared at the screen.

There was a Glory match recording being played on the screen. After Chen Guo went closer to take a look, she could see that it was Team Jade Dynasty's match. The offline tournament had been going on for a month now. Not only did she recognize every player on the remaining teams, she recognized the characters on each team too. The screen was currently displaying one of Team Jade Dynasty's matches in the group stage.

Chen Guo watched for a bit, but she didn't see any problems. Team Jade Dynasty was heralded as a pro team, but their performance was always very mediocre. In their next match, more people actually favored Team Happy. After eliminating Team Everlasting and beating Team Mysterious Fantasy 10-0, no one doubted that Team Happy was the real deal. However, beating Team Excellent Era..... very few people believed that it could happen. But in many people's eyes, Team Jade Dynasty wasn't even as good as Team Everlasting or Team Mysterious Fantasy. When they fought against Team Happy, wouldn't they lose even more miserably?

However, Chen Guo saw how solemn the three Gods were as they watched Jade Dynasty's match. She felt like there should be a reason, so she was too afraid to rashly come out with her wise opinion on the matter. She watched along with them for awhile longer. This match ended with Jade Dynasty winning the team competition.

"What do you think?" Ye Xiu spoke.

"Your analysis is reasonable." Sun Zheping nodded his head.

"What's going on?" In the end, Chen Guo couldn't help but interrupt them.

"Oh, we're studying Jade Dynasty." Ye Xiu turned his head and saw Chen Guo. He gave her a quick explanation.

"Is there a problem with Jade Dynasty?" Chen Guo asked.

"Jade Dynasty's performance has always been quite mediocre, but being able to maintain that performance the entire time shows how terrifyingly consistent they are." Ye Xiu said.

"What does that mean?" Chen Guo didn't understand.

"It means that they've always been more than up to the task 1 *. They have the ability to win their matches in a more dominant manner, yet they only play at this current level." Ye Xiu said.

"Why is that?"

"I don't know." Ye Xiu shook his head, "Maybe it's because they're intentionally showing that they're weak or maybe it's because it's a way to practice their control over their rhythm."

"In short, this isn't Team Jade Dynasty's true strength?" Chen Guo said.

"It's just a guess. For now, all three of us acknowledge that it's a possibility." Ye Xiu said, while pulling out his QQ. He clicked on a profile picture in his friends list. His QQ trembled and then he sent a "Hello hello hello?"

Then, the QQ interface showed that the other side was typing, but no reply came after a long time. Ye Xiu waited patiently and typed again: "Is it that bad? Even your typing is this slow?"

Chen Guo moved closer to take a look. Her jaw dropped. The other side's name was "Yu Wenzhou".

Why did Ye Xiu look for Team Blue Rain's captain?

Chen Guo was puzzled. Then, she saw the other side's reply: "They should be suppressing their rhythm deliberately! But I don't think that it's because they're pretending they're weaker than they actually are. They should be playing slower and more patiently in order to play more consistently. Their playing looks as if they're out of practice. It's as if they're still familiarizing themselves with new characters."

"As I thought!" Ye Xiu replied.

"That's just my own opinion." Yu Wenzhou expressed.

"Okay, I've got it. Sorry! If you're sleepy, then you should go back to bed." Ye Xiu said.

"..."

Ye Xiu closed the chat window and then looked towards Wei Chen and Sun Zheping: "His opinion is the same as ours. It looks like that really is the case."

Chen Guo figured out what had just happened. She stood on the side, dumbstruck. These guys analyzing it was fine, but even pulling along Blue Rain's Yu Wenzhou and having this top master help them analyze it too?

"This this this... this is breaking the rules!" Chen Guo said.

'Breaking the rules?' Ye Xiu turned his head and looked at Chen Guo, "What rule did we break?"

"This this this...." Chen Guo didn't know what to say. There was no clause in the rules that talked about this, but Chen Guo felt like it was the big bullying the small. If Jade Dynasty knew about it, they'd probably be crying out of grievance.

Those three weren't even done yet!

"Should we go ask Zhang Xinjie and see what he thinks?" Wei Chen said.

"Him?" Ye Xiu checked the time. "He gets up from bed, washes, eats breakfast, exercises on a punctual schedule. You can't take away even a second from his routine. Let alone when he replies, we can't even count on him replying!"

"Isn't there another Master Tactician?" Sun Zheping said.

"Xiao Shiqin?" Ye Xiu asked.

"I think that's the name." Sun Zheping nodded his head.

"Can't you pay more attention to the younger generation? You can't even remember their names!" Ye Xiu looked at him disdainfully.

"Yeah....."

"What does yeah mean?"

"Stop wasting time. Go ask him!" Sun Zheping said.

"Do you not understand what the situation is! Do you know which team he's on?" Ye Xiu said.

"Which team!?"

"Excellent Era!" Ye Xiu said.

"Oh?"

"Oh? Do you not read news about transfers?" Ye Xiu said.

"Never." Sun Zheping said.

Ye Xiu actually already knew that. The person in front of him never cared about that stuff. For him, who cares if there are any changes in a team? Just chop them to pieces. What's the difference?

"Asking him probably wouldn't be too convenient." Ye Xiu said.

"Yeah." Wei Chen nodded his head, "Who knows, he might just intentionally try to confuse us with his analysis." Wei Chen thought about Xiao Shiqin from a shameless perspective.

"Right." Sun Zheping nodded his head, "That's possible. People who play with tactics have dirty hearts."

"Yes yes, all of them are shameless." Wei Chen immediately expressed his approval. Sun Zheping's evaluation of tacticians clearly included Ye Xiu. After all, he was one of the four Master Tacticians!

"Haha." Ye Xiu laughed dryly.

"You're not even ashamed." Wei Chen shook his head and sighed.

"And you even think of it as something glorious." Sun Zheping also sighed. He looked at Ye Xiu like he couldn't be saved.

"Haha." Ye Xiu laughed again. "Says the two who were beaten by me."

"It looks like Team Jade Dynasty won't be easy to deal with!" As expected, Wei Chen switched subjects. The switch was stiff, showing his shamelessness.

"Yeah, from our analysis, Team Jade Dynasty might not be hiding anything in terms of their playstyle. What they've hidden is the strength of their characters." Ye Xiu obviously wasn't going to waste time arguing. He followed along and started talking business.

"The strength of their characters can't be considered weak." Wei Chen looked through the information he had. It was all the detailed information that could be found on the current Team Jade Dynasty. Chang Xian had organized it and handed it over to them.

There were already plenty of Level 75 players after five months. Level 75 Orange equipment naturally weren't as rare as before. For a former pro team like Team Jade Dynasty, even if they couldn't get it themselves, they could still use money to buy it. Orange equipment had a drop rate, after all. Their value couldn't be compared to Silver equipment. If a team set their sights on going pro, if they didn't even have the heart to spend some money on Orange equipment, then it was best if they disbanded.

Team Jade Dynasty hadn't given up after so many years. They could still invest some money into equipping everyone with Level 75 Orange equipment. If these characters were still hiding strength, then only Silver equipment could improve them.

"Does Team Jade Dynasty have such a backing?" Wei Chen wondered.

"I don't know....." Ye Xiu was also at a loss. If they weren't in the Challenger League, those in the competitive scene would have probably forgotten them already.

"Maybe... they got some sort of sponsor, so they have money to spend now?" Chen Guo interrupted at this moment. Her opinion was very reasonable. This came from her personal experience. Team Happy's outstanding performance in the offline tournament had already attracted several organizations, who wanted to discuss a partnership with Team Happy. Of course, no one had signed anything yet because all of the organizations still needed to wait and see. Just their current performance wasn't enough for them to want a long term partnership. But if Team Happy actually beat Team Excellent Era, their talks for a partnership would intensify.

The current Team Jade Dynasty seemed to be hiding their strength. Chen Guo suddenly thought: could this team have gotten this type of support?

Chapter 983: Happy's Fanclub

Sponsorship?

Ye Xiu shook his head. A sponsorship was a business move. The sponsor needed to benefit from the sponsorship, so organizations usually looked for strong teams, teams with lots to talk about, or teams that would receive a lot of attention. The Challenger League viewership was very small. Few sponsors would gain any benefit from sponsoring Challenger League teams.

Happy receiving sponsorship talks was an exception. Even though Happy wasn't a strong team in many people's eyes, Happy also never lacked topics to talk about. Happy was receiving more and more attention too. Even so, no one had reached out for sponsorship yet. It was clearly because they felt like Happy still hadn't reached the level they wanted.

The business didn't want a short-lived night-blooming cactus, but a long-lasting partner. In the Challenger League, there was only way to achieve this: getting the final victory.

This time's Challenger League had Excellent Era. If Happy actually won, the attention that Happy received wouldn't be on the same level as the past Challenger League winners. The current interest towards Happy had much to do with Excellent Era. It was the existence of Excellent Era that gave them such value in this year's Challenger League.

Jade Dynasty's performance in the Challenger League had been very mediocre too. Even though they had Excellent Era as a touchstone, they should be in the same boat as Happy. They had to at least beat Excellent Era first before getting any sponsorship offers. Chen Guo's deduction wasn't logical.

But from this perspective, Ye Xiu thought of another possibility.

Jade Dynasty had switched owners.

Teams and clubs were similar to companies. They could be bought and sold too. If Jade Dynasty had been purchased and the buyer had a lot of money, having a strong backing all of a sudden was an extremely likely possibility.

"Why bother thinking about it so much?" Sun Zheping said, "Even if we can't see through them, we just have to prepare for them well. When the time comes, we just have to beat them."

"There's no other way." Ye Xiu nodded his head.

Since they couldn't get a read on Team Jade Dynasty's true strength, they had no way of preparing for them in a targeted manner. If they rashly came up with strategies, it was very possible that it would come back to bite them. As a result, this week's practice was just to work hard and improve without any big changes.

Jade Dynasty's players continued to go to the Internet cafe in the hotel to practice. When they saw Happy, they would smile and greet them. Everything seemed warm and friendly. At this moment, only these two teams were going in and out of the Internet cafe. The other team was up against Excellent Era next and had already given up. They might as well take the week off and have fun, so they had gone off to tour City B. They hadn't come to the Internet cafe a single time this week.

In the blink of an eye, it was match day. The Esports Home published biweekly. The Monday issue was after match day, so it introduced the contents of the match and commented on the predicted results. The Friday issue was before the next match day, so it was mostly trivial news, as well as predictions and

preparations done by the teams. The Challenger League may be a small steamed bun, but it had juicy meat. There was no lack of things that needed to be written.

8 PM. Offline tournament stadium. The number of matches every week became fewer and fewer, but the number of viewers only increased. After Team Happy entered the stadium through the player passageway, they headed over to their seats. Suddenly, they heard a crash. A distance away, in the audience behind their player seats, was a huge banner: Team Happy! Certain Victory!!! Then, they saw a bunch of people sitting there and cheering loudly.

"Huh?" Chen Guo was surprised. Even though there had been a few Team Happy fans before, she had never seen this kind of support. Ye Xiu's personal fanclub had once gathered together and cheered them on, but who would have thought Team Happy would finally have a fanclub too!

Chen Guo felt delighted in her heart. But in the next moment, she heard a crash from nearby. Another banner had dropped saying: Team Jade Dynasty! Certain Victory!!!

It didn't matter whose banner was bigger. The typeface for Team Jade Dynasty was superior to Team Happy's. The fanclub over there looked at Team Happy's fanclub in delight. They started cheering loudly too. All of a sudden, Team Happy's fanclub had been drowned out.

But Happy's fanclub weren't afraid of this kind of challenge. They started shouting loudly too. There were even a few curses mixed in. Soon enough, just cursing out loud wasn't enough. They started throwing whatever they had in their hands like water bottles at Jade Dynasty's side.

This time, Jade Dynasty's fanclub looked as if they couldn't hold on. They didn't counterattack with weapons of their own. Even when Happy's fanclub had been cursing at them, not many of them cursed back. Right when Happy's fanclub were immensely proud of their victory, the stadium's security guards rushed over and surrounded them.

Chen Guo was very worried for them. She hastily ran over to talk to the security guards. Then, she saw the security guards give a harsh warning and picked out the guy who arranged the long-range attacks, preparing to escort him out of the stadium. This time, Happy's fanclub refused to cooperate. After another loud commotion, the security guards said something again and the commotion gradually died down. The lead instigator left, but he wasn't escorted out. He was simply placed in another seat. The turnout for the semifinals wasn't bad, but the Challenger League's popularity was limited, so the majority of the stadium was still empty. This lead instigator was thrown into a lonely and desolate section filled with empty seats.

As for Jade Dynasty's fanclub? They had victorious smirks on their faces as if they knew this would happen. Chen Guo saw this and was extremely unhappy, but Ye Xiu knew with just a single glance that Jade Dynasty's fanclub was experienced and organized. They had experience watching these sorts of matches and knew their limits. On the other hand, Happy's fanclub were much more wild. Creating such a commotion would obviously force the security guards to come out and stop them.

Team Jade Dynasty arrived too. They saw how the previous scene unfolded and couldn't help but look towards Team Happy and chuckle. The player seats for the two competing sides were located near each other. This time, the fanclubs on both sides had gathered behind them. They hadn't even started fighting yet, and a dispute had already arisen. Happy and Jade Dynasty was just an ordinary match with

nothing to celebrate about. It was easy to imagine just how intense the struggle would be between two teams with a deep rivalry.

The players sat down in their seats. Someone from Jade Dynasty said something to the fanclub behind them as if to appease them. Chen Guo noticed this. She couldn't fall behind. She also stood up and turned around. Then, she saw the faces of the fanclub filled with expectations and suddenly didn't know what to say. A person suddenly jumped out from among the crowd, waved his hands wildly at her, and shouted: "Boss, boss, it's me! It's me!"

Before anything else happened, security guards immediately rushed over. That person immediately shrunk back, but he was still pointing fiercely at himself: "It's me!! Seven Fields! Seven Fields!"

"Ah?" Chen Guo was dumbfounded. For a moment, she couldn't remember who that was. The others already learned from Seven Fields and started introducing themselves.

"Guild leader, it's me, Cruel Shadows."

"It's me, Flying Ghost."

"Little Lobster."

"Banner Wastrel"

"Frozen Mast."

"..."

"It's you guys!!" Chen Guo blurted out. She had seen these names many times before, but they were a bit unfamiliar to her. All of them were members of the tenth server's Guild Happy. They were the first few to join the guild and helped build the guild up from scratch. A few of those guild members had reached the Heavenly Domain. A few continued to stay in Happy. Others started their journey anew after arriving in the Heavenly Domain, but there were also a few who stayed in the normal server and continued to play there. For example, the ones who had come from Full Moon Guild like Seven Field's and Sleeping Moon's group. They had originally been veterans from the Heavenly Domain, but had come to the new server after the tenth server opened. For normal servers, the end goal was to reach the Heavenly Domain.

Thus, it could be said that, in Glory, those who switched to the new server to restart their journey were dedicated to staying in the new server; they wouldn't go to the Heavenly Domain. Otherwise, it was all meaningless for them. Seven Fields and the others hadn't been from a club guild. They didn't come to the normal server to build and grow a certain guild. The reason that they came to the normal server was because they didn't want to play in the Heavenly Domain anymore and only wanted to enjoy the normal servers.

As veterans, their skill level was higher than all of the noobs in the new server, so they became Happy's backbone. The backbones of the guild always carried a certain amount of influence. The four had long since abandoned the Heavenly Domain, so they obviously didn't have any favorable impressions of the Heavenly Domain. Due to their influence, quite a few members of the tenth server's Guild Happy stayed in the normal server instead of leaving for the Heavenly Domain.

And now, they had come over to the stadium to support their team. Chen Guo didn't know where these guys were from, but all of them had gathered behind Team Happy, becoming a solid support group for them.

"You guys..." Chen Guo started to get emotional. She was someone who could easily make friends with others, but she didn't know what to say towards these "familiar" faces.

Ye Xiu quietly stood by her side. The players immediately became excited: "Ah! God Ye! Look!"

Ye Xiu had left the normal server too early, so a lot of them weren't very familiar with him. Seven Fields knew him though. They had met quite early on, even before Steamed Bun.

"Where's Little Moon Moon and the others?" Ye Xiu asked Seven Fields with a smile.

"Haha, Sunset Clouds and Drifting Water live too far away. It wasn't convenient for them to come visit. Isn't Little Moon Moon sitting over there?" Seven Fields pointed. The lead instigator, who had taken the lead in throwing a water bottle at the opposing fanclub and had been put under house arrest in an empty area, was Sleeping Moon.

"Hahahaha, it's actually you guys!" A person suddenly got up from Chen Guo's side. Steamed Bun had stood up on his seat and waved excitedly towards Happy's fanclub.

"Oh oh, it's Steamed Bun! That fool!" Everyone roared. Ye Xiu was a God. When they faced him, they always felt pressured and didn't know what to say. However, when they faced Steamed Bun, they immediately became close. Steamed Bun had come from Guild Happy, so they knew all him very well.

"Hahahaha, watch me f*ck these guys up." Steamed Bun pointed towards Team Jade Dynasty.

"1v5! Do you dare!!" Happy's fanclub shouted.

Chapter 984: Jade Dynasty's Boss

The fanclubs for both teams had come, so the teams had to interact with them, of course. For Jade Dynasty, the team and fan interactions were peaceful and harmonious. The team thanked their fans for their support and the fans didn't stop shouting encouragements toward the team. For Happy, their team and fan interactions were rambunctious and like a riot. Nothing needed to be said about Steamed Bun and his pals, but they weren't unfamiliar with Tang Rou either! It was just that Tang Rou was extremely headstrong and fierce in game, so while she might've had a lady's voice, many people suspected. Now that they saw the player behind the character, they found that, not only was she really a girl, but she was also immensely beautiful. Everyone was rather embarrassed to speak for a moment.

Apart from those two, there was also Luo Ji, who had been a part of Guild Happy for a long time, becoming close with the other guild members and even provided them with many walkthroughs and the such. In the eyes of rookies and noobs, Luo Ji was also an expert among experts. Now, seeing that he was even part of the team, who wouldn't nod and say: an expert as expected.

Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash was usually being power leveled by a different person, so he hadn't had much interaction with Guild Happy's members. However, since his name was a part of the guild, he was one of them, so there would naturally be this sort of closeness.

Over on Happy's side, there was a rowdy atmosphere, often catching the attention of the security guards. So Happy's players didn't dare to make any sudden movements. There was a gap between the audience seating and the players seating, and this was for the safety of the players. According to the rules, the audience couldn't enter the surrounding areas. However, sometimes fans would want autographs and after getting the permission of the players, the guards would let it slip occasionally. However, one of Happy's fans had already been dragged out today for overstepping their bounds, so they became the target of the security guards' watchful stare. Because of this, they obviously couldn't be as casual as they wanted to be. They were all chatting happily, but they could only yell across the gap at each other.

Jade Dynasty's polite interactions were done in a few moments. That was when they saw Happy's rowdy and laughter filled area, which didn't seem to be ending. They felt conflicted. They kind of envied Happy's closeness with their fans, but at the same time they were disdainful of their grassroots demeanor. However, their thoughts then changed. Even if they didn't consider anything else, with just God Ye Qiu's identity alone, Happy was far above their entire team. What sort of right did they have to be disdainful of the other's grassroots demeanor?

Jade Dynasty's players all felt a little down, dully sitting there and waiting for the match to start. Their fanclub had also gone quiet, sitting there and watching Happy's side. Talking about envious, it was the fans who were truly envious. The pro teams of today sat high above everyone, and their players were all celebrities, becoming more and more distant from their supporters. This sort of close and familiar interaction was something they could only dream of.

Seeing the cheers coming from Happy's side and comparing it to their own rather cool airs, one person sitting in Jade Dynasty's player stands turned and smiled at another, saying a few words to him. After that person nodded, the two stood up together and walked towards Team Happy with a smile.

Ye Xiu had long since noticed these two. These two had never appeared in Jade Dynasty's lineup before and today was the first time they had shown their faces. However, they couldn't be players either. The offline matches didn't allow the changing of your lineup mid tournament.

In addition, the person on the right seemed older, probably around thirty years old, while the one on the left was relatively younger, about twenty five or twenty six years old.

Seeing the two approach, Ye Xiu stepped forward to meet them. After the others noticed, they all stopped their conversations and turned to place their gaze on the two.

"Hello, God Ye." The two initiated greeting upon coming forth.

"You are...?"

"Zhang Jian." The relatively older one on the right introduced himself.

Ye Xiu paused for a moment after hearing this before giving Zhang Jian a closer look. Soon he remembered. "It's you? It's been quite a while, I didn't even recognize you."

"For insignificant people like us, it's already enough of an honor if God Ye has heard of our names before," Zhang Jian said with a smile.

"What are you saying?" Ye Xiu smiled as well.

Zhang Jian was also a first generation pro player and was Jade Dynasty's captain back then. For the first two years, he led Team Jade Dynasty from the very bottom of the Alliance. Compared to the captain that had led his team to gain two consecutive championships in both years, he was as opposite as could be from Ye Qiu in the Alliance. From this point of view, saying he was an insignificant person wasn't being modest for Zhang Jian.

However, considering his individual strength, Zhang Jian wasn't as insignificant as his team who always placed last. Yet in the pro league, strength didn't always mean a good record, and a good record was what truly proved your strength to people. With Jade Dynasty coming in last place for two years in a row, a record that couldn't be worse, he, as the captain and ace, took the blame for it.

In the second season, the Alliance began to relegate teams and Team Jade Dynasty, at the bottom of the ranks, was relegated. However, Zhang Jian received some invitations from other teams. Just when everyone thought he was going to take the chance to escape the sinking ship, he stayed and pulled Team Jade Dynasty back into the Alliance against all of the pressure and friction against them. After that, he retired.

Then after that, there was no more news from this player. Back then, Glory wasn't so grand as it was now and pro players wouldn't make enough money. Retired pros lived normal and simple lives. As for a player like him, from a shitty team, there would be little effort made to seek out his circumstances and whereabouts.

Ye Xiu had never thought that, after all these years, he would meet this person again in the Glory circle. And he was even standing with Team Jade Dynasty which he had once fought alongside with. Could it be that he had gotten rich over these years and bought the team?

As Ye Xiu was wondering to himself, Zhang Jian introduced the young man beside him to Ye Xiu. "This is the boss of Team Jade Dynasty, Xiao Jie."

"Oh?" Ye Xiu was guessing if Zhang Jian was the boss, yet in the next moment, the boss had been introduced to him. Speaking of which, Ye Xiu really had no clue who Jade Dynasty's boss was. The information Chang Xian had given them didn't say much either. However, this man who was only around twenty-five or twenty-six, obviously couldn't have always been Jade Dynasty's boss. How old would he have been back then? Probably only sixteen or seventeen!

Yet after this introduction, An Wenyi made a surprising move by coming forwards to ask, "Xiao Jie? Is it that Xiao Jie?"

That was when the young boss nodded with a smile. "Yes, I'm that Xiao Jie."

"Who is this?" Ye Xiu and the others all looked to An Wenyi.

"He's a bestselling author," An Wenyi explained.

"Author?" Ye Xiu scratched his head. This identity seemed very distant and alien to him. Wei Chen was even more exaggerated, and took several big steps over in a rush upon hearing what they were saying. "Author? Where is he? Let me see! I haven't seen a live specimen before!"

As for Chen Guo, she was quite curious as well, but she wasn't as exaggerated as Wei Chen. This was because she saw a thick air of ignorance for everything non-Glory related coming from Wei Chen.

"Greetings, author! It's an honor, an honor." Wei Chen came up and grabbed the man's hand, shaking it with vigor.

"Big Boss Wei. I watched a lot of your matches as a kid," Xiao Jie said with a smile.

"Oh oh, really! Do you want my autograph then? Hahahaha," Wei Chen said without any embarrassment whatsoever.

Xiao Jie smiled without saying anything in response. It was clear that he wasn't Wei Chen's fan. However, his words had already revealed some information; he was someone who had remained a fan of Glory for a long time.

"It seems like Boss Xiao is a fan of Jade Dynasty!" Ye Xiu said.

"Yes, I've always been one," Xiao Jie replied.

"You must not have had it easy then," Ye Xiu commented.

On that side, Zhang Jian rolled his eyes. These words were a little mocking, and yet it was the truth. Jade Dynasty wasn't anything impressive, yet they could still gain a fan that was so loyal to them throughout all these years. This was indeed not easy.

"Heh, that's true." Even Xiao Jie himself agreed. "Jade Dynasty's battle records have never been that good. It makes people rather worried. However, in the past, I could only be anxious about it and do nothing else. Now things are better. I have the power to help the team I support and I'm quite relieved with that."

"Jade Dynasty should be rather relieved, too, having a fan like yourself," Ye Xiu said.

"Haha," Xiao Jie laughed a little. He had wanted to say more, but saw the referee walking over. Seeing both sides look over, the referee waved his hand. "Go and prepare. The match is about to begin."

"Then let's talk after the match, yeah?" Ye Xiu suggested.

"We could also talk as the match goes on. I want to listen to what a god thinks and sees about the match," Xiao Jie said.

"No problem. We're sitting pretty near each other, after all," Ye Xiu agreed.

"Then please."

"Please."

They might've said please, but they didn't sit together immediately, but returned to the player stands to prepare for their upcoming match. As for words like "I wish you the best" they wouldn't say it. They were opponents after all. Wishing the other the best would be equal to wishing for your own failure. This sort of cliché words couldn't be more empty if said here.

Happy returned to their players' stands, but their hearts were in turmoil. They could tell what the situation was between Xiao Jie and Team Jade Dynasty through these few words.

Xiao Jie was a fan of Jade Dynasty from long ago and continued to support this team throughout the years. It was unfortunate that this team never lived up to his expectations. Yet this young man grew day by day and became a bestselling author, a successful person, so he bought the team that he supported. Such support from a fan was probably the first of its kind in Glory history. The only people who could be put on the same level were the people who played Glory and ended up making their own club and pro team to enter the Alliance like Heavenly Sword's five young masters.

This explained Jade Dynasty's miraculous history. However, this would be no help to the victory of the match. It was better to not get distracted by such trivial things.

Seeing that the match was about to start, Seven Fields stopped the others from bothering the members of Happy any longer and took command, telling the people who were meant to hold banners to hold banners, the people who were meant to be cheering to cheer, immediately beginning their support parade. Jade Dynasty's fans obviously refused to be beaten, immediately doing their own thing in order to compete with Happy's fanclub.

On Team Jade Dynasty's side, Xiao Jie sat in the seat closest to Happy, as expected. After glancing over with a smile, their team's first member stood to go up.

Chapter 985: Hidden Strength

With this new tournament format, how should the teams choose their pick order? The teams worried, and the players were also concerned as well. Everyone was vigorously researching and discussing such topics. Using the previous group arena strategy of placing the ace players at the end to hold the bottom line was too conservative and quite undesirable with the new rules.

However, directly placing these ace players at the front of the lineup also seemed excessive. In the competitive scene, 1v3 sweeps happened too rarely. The remarkable displays often seen in the group arena matches usually consisted of a two-player up-and-down.

This so called two-player up-and-down was a situation in which one player, after defeating their first opponent, also took their second opponent to half health; or possibly, after defeating their second opponent, they had little health left while facing the third and fell quickly. Even this was already considered a rarely seen success in the group arena. Thus, even if an ace player appeared first, they wouldn't necessarily bring their team a huge advantage.

The good steel still had to be used on the blade of the knife. While previously, the ace players had fought towards the end to guard the mountain pass, now they had to do their best to gain an advantage when there was an opportunity, in order to achieve victory. In this way, appearing on stage at the most optimal time was key. For example, if an opponent only had half a person remaining, sending out the ace player at that time would maximize the chances of victory.

After going through a lot of analysis, the current consensus was that, in this five person group arena, ace players should be placed in either the third or fourth position.

Except, even in this way, the group arena scoring was far more complicated than the team competition. The future development of the group arena should be stable. Teams should focus on not losing too

many points in the group arena, and using the team competition as a tiebreaker. At present, the forecast predicted that the future competitions would head in this direction.

Except today, when Jade Dynasty went on stage, their first player was actually their captain, the Blade Master, Lin Yi.

Looking at the previous matches, wasn't Lin Yi Jade Dynasty's most outstanding player? Now, astonishingly, he was the first to step onstage. Did he have that much confidence, or was there another reason for such an arrangement?

Jade Dynasty's Boss, Xiao Jie, hid his smile the entire time. He turned towards Happy, making an inviting gesture towards Happy. Ye Xiu smiled, immediately patting the people next to him. "Forward!"

"Oh Oh Oh Oh Oh!!!" Immediately, Happy's fan club surged because of the person that stood up.

"Steamed Bun, 1v5!!!" Obviously the fans didn't care whether or not this was realistic. Either way, this was a cheer. If it wasn't grandiose, then how could it be called a cheer?

"Ha ha ha." Steamed Bun laughed. With his personality, he didn't care at all about what order his opponents sent out their troops. He waved his hand, turning to his group of in-game friends and pumping his fist in the air.

"1v5!" Steamed Bun yelled out. From the bystanders' point of view, this really was an arrogant and shameless guy. Jade Dynasty's fans had long started booing. After this was said, Happy's fans really felt too embarrassed to earnestly respond. Their shouting was just shouting, they obviously also knew that there was no way a 1v5 would happen. Using this to challenge other people, wasn't this just asking for their faces to be slapped?

Both sides' players immediately went onstage, swiping their account cards to enter the game. Happy's players all looked at each other. All of their screens were stopped on the character loading image. After the characters had finished loading, the screen would display the characters' equipment for the entire audience to see.

"Sure enough!"

Lin Yi's character, Blade Master Ten Thousand Swords, struck a pose. Just from the character's attire, everyone could see what was different from before. As soon as the equipment viewer was opened, a line of glittery silver names jumped out. From head to toe, Ten Thousand Swords had seven pieces of Silver equipment. Although this was one less piece than Windward Formation. In reality, Happy's Silver equipment wasn't evenly distributed. Wei Chen's Windward Formation had eight pieces, but the rest of Happy had far less than that. Furthermore, Ye Xiu's Lord Grim only had a single Silver weapon, Myriad Manifestations Umbrella. When it came to Silver equipment, Ye Xiu mainly prioritized his teammates.

Yet, most pro teams wouldn't be this ridiculous and heavily favor one character over another. Although the core characters would definitely consume more resources, they wouldn't go so far as to give one character eight pieces of Silver equipment while leaving another with only one. Adding onto Jade Dynasty's shaky foundation, Lin Yi's Ten Thousand Swords' Equipment level likely represented the average of the team. An average of seven pieces of Silver equipment... this armor surpassed the Alliance's average level. Sure enough, Jade Dynasty possessed a lot of hidden strength.

However, of Ten Thousand Swords' 7 pieces of Silver equipment, not a single piece was level 75. After all, level 75 materials were very limited. Right now, in the Alliance, level 70 equipment were widespread. All of this was accumulated over the years while the level cap had remained at 70. If any team really wanted to upgrade their equipment over the course of a year, they would have to monopolize the Heavenly Domain's uncommon materials. Trying to do this would make any team go insane.

Jade Dynasty's circumstances were well understood. Thus, Happy's players maintained calm expressions. Jade Dynasty being able to acquire this many pieces of Silver Equipment so quickly probably wasn't due to financial resources alone. After all, Xiao Jie was only a young writer. No matter how well his books sold, there was no way he could compete financially with people like Luo Guanning. Moreover, Luo Guanning had a five man crew. Even with that, they had only managed to obtain a total of 20 pieces of Silver equipment when they had entered the alliance.

Although Jade Dynasty was in dire straits, when all was said and done, they had started off as a member of the pro circle. After so many years, they still hadn't given up. No matter what, they still had to have accumulated resources. Xiao Jie's investment this time had probably come at an optimal time, exploding forth all of Jade Dynasty's accumulated resources. Additionally, that guy Zhang Jian perhaps was also a crucial figure in breaking out Jade Dynasty's potential. Back in that era, he was a pro level player. If he still hadn't given up after all these years, then his achievements in Glory wouldn't be a small matter either.

As Ye Xiu waited for the people to realize Jade Dynasty's circumstances, onstage the first round of the group arena had finally begun. After the countdown finished, both sides' characters entered the map, and the competition officially began. Jade Dynasty's boss, Xiao Jie, had indeed done as he promised. As soon as the competition began, he gathered together with Ye Xiu to chat.

"I think your team's current player is really interesting," Xiao Jie said, his voice giving off a kind of pompous tone of seniority, but to tell the truth, Ye Xiu wasn't really at an age where he could be looked down upon. Twenty-five, twenty-six, there was basically no difference in age between the two.

"Your team's player also seems quite steady," Ye Xiu replied.

"A team captain needs to be like this," Xiao Jie sighed.

"It looks as if he still isn't the ace player of Jade Dynasty," Ye Xiu said.

Xiao Jie smiled, immediately asking, "From God Ye's perspective, which of our Jade Dynasty's players do you think is our ace?"

Ye Xiu also smiled, turning to look towards one of the players on Jade Dynasty. "Your ace player would find it difficult to guide your troops into battle as the core. He's instead acting as your final line of defence."

"God Ye indeed has a good eye!" Xiao Jie gave a thumbs up out of praise, also turning to look at this player within Team Jade Dynasty, the Cleric Lu Shilin.

"However, God Ye's statement that a Cleric isn't able to guide troops as the core, I think that's a bit old-fashioned." Xiao Jie said.

"Eh. Actually what I wanted to say was leading, not guiding. I used the wrong word. Sorry about that. I'm sure you know that I'm no writer." Ye Xiu said.

Xiao Jie stared blankly, suddenly not knowing whether to laugh or cry. Leading, guiding, these two phrases only differed by three letters**. The meanings were indeed a bit different. He had thought about picking a fight with Ye Xiu to prove he was superior. He didn't expect the other party to immediately use a wording error to cover this up, conveniently mocking his own identity as a writer at the same time.

"It seems that God Ye also has a card up his sleeve when it comes to responding to this threat?" Xiao Jie composed himself and continued to ask.

"In reality, as long as he's not the core player leading the team, there's really no need to specially respond," Ye Xiu replied.

"Really?" Xiao Jie smiled again, not saying anymore. He went back to his seat to continue watching the competition.

This guy really liked to smile, the dim, faint kind. At first, looking at these smiles easily created good feelings in people, thinking that there was a good reason for his modesty. However, after these kinds of smiles came time and again, they no longer conveyed that same meaning. Instead, there was pride and conceit. He used this kind superiority-filled expression to express his disapproval of the other party. From Chen Guo's perspective, it would be better if he directly said, "You truly are an idiot," to his heart's content.

"This guy's smile is truly annoying," Chen Guo said to Ye Xiu.

"He's annoying even when he doesn't smile, making this team to cause trouble for us. It's truly troublesome!" Ye Xiu said.

"..."

Offstage, the exchange stopped at this point. Onstage, Steamed Bun's Steamed Bun Invasion and Lin Yi's Ten Thousand Swords had already exchanged blows for quite a while. Neither side had specific tactics for this round, directly heading for the middle of the map. As soon as they met, they began to fight.

Mechanics, awareness, judgment, a battle without much scheming. With more experience, more solid tech skill, and better equipment, Lin Yi very quickly gained the upper hand. He didn't have the strength to completely suppress Steamed Bun, but his steady and unaffected state of mind nevertheless partially restrained Steamed Bun's derailment. Although from time to time Steamed Bun would jump out with an ingenious move, it didn't have any psychological impact on Lin Yi. Though this kind of randomness couldn't possibly follow any rules, Lin Yi actually managed to use his steady mind to remain completely unaffected.

Ye Xiu glanced over at Jade Dynasty. Coincidentally, at that same moment Xiao Jie also happened to look over towards him with that same smile again. His superiority seemed to say: Look, I know.

The opponent's first player had been chosen as a tactical move with purpose. It seemed as if they had guessed Happy's intent. Although no one knew how skilled Xiao Jie was at Glory, as a fan of Jade

Dynasty from the early days until now, he was clearly a Glory fanatic. It appeared that when it came to Glory, this guy also had some skill.

Seven Fields and the others had been wildly cheering for Steamed Bun in the beginning. At this point, they were feeling a bit depressed because they could all see that the present circumstances were quite unfavorable towards him.

If even the audience members could tell, then the circumstances were quite obvious. The commentators nearly announced the results.

"Haha, it looks like the outcome of this match is already clear." Xiao Jie moved closer to say.

"Everyone can already see the obvious, but there's still one more person who isn't so sure!" Ye Xiu said.

"Who?" Xiao Jie didn't understand. It was so obvious. Who couldn't tell?

"Look," Ye Xiu held out his hand, pointing towards the screen. "Our Steamed Bun is still fighting energetically."

Chapter 986: Crucial Point

On screen, Steamed Bun Invasion looked like he had just gone on stage. He was filled with energy as he continued to clash with Lin Yi's Ten Thousand Swords. From time to time, he would make a weird move that would be calmly received by Lin Yi. However, that was all. The situation stayed the same as before. Lin Yi firmly grasped the pace of the match. If not, how could even the normal audience members already be certain of who the winner of this fight would be?

Xiao Jie saw this scene and smiled.

"He's quite tenacious." He said.

"Tenacious? You're mistaken. That's not tenacity. He hasn't even started considering giving up or persevering. He's just continuing to keep his own pace. I won't deny that Lin Yi has the fight under control at the moment, but it's still too early to say who will win and who will lose."

"Haha." Xiao Jie laughed. He found it beneath him to argue. In his eyes, Ye Xiu was just believing in his own lies. Just look at the situation. You're saying it's still too early?

Xiao Jie's gaze turned back to the stage. Steamed Bun Invasion had once again done an incomprehensible move. When his Powerful Knee Strike smashed towards Ten Thousand Swords, Lin Yi had his Ten Thousand Swords calmly step to the side and prepare to counter attack. Who would have thought that Steamed Bun Invasion, who had whistled past him, would suddenly turn his head and shout at Ten Thousand Swords.

Brawler skill: Threaten.

Threaten didn't deal direct damage. It was classified as a spirit attack, and it reduced the target's attack power. Spirit attacks could not be avoided. It could only be defended by the appropriate resistance skills, or lowered or canceled by the Spirit stat.

Looking at it from the effects from this skill, Steamed Bun's abrupt Threaten didn't make much sense. Maybe he planned on trading blows with his opponent. He had caught his opponent off guard and lowered the opponent's attack power. His Powerful Knee Strike may have been dodged, but his target had been successfully Threatened. However, because of the momentum from his Powerful Knee Strike, he continued to fly past his opponent. Ten Thousand Sword's attack power might be reduced, but it wasn't like he was rooted or stunned. He continued to ready a counter attack and chased after Steamed Bun Invasion with a Downwind Sword Slash.

Steamed Bun's reaction speed was fast, but this Downwind Sword Slash had been timed perfectly and struck him.

Steamed Bun Invasion was hit and slid to the side. Lin Yi's Ten Thousand Swords immediately followed up with a Triple Slash, pursuing while also attacking at the same time, but who would have that thought as soon as Steamed Bun Invasion steadied himself, he would ricochet towards Ten Thousand Swords. Lin Yi was caught by surprise. He saw a sword light flash towards him. It was actually another Downwind Sword Slash that had come from Steamed Bun Invasion's Brawler this time. The priority on Triple Slash couldn't contest Downwind Sword Slash's priority. Not only was Ten Thousand Sword's momentum halted, he had been struck stumbling.

The stadium exploded into an uproar. Those who were a little slower might even be confused about Steamed Bun Invasion's class. How did he use Downwind Sword Slash too? Those who were faster had already recognized that this was the newly added Brawler skill: Tooth for Tooth.

Tooth for Tooth was an active ability. When attacked, the character would still take damage, but the character would remember which skill was used. That skill would appear on the character's skill list. The number of uses and the skill effects was determined by Tooth for Tooth's skill level. In addition, the amount of mana used for the skill would be double what it originally was.

Clearly, Steamed Bun Invasion had activated Tooth for Tooth earlier. When he was hit by Downwind Sword Slash, he remembered the skill and returned it back to its owner. From this point of view, another issue came up. He had used Tooth for Tooth, but he had also used Threaten beforehand, so the damage from the opponent's skill had been reduced when it struck. Thus, Steamed Bun Invasion's Downwind Sword Slash had also been reduced. Returning the strike had been a good move, but that previous Threaten still didn't make any sense.

But even so, the Downwind Sword Slash had caught Lin Yi off guard. Steamed Bun took this opportunity to strike back and begin his fierce assault.

Happy's fanclub's spirit revived at once. They shouted "Steamed Bun!" loudly and cheered for him, but at Happy's player seats, Sun Zheping had his brows furrowed. He was thinking back to that previous scene. It just so happened that the screen did a replay of Steamed Bun's counterattack. After looking at it again, Sun Zheping moved closer to Ye Xiu: "If that Threaten hadn't debuffed, then Downwind Sword Slash....."

"Would have been faster and the knockback would be stronger. It would have sent Steamed Bun Invasion flying into the air after his Powerful Knee Strike missed. He would have been knocked back farther away, and he would have needed to Quick Recover. If he had used Downwind Sword Slash like that, he might not have gotten the same results." Ye Xiu said.

"So that guy..."

"Don't ask me if he did it on purpose. I have no idea either." Ye Xiu said. And this was why Steamed Bun's derailment playstyle was so terrifying. His completely unexpected move could be utter trash, but it could also be a brilliant turning point. When it was utter trash, you could laugh at it all you want, but when it became a turning point, it would be a deciding factor. And this deciding factor was impossible to defend against. Even someone as skilled as Sun Zheping needed to think about it after the event took place. When playing in a match, there was no time for so much thinking. How many people could instantly recognize the subtle involvement this move had?

The expression on Xiao Jie's face turned ugly when he saw Steamed Bun's counterattack. However, Lin Yi was a steady player. He quickly got out of Steamed Bun's assault and once again regained control of the situation. Steamed Bun's counterattack looked like one final desperate struggle. Xiao Jie let out a sigh of relief and glanced at Happy's side with delight. He saw Ye Xiu turn his head and look at him too. He immediately smiled: "He really knows how to surprise people!"

"And isn't that why he's so interesting?" Ye Xiu smiled.

"Yeah." Xiao Jie nodded his head. Suddenly, he heard a cry of surprise from the venue. Xiao Jie turned his head and saw that Lin Yi's Ten Thousand Swords was being slapped into the ground and beaten black and blue by Steamed Bun Invasion's Tyrannical Chain Punch.

What happened?

Xiao Jie was shocked. The situation had been stabilized just moments before. How did it flip all of a sudden?

It just so happened that the screen showed an instant replay.

Powerful Knee Strike. Another Powerful Knee Strike. This time, the distance between the two sides had been very close. Lin Yi's Ten Thousand Swords had been in the middle of a combo. He had used Headwind Strike, when Steamed Bun Invasion suddenly burst forth with a Powerful Knee Strike. Blood flew out from Steamed Bun Invasion as he slammed into the Headwind Strike head on. However, Steamed Bun Invasion forcefully broke through the sword prison just like that and followed up with a Tyrannical Chain Punch. The airborne Ten Thousand Swords crashed to the ground, following which was the current scene.

Xiao Jie was astonished.

For a final desperate struggle, it should be one last struggle. How could someone facing death do a final struggle again and again? If he kept on struggling, that only meant one thing. This person couldn't die.

Maybe claiming victory already really had been too early? Xiao Jie thought to himself, but he refused to accept it. In terms of equipment, they were stronger. In terms of players, they were more consistent. In terms of the situation on stage, they had always been winning. Just looking at their health bars, even though Steamed Bun Invasion had done two desperate struggles, he hadn't pulled it that much closer. He had taken Downwind Sword Slash full force. He had completely eaten a Headwind Strike too. The damage from Headwind Strike was quite high. In addition, Lin Yi had control of the situation for most of

the battle. Ten Thousand Swords had 50% more health than Steamed Bun Invasion. Could Steamed Bun Invasion actually make a come back?

Impossible! Absolutely impossible!

Xiao Jie couldn't bother with going over to Happy and letting out a smile showing his superiority. He stared closely at the screen and saw their lead, yet he couldn't help but feel nervous.

Xiao Jie's nervousness was deserved. Steamed Bun started to slowly make a comeback. The steady Lin Yi was already having trouble controlling the fight. Whenever Steamed Bun went off the rails, he would always deal significant damage towards Ten Thousand Swords. Although Lin Yi was sometimes able to strike back, it wasn't as effective as Steamed Bun's attacks.

Xiao Jie became more and more uneasy. He was even somewhat angry. It looked like he wasn't happy with Lin Yi's performance. Unfortunately, his anger couldn't be transmitted into the fight. The health bars of the two characters grew closer and closer, bit by bit, all the way until both sides only had 8% health left.

Happy's fanclub had gone crazy. They took whatever they had that could make noise and started making as much noise as possible. Under Seven Field's lead, they cheered in unison "Steamed Bun!"

Steamed Bun didn't let them down. On the other hand, Lin Yi's performance was disappointing compared to the start of the fight. Jade Dynasty's fanclub was cheering on their team captain, but when Steamed Bun Invasion led with 5% health compared to Ten Thousand Sword's 3% health, they had trouble bearing it. He had such a huge lead, and he actually lost it?

But no matter if it was 5% health or 3% health, a single wave of attacks could end it for either sides. The match had reached this point. It just depended on who would grasp the final opportunity.

The fans on both sides and the players on both sides were standing up, staring closely at the match screen.

Steamed Bun Invasion!

In the final moment, Steamed Bun Invasion once again made another strange, unconventional move, helping him grasp the final opportunity. Ten Thousand Swords only had 3% health left. He was unable to grasp the final opportunity. Steamed Bun Invasion had won the first round of the group arena.

"Oh oh oh oh oh!!!" Happy's fanclub cheered. The team also clapped in celebration. Jade Dynasty's side was rather quiet. However, this was a group arena, so with the other side only having 5% health remaining, from an overall perspective, it wasn't too bad. Even so, when Jade Dynasty's team captain, Lin Yi, came down from the stage, he was met with harsh rebuke from his boss, Xiao Jie.

"What was that? You had such a big lead, and your opponent actually turned it around? With that type of performance, what type of example are you setting for your teammates?"

"Sorry..." Lin Yi's face carried a trace of exhaustion, but he could only quietly accept the boss's fury.

Chapter 987: Who's Mistake Was It

"What's with that guy?" Chen Guo couldn't bear Xiao Jie's behavior any longer.

If the match was played poorly, it was normal for post-match critique. It was just that when pointing out mistakes, it was best to console the player first and then calmly analyze why the match had gone the way it did. Everyone had their own way of communicating, but starting with criticism outright was no good.

Although Lin Yi lost the match, he had lowered his opponent's health down to 5%. That was still an acceptable result. However, he originally had complete control over the fight, but in the end, his opponent stole away the win. Such a fall was the true reason why Xiao Jie wasn't happy, which was why even though the outcome wasn't too bad, Lin Yi was still extremely indignant.

Chen Guo stopped watching. After all, this was the other team's matter. It wouldn't be good to butt in.

After being admonished, Lin Yi quietly sat to the side. The other players came over and patted his shoulders to console him.

As for Xiao Jie? After venting his anger, his mood seemed to have taken a turn for the better. He looked very satisfied with his strict way of handling the issue. He even had a smile on his face as he turned to say to Happy: "We actually lost with such a big lead. We've really made a fool of ourselves in front of God Ye."

"If it's just because of us making a comeback, you shouldn't blame him too much." Ye Xiu replied.

"What do you mean?" Xiao Jie said.

"If he had been picked to go first because you guys guessed that our first player would be Steamed Bun and specifically made preparations on dealing with him, then the person who arranged for him to go first should be the one responsible for bearing this loss." Ye Xiu said.

"What are you saying?" The expression on Xiao Jie's face changed.

Ye Xiu smiled. He had seen through it all. Usually, the team captain was responsible for the pick order. However, from Xiao Jie's bossy rebuke, it looked like the team owner not only guided the general direction of the team, he even interfered in the team's tactical arrangements.

An amateur leading experts was always a major fear. As for Xiao Jie, he couldn't be considered a complete amateur at Glory. After all, he had been a fan of Glory for so many years. Even if he hadn't eaten pork before, he had seen pigs run. Just because he didn't have pro-level technical skill, that didn't necessarily mean he didn't have pro-level tactics and theorycrafting. It was similar to how although a football coach might not be an outstanding football player, but the coach still had the qualifications to tell the team how to kick the ball. It was the same reasoning.

Since he was interfering with the team's matters, when something happened to the team, he should naturally have a clear idea of knowing where the problem lay. Was it because of a bad pick order or because of the player performing poorly?

Lin Yi lost the match. When he came down, he was yelled at by Xiao Jie. Chen Guo didn't like his conduct, but Ye Xiu didn't even put it in his eyes. Xiao Jie couldn't distinguish between right and wrong. Ye Xiu didn't know if Xiao Jie actually had the skill to control the team in such a manner, but from what

he saw in the first match, if Lin Yi had been placed specifically to deal with Steamed Bun, then that had not been a wise move.

Sure enough, after pointing this out, the expression on Xiao Jie's face turned even uglier. It appeared that he really had been the one to make the arrangements, so when Lin Yi had control of the fight, he had been delighted, feeling that it was because of his own genius that allowed Lin Yi to suppress his opponent, but after a comeback was made, he suddenly became furious. He thought that Lin Yi failed to seize such a good opportunity. He had placed victory right before his eyes, yet Lin Yi couldn't even grab it. In his eyes, Lin Yi was utter trash.

But now, Ye Xiu actually said that it was problem with the pick order?

"What do you mean?" Xiao Jie glared at Ye Xiu. He didn't even act as polite like before.

"Judging Lin Yi to be Steamed Bun's bane is a mistake." Ye Xiu said.

"Based on what?" Xiao Jie called into question.

"Based on the results of that round." Ye Xiu smiled.

"What a joke." Xiao Jie sneered, "What does the outcome of a single round prove? What's more, Lin Yi had complete control of the match in the beginning. If he hadn't been careless....."

"Once is carelessness. Twice is carelessness, but being careless continuously? Have you not considered that there might be another reason for it?" Ye Xiu said.

"So you're saying that it was because of the pick order? Are you saying that he shouldn't be matched against an opponent that's too easy, so he won't easily underestimate his opponent?" Xiao Jie's voice was filled with ridicule.

"You should think about the specifics yourself!" Ye Xiu smiled. He didn't give him a detailed explanation.

"What? You don't know?" Xiao Jie sneered.

Ye Xiu said helplessly: "Don't tell me you're hoping that I'll help you analyze how to beat my team?"

"Then how about you enlighten me after we beat your team. When the time comes, it won't affect the big picture anymore." Xiao Jie said.

"You guys are going to need a lot of luck then." Ye Xiu said.

"Don't worry about it." Xiao Jie said coldly.

The current him had completely torn off his initial modesty. After this loss, his pride, his arrogance, and his conceit had been entirely revealed. From this perspective, Xiao Jie wasn't a sophisticated person. His ugly side took form with just a slight pull of the trigger.

On stage, the second round had already begun. A Ghostblade player from Jade Dynasty came out to battle. From a team composition perspective, Jade Dynasty had its own unique characteristics. Their team's main roster consisted of four swordsmen, a Berserker, a Blade Master, a Ghostblade, a Spellblade, as well as a healer.

This Ghostblade player was one of their main roster players. His character was called Anxious Ghost. He was a fairly standard Ghostblade player that walked the middle road, a Phantom Demon Sword Demon hybrid.

Steamed Bun's Steamed Bun Invasion only had 5% of his health left. The two sides clashed. Not waiting for anything surprising to happen, Anxious Ghost made quick work of him.

The previous round had been a narrow victory over Lin Yi, but Happy's fanclub cheered as if Steamed Bun had done a 1v5. Nothing really happened this round and Steamed Bun was killed. Happy's fanclub immediately began jeering at him without mercy, and they even took something as unrealistic as a 1v5 to jab at him. It wasn't them being mean. It was because they viewed Steamed Bun as their friend, a brother who had once played with him in game. It was a form of teasing between bad friends.

Steamed Bun shook his head as he went down from the stage. He actually seemed a bit angry at his quick loss in the second round: "I only had that much health left. They didn't even give me some steamed buns to recover. Ai ai ai!"

Everyone on Happy's side laughed. They saw Steamed Bun sit down dejectedly. No one went over to console him though because everyone knew there was no need to. Sure enough, five seconds later, after hearing the fanclub's teasing, Steamed Bun turned his head and started chattering away. This guy even tried to climb over the wall between the players and the crowd, but the security guards stopped him.

The security guards were at a loss. They had seen fans rushing towards the player area, but they had never seen a player climb towards the fans. Was that in accordance with the rules? The security guards didn't know. They hadn't noticed in the rules whether a player was permitted to leave his seat and go to the audience. Who would think of doing such a thing?"

Not long after Steamed Bun went off stage, Team Happy's second player came up. It was coincidentally Team Happy's Ghostblade --- Qiao Yifan.

Qiao Yifan's Ghostblade, One Inch Ash, was a pure Phantom Demon though, which was a lot worse at 1v1s. He only had two pieces of Silver equipment too, while Team Jade Dynasty's Anxious Ghost was the same as their captain's Ten Thousand Swords. Anxious Ghost had seven pieces of Silver equipment. From just their characters, One Inch Ash was at a fairly large disadvantage.

But in terms of player skill, Qiao Yifan was much more consistent than Tang Rou and Steamed Bun. He had come from a champion team too, so he had solid fundamentals. Even if Team Tiny Herb never gave him a chance to play in a match, just from their practice quality, how could a team like Jade Dynasty, which had been relegated for so many years, compare to a champion team?

Moreover, after receiving wholehearted guidance from a God like Ye Xiu, his class change was a huge success. At this point, Qiao Yifan could already clearly feel the advantages from changing classes. He was like a fish swimming in water. His intuition and awareness were like a match made in heaven with Phantom Demons. He had never felt such comfortableness and freedom when he had played as an Assassin on Team Tiny Herb. As his skill level increased, this feeling of comfort became even stronger. Qiao Yifan simply loved this class too much.

His control over the class had reached a point where his character would move however he wished it to. For Qiao Yifan, it greatly made up for his confidence, which he had always been lacking. He no longer doubted himself. He firmly believed that he would become an outstanding pro player.

The fight began. Team Jade Dynasty's Anxious Ghost raised his sword and charged over. In the previous fight, he made quick work of the nearly dead Steamed Bun Invasion. Victory had been easy. It wasn't enough. The current him was in high spirits. His thirst for battle was also extremely fierce. He hated how he couldn't immediately start clashing with his opponent and fight a real battle.

Qiao Yifan did not directly rush towards Anxious Ghost and instead took a different path. He began circling around from the side. This battle would begin with an ambush from one side.

It had to be said that Qiao Yifan's difficult practice for half a year as an Assassin had helped him grasp the techniques of an Assassin. For example, a sneak attack was something that Assassins needed to be proficient at. Qiao Yifan wasn't great, but he had tried his best the entire time. His grasp of it might not be very high-level, but it was at least very solid. He wouldn't lose it just because he had changed classes. The Phantom Demon One Inch Ash's sneak attack route was extremely precise. He circled around diagonally. When he showed his head, he was already behind Anxious Ghost.

"Idiot! Behind you!" Seeing this scene, Xiao Jie suddenly cursed anxiously.

Qiao Yifan wasn't in a hurry to attack. He hid himself behind Anxious Ghost, observing his movements.

Chapter 988: Ghost Feast

Those who had been following Happy's matches all felt that this moment was very familiar. In the match against Mysterious Fantasy, Happy's Mo Fan and his Deception had followed their opponent in the same patient, careful manner, waiting for the perfect chance to strike suddenly. After gaining the upper hand, he didn't linger, but quickly retreated, before repeating this process over and over until his opponent was dead.

Seeing Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash also quietly sneaking behind his opponent, everyone couldn't help but remember the match that day. Though it was a different player, they were from the same team, so they might use similar playstyles. If that were true, then that would make things very boring, no?

Boos rose from the crowd. It was evident that Mo Fan's playstyle wasn't liked. If you managed to burst your opponent in a sneak attack, that would be pretty great to watch, but Mo Fan's repetitive playstyle, always doing a hasty retreat just as the match was coming to a crescendo, might have been familiar and comfortable to him, but the audience was always denied that last breath of relief because of his rhythm, and held it in uncomfortably.

With this experience in their minds, and seeing Qiao Yifan seemingly about to do the same thing, the crowd loudly expressed their displeasure.

Amidst the boos, Xiao Jie glanced over at Happy; now, he wasn't nervous anymore. This sort of stalling playstyle was rather annoying. However, this was a group arena and not an individual competition, so every player had the chance to fight multiple players. And this sort of stalling playstyle, while not very fun to watch, tested a player's skill and required them to expend a lot of concentration. In the group

arena, players couldn't only focus on defeating their current opponent if they wanted their team to win. They also had to conserve as much energy as possible while defeating their current opponent, so as to do as much damage as possible to the next opponent. Therefore, this sort of playstyle that required a player to expend a lot of mental energy wasn't very appropriate for the group arena.

As if hearing the crowd's boos, the Jade Dynasty player onstage suddenly went on high alert.

After rushing through a good portion of the map and not seeing the opponent, you would usually realize the other planned to ambush you. This was a very common tactic, but for Happy, they needed to be more careful. This was because they had Deception's endless stalking and Windward Formation's shameless and dirty hiding and sneaking. Both were rather disgusting to deal with.

But with Mysterious Fantasy testing out the waters for them, Jade Dynasty's players were prepared for this. Upon realizing that the opponent had such intentions, they didn't panic, instead heading resolutely towards Team Happy's spawn point. This was thanks to the experience they got from the match Happy had with Mysterious Fantasy. This was to prevent the other from finding some random place to huddle up and making them waste their energy and time for nothing.

Seeing his team's player reacting so quickly and accurately, Xiao Jie nodded in satisfaction. They had done careful planning on going up against Happy, and this sort of situation was the kind they put the most thought into. The decision the Ghostblade player had made was in accordance with Xiao Jie's thoughts, making him feel secure. Even though One Inch Ash wasn't huddled away at the spawn point, there would be no problem, so long as they followed the current strategy.

Just as Xiao Jie was thinking this, a blade flashed on the field and Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash attacked.

Although Jade Dynasty's player had prepared to head off to the spawn point to check, that didn't mean he had let his guard down. Qiao Yifan's sneak attack wasn't very well timed and Anxious Ghost rolled, easily dodging the strike. While he got up, he sent a Moonlight Slash back.

One Inch Ash jumped backwards to dodge, and the flash of energy swept past the tip of his nose. Anxious Ghost followed up with a Full Moonlight Slash. Moonlight Slash and Full Moonlight Slash were two different skills, but since the combination of the skills was cool and practical, one would follow the other more or less eighty percent of the time, as if they were two parts of the same skill.

One Inch Ash had dodged the Moonlight Slash, but was struck by this Full Moonlight Slash. After receiving the blowback, he rolled twice before managing to quick recover and steadied himself. Seeing Anxious Ghost approaching, blade in hand, he turned and ran.

"Hahaha." Seeing this, Xiao Jie immediately laughed aloud. This was exactly what failing to steal a chicken and losing a handful of rice* was, in his eyes. This ambush of Happy's was too weak. Not only did he fail to gain the upperhand, but he also fell into a disadvantageous position and was now being chased by their player. Xiao Jie was inwardly delighted and involuntarily glanced over at Happy.

Xiao Jie hoped that Happy's members would display a bit of anxiety on their faces! Yet when he turned to look, they were all sitting calmly as if waiting for a fish to bite, especially Ye Xiu, who was even smiling!

Xiao Jie wanted to say something, but seeing how no one turned to pay him any attention, he held back.

On the field, Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash turned and darted into a small alleyway nearby. The map they were on was an ancient town. Under the fading light of the setting sun, One Inch Ash immediately turned upon entering the alleyway. His shadow was still stretched out and left behind him. When Anxious Ghost charged over, he immediately saw this and sped up to give chase.

"Tsk tsk, the small details are what decides victory!" Xiao Jie lamented. The current match, Happy versus Jade Dynasty, was being streamed. Currently, the different angles and shots included the streaked one. Just now, they had given a close up of the lengthy shadow stretched out behind One Inch Ash and the commentator was analyzing the mistake made by Qiao Yifan.

"You should have your back to the setting sun, not your face..." The commentator expressed. Yet he saw One Inch Ash stop, huddling behind a wall and setting down a Sword Boundary to increase his strength and intelligence, preparing his ambush.

"This... I believe that Jade Dynasty's player couldn't possibly not be ready for this." The commentator said with confidence. Using the corner to make a sneak attack was a commonly employed tactic, so how could a pro player not be prepared for such a happening?

As expected, Jade Dynasty's Anxious Ghost didn't walk along the wall when he came in pursuit, but used an extra two steps to send himself into a rather large pathing curve. This way, he could gain some distance and guard against an ambush. What pro player wouldn't know to do this?

Even so, One Inch Ash's tachi still swung up, a Moonlight Slash was sent at Anxious Ghost, character and sword flying at him.

"Tsk tsk, this ambush..." The commentator was about to comment on this ambush and Qiao Yifan's attack from before and how childish they were, but Anxious Ghost seemed to have become dumbstruck, lifting the tachi in hand, but not seeming to know what he was doing. One Inch Ash's Moonlight Slash struck its target.

After Moonlight Slash was a Full Moonlight Slash, the same combo, expect that Qiao Yifan followed the knockback effect with a Ghost Slash. Anxious Ghost's momentum in the air immediately increased, like a cannonball, flying head first into the mud. The Jade Dynasty player quick recovered, making Anxious Ghost's original head-into-the-ground into a diving forward roll. As he rolled, he turned. A flash of energy from his sword darted out from beneath his arm, sending out a Sword Draw as he got up.

Yet, the sword struck air since One Inch Ash hadn't even approached him. Over there, the edge of the blade was unsheathed and the power of Phantom Ghosts flowed out and under. Two consecutive Boundaries were cast.

The commentator was really busy now! Not only did he have to analyze the situation at hand, he was inwardly wondering how Anxious Ghost had been successfully sneak attacked by One Inch Ash just now. It shouldn't have been! Such a simple ambush, even he could dodge it if he were up there, no?

However, the two sides were locked in intense battle now, so there was no time to replay the previous scene. The commentator could only pay attention to the current happenings. Yet as he stared at the match and continued to speak and speak, he spoke until he was struck dumb by his own words...

"Happy's One Inch Ash has laid his fourth Ghost Boundary, turning this small area into a Ghost Boundary encyclopedia. Jade Dynasty's Anxious Ghost doesn't seem to be able to do much. High walls surround his left, right, and back. The only escape route is blocked by One Inch Ash. Take a look, everyone, One Inch Ash hasn't thrown all his Ghost Boundaries in a pile together. There are layers to this arrangement. This way, if Anxious Ghost tries to charge out, he'll be stopped by one of the layers of Ghost Boundaries, making it hard to get a good rhythm down and making things easier for One Inch Ash. Sword Draw! Oh, Anxious Ghost still maintains a very good reaction speed, he dodged it. Huh? What's he trying to do... Anxious Ghost keeps moving forward, but that's a wall over there! Oh, he bumped into the wall. Oh, it's the Seed of Darkness, or the Dark Boundary, as it's more commonly known. Sorry, there's too many interwoven Ghost Boundaries that even I didn't notice it. When did One Inch Ash lay it down? Anyways, Anxious Ghost stepped into the Dark Boundary, and he couldn't see under its blinding effects, so he ended up walking into a wall... this... seems rather ugly..."

"Dark Boundary's effects have worn off, Anxious Ghost turns... Wow, he's frozen now, an Ice Boundary..."

"One Inch Ash has the absolute advantage here. To be honest, I want to just announce his victory now, but the happenings from before taught me a lesson, so let's finish watching the match first." The commentator continued to analyze the situation and even made a joke about himself. Last match, the commentator hadn't been able to help announcing Lin Yi would win, but ended up getting his face slapped. So, in this match, he didn't dare jump to any conclusions though Qiao Yifan had the absolute advantage.

"Anxious Ghost has been trapped there by One Inch Ash, unable to escape. Happy's player has used the terrain to its fullest, perfectly utilizing the advantages of a Ghostblade. Okay, now the scene we're giving everyone is One Inch Ash's skill situation. We have the production director to thank for capturing this scene. Look, everyone, all of One Inch Ash's Boundaries are currently in use. All of the Ghost Boundaries in his skill build are currently on cooldown. Seeing the rotation of these cooldowns, doesn't everyone think this is a beautiful rhythm? I feel like if there was some music to go with it, it would be even better."

"Oh, One Inch Ash has quickened his pace, sending out all his Ghost Boundaries. Now, there are a total of, one, two, three, four, five... Sorry, everyone, I can't seem to make it out clearly either, but with One Inch Ash sending out all these Boundaries, does he want..."

"Ghost Feast!!!"

"Amazing, One Inch Ash has activated Ghost Feast, making all the Ghost Boundaries erupt, immediately taking the rest of Anxious Ghost's health with them. One Inch Ash won! What a beautiful victory!" The commentator yelled, forgetting his composure.

Chapter 989: The Cautious Qiao Yifan

Amidst the silence, someone from the crowd started clapping, which quickly spread until applause erupted around the entire stadium.

Happy didn't have that many fans. There were even quite a few people who didn't like them. However, even people who had well-defined likes and dislikes appreciated brilliant performances. Everyone had seen Qiao Yifan's prowess in this fight on the jumbotron in front of them. Such a convincing performance truly deserved such wild applause.

They now had a completely different view of that rash and initial sneak attack. It was without question to lure the opponent into his trap. Its purpose was to draw Anxious Ghost into the necessary position.

"Friends, I don't think you guys have forgotten about the sneak attack from the corner. Let's take a look at it again." When the commentator reviewed the match, he impatiently had the stream cut to that moment.

The clip had already been prepared. However, the fight never stopped, continuing all the way until Anxious Ghost was killed. As a result, there had been no time to show the replay. It could finally be played now. Everyone watched the scene again from Anxious Ghost's perspective.

When Anxious Ghost chased after One Inch Ash to this little alleyway, One Inch Ash had already disappeared. However, at the corner of the street, a shadow extended on the ground. Anxious Ghost noticed it and immediately ran towards it. Before he reached the corner, he moved in an arc, putting distance between the two before rushing forward to attack One Inch Ash, who had been lying in wait.

The twilight from the setting sun shone down, making things seem real, yet unreal at the same time. From Anxious Ghost's point of view, only One Inch Ash could be seen. The swordlight had been completely hidden by the setting sun. Anxious Ghost wasn't able to see the attack coming. Then, he was thrown into a corner until his defeat.

"So it was like that..." the commentator gasped in admiration, "Happy's player cleverly positioned himself so that the sunlight directly shone on him and covered his attack. Everyone paid attention. One Inch Ash jumped when he let loose a Moonlight Slash. This jump put this swordlight in a position, where the sunlight would also conceal it. Everything had been planned accordingly. Happy had a clear strategy going into this battle. I'm sure everyone knows that even though the maps used in these matches are temporary, once the League started, all of the maps were available for download and use. The maps used in every match are announced beforehand so that the teams can prepare ahead of time. From the looks of it, Happy has put a lot of work in this area. What about Jade Dynasty? The player was also a Ghostblade. Even though he's a hybrid Phantom Sword Demon, he could have taken advantage of the map too, yet he didn't notice this point."

"That victory was beautiful. Let's all remember this player's name. Qiao Yifan! He truly should come out and accept our applause. Unfortunately, this is a group arena. He still needs to continue playing, but worry not. There's still a long road ahead of him. I believe that this player certainly has a bright future ahead of him. Speaking of which, Qiao Yifan was originally from Team Tiny Herb. For some reason, he never appeared on stage with them and left after being there for a season. Seeing Qiao Yifan's performance today, I wonder if Team Tiny Herb is going to regret their decision."

Amid the commentator's praise and the crowd's applause, Team Jade Dynasty's defeated player came down from the stage. The praise and applause was for Qiao Yifan. For him, it only made it that much harder to bear. He walked very slowly as if he didn't want to go back to the player bench. Their boss,

Xiao Jie, was sitting down with a dark face. Seeing his player coming down slowly, he snorted coldly and ignored him. He called over Team Jade Dynasty's third player.

"Be more mindful. The opponent has a strong grasp of the maps. Be careful and don't make the same mistakes. And..." Xiao Jie instructed impatiently.

"I understand." The third player was Zheng Shengchao, a Berserker. His character Severed Yearning. After being given sincere advice from Xiao Jie, he headed towards the stage.

The third round began. The current situation was very unfavorable towards Jade Dynasty. One Inch Ash had consumed lots of mana, but he had only lost 20% of his health in the previous round. Happy had nearly a one person lead over Jade Dynasty. Even with a disadvantage, Xiao Jie was sat quite upright. He didn't smile as he turned his head over and talked to Ye Xiu.

The match began. Due to Qiao Yifan's outstanding performance in the previous round, the commentator couldn't help but reveal a bit of bias towards him. At the start, he talked about what Qiao Yifan might do since he wasn't at full health and he didn't have much mana left. After his concern for Qiao Yifan, he introduced Jade Dynasty's player, Zheng Shengchao.

It was somewhat awkward for Berserkers to play in group arenas because of their signature skill Blood Awakening, creating the unique health-trading playstyle. Because of how trading health changed the pace of the match, it made things too difficult for Berserkers. In a 1v1, they could easily make this decision, but in a group arena, if they traded away their health cleanly, how were they going to take down more than one opponent? Although Berserkers became stronger the lower their health, they weren't so strong that they could just instantly kill an opponent. Directly trade away 90% of their health at the start? That wasn't how trading worked. When they traded their health, they would lower their opponent's health to around the same range. If a Berserker's health was low, but the opponent's health was high, don't think that was the Berserker trading away his health. Ninety nine percent of the time it was just the Berserker getting destroyed.....

Their class's feature made it challenging for them to participate in the group arena, especially when the opposing side held the lead.

Xiao Jie sincerely instructed his team's Berserker, but his expression was still grave and stern. He clearly knew what a predicament they were in.

They knew. Qiao Yifan knew even better. It could be seen that from his previous performance, Qiao Yifan had made ample preparations beforehand. He had taken it very seriously and played very carefully. He had even taken note of the sunlight at the corner of the street and utilized it to his advantage. How could he not have been prepared for his current situation?

Zheng Shengchao didn't hurry and search for One Inch Ash. Qiao Yifan also didn't go on the defensive to protect his lead. The two cautiously and patiently looked for opportunities.

Xiao Jie couldn't help but feel somewhat fretful upon seeing this scene.

He had figured that the other side would be more proactive and bold because of his lead. Certain decisions that might not be considered under normal circumstances might be made as a result. After all,

he had a health lead as a backup! Thus, he had instructed Zheng Shengchao to take advantage of the other side's mentality.

But from the looks of it, the other side didn't have that sort of mentality. Xiao Jie couldn't help but feel doubtful. In the previous round, Qiao Yifan had taken the initiative and lured his opponent into a trap, but in this round, he had actually become more careful. Let alone boldly attempting it when there was a thirty percent chance, the current Qiao Yifan turned a blind eye to even a fifty sixty percent chance. He was looking for an even more certain opportunity.

Xiao Jie's prediction was completely wrong. He couldn't help but feel unhappy. On stage, Zheng Shengchao had long since noticed this point. After some more careful probing, he decided to abandon Xiao Jie's advice. The other side wasn't falling for it.

Unable to bait the opponent, Zheng Shengchao could only search for an opportunity to forcefully break through to the opponent, but Qiao Yifan refused to face him directly. Qiao Yifan weaved in and out of the alleys as if it was his own home.

Zheng Shengchao was puzzled. It was a new map for both sides. How come the other side was so familiar with it? How could he know this map like back of his hand?

Zheng Shengchao, who had been chasing him the entire time, was starting to become impatient. Every time he reached a corner, he lifted his head to see where the sun was. He had to think about whether that place might have traps set, a dead end, or if it could be completely sealed off by ghost boundaries. Because of all the thinking he needed to do, he often lost his target, making him feel even more annoyed.

"Are you planning on running around until you recover all of your mana?" Zheng Shengchao couldn't bear it anymore and spoke to the other side through the all chat. Glory characters had basic health and mana recovery, but it was very very slow in real combat. If not, wouldn't the matches go on forever? Zheng Shengchao knew the other side didn't have that goal in mind. These words were purely to provoke him.

At Happy's benches, Ye Xiu actually went over to ask Chen Guo: "Did Yifan bring recovery equipment into the game?"

"Do you think everyone thinks like you do?" Chen Guo felt hopeless.

Ye Xiu had done this before, but it had actually been a very bold move. Bringing two sets of equipment increased the character's weight significantly. Fighting would feel different. It was hard to say if bringing an extra set of equipment was actually helpful or harmful, so the switching-equipment playstyle only lasted a short while before becoming nonexistent. It was considered okay to bring one or two extra pieces of equipment, but the end result of carrying two full sets of equipment might just be dragging the character to their own death.

Even Ye Xiu only dared to do so against Team Everlasting. If he had to compete against similar-level experts, he would need to carefully ponder over it.

"I feel like with Yifan's skill level, bringing an extras set is still quite reasonable!" Wei Chen gave an enthusiastic thumbs up. His words meant that Qiao Yifan had the ability to toy around with Jade Dynasty's player.

"Do you really think Yifan's as shameless and unscrupulous as you guys?" Chen Guo was about to go crazy.

"I think it's just because Yifan's rather cautious." Ye Xiu said.

"Yeah yeah, he's probably overestimating these Jade Dynasty players." Wei Chen said.

"We also figured that Jade Dynasty was hiding their strength." Ye Xiu said.

"Yes, that's right. If it wasn't for that, he would definitely have brought another set of equipment." Wei Chen said.

"Yeah, he definitely would have." Ye Xiu nodded his head.

"Get out of here! You two, f*ck off!!" Chen Guo yelled.

Chapter 990: Remaining Mana

Ye Xiu and the others were all joking around off stage, while Qiao Yifan, on stage, was completely unaffected by his opponent's taunting. Jade Dynasty's Zheng Shengchao had no idea as to where One Inch Ash was or where he was heading, but the audience could clearly see how One Inch Ash was darting in and out of the alleyways with familiarity.

This sort of playstyle was usually very unpopular, but because of Qiao Yifan's brilliant performance last match, the audience's tolerance for Qiao Yifan's playstyle had obviously become very high. Even the commentator was praising Qiao Yifan's patience, saying that it was rare that someone kept such a cool head when they were in the lead by a full player in the group arena.

"Ok, Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash has once again managed to sneak behind Severed Yearning once again. Will he manage to grasp an opportunity this time?" The commentator kept his eyes on the match.

"He's approached, but this position doesn't seem very appropriate for a Ghostblade's ambush. Let's see what Qiao Yifan will do!"

"Oh, he's laid down a Ghost Boundary."

"It's a Flame Boundary. Seems like Qiao Yifan also knows that this environment isn't too great for Ghost Boundaries, so he's aiming to deal damage."

"Jade Dynasty's player noticed, turned around, Collapsing Mountain!!! He has a very fast reaction speed. It looks like Zheng Shengchao was waiting for One Inch Ash to strike."

"Qiao Yifan has backed away. Seems like he felt that this opportunity wasn't a very good one. However, it's obvious that Zheng Shengchao isn't willing to let Qiao Yifan go so easily this time, and he's pursuing. Exchanges like this have happened several times already and Qiao Yifan has continuously managed to

slip away, utilizing his familiarity with the map. However, this time... It seems like Zheng Shangchao has gained a better understanding of the map during the match. He refuses to be shaken off."

"Huh...? This place..." The commentator made a questioning sound before he started to become excited. The broadcast very cooperatively flashed to the area the commentator had noticed. The audience looked over, and immediately understood the commentator's excitement. This area had a very similar terrain to where Qiao Yifan killed his last opponent.

A brilliant performance was about to follow! The audience perked up, and some even began applauding. As for Team Happy's supporters, they had already begun to cheer and yell with excitement.

Jade Dynasty's members were extremely anxious at this moment. It didn't feel good to be spectating this at all. They could only watch as their teammate fell into the opponent's trap, but were helpless to do anything about it. Half of Jade Dynasty's players had even stood up, but their boss, Xiao Jie, was still sitting, unmoving, though his own anxiety was evident. His gaze even revealed a hint of rage, clearly unhappy at how his players were continuously falling for their opponent's tricks.

Under the eyes of the people, Zheng Chaosheng didn't fail their expectations. His Severed Yearning took that final step.

A Ghost Boundary practically matched the timing for this step, coming down on Severed Yearning's head. Qiao Yifan had perfectly timed the skill, beginning to cast it beforehand, and just finishing the cast with this step.

Zheng Shengchao was shocked, but didn't panic. He wanted nothing more than for Qiao Yifan to stop and face him head on! With a Colliding Stab, Severed Yearning charged at One Inch Ash. One Inch Ash whirled around in a dodge, bounding to switch of positions with Severed Yearning.

After the Colliding Stab, Severed Yearning spun around and Zheng Shengchao only noticed the terrain of his environment then. His heart missed a beat, feeling dread rising. However, he was already trapped in a Ghost Boundary and One Inch Ash swung the Taichi in his hand, Ghost Boundaries came down one after another. The audience yelled and cheered, abandoning all pretense, while Jade Dynasty's players all felt like crying.

Zheng Shengchao struggled, wanting to break out of the encirclement of Ghost Boundaries, yet was met with failure after failure.

Compared to the Ghostblade of last round, Berserkers were a lot better at breaking through, but didn't have nearly as high of a resistance to the effects of Ghost Boundaries. Falling into a CC chain like this was much more troublesome for Zheng Shengchao than for the last match's Ghostblade player. Severed Yearning's life dropped constantly, the audience applauded thunderously, Jade Dynasty's players sat silently and boss Xiao Jie's expression made him look like he was ready to eat someone.

"Qiao Yifan has done it yet again, an amazing performance. However, this sort of playstyle consumes a lot of mana, so it seems that this time he won't be able to wipe out his opponent. That's perfectly fine though; being able to expend all your mana in the group arena means you've truly done everything you can. Qiao Yifan has reached this limit wonderfully. If Happy wins the group arena, then Qiao Yifan would've made the greatest contribution!" The commentator kept praising Qiao Yifan's performance,

noticing, at the same time, that One Inch Ash's mana might not be enough and therefore wouldn't be able to keep up this playstyle of layering Ghost Boundaries in excess.

"Ah! So close...." A split second after the commentator finished analyzing the situation, he gave a cry from a sudden change on the field. Meanwhile, the audience suddenly gave a loud collective sigh at the same time.

"Severed Yearning almost charged out of One Inch Ash's encirclement. Though Jade Dynasty's player fell into a trap, it seems like he hasn't given up yet, seeking opportunities whenever he can." The commentator, having almost focused completely on One Inch Ash, finally decided to spare a few thoughts for Zheng Shengchao.

"Uh... Qiao Yifan's control seems to be too spread out this time!" Seeing the two's exchange on the field, the commentator suddenly came up with this comment.

Compared to the complete control of the match, Zheng Shengchao's Severed Yearning could still find some opportunity to try and break away from the control. Though he hadn't succeeded, he wasn't losing as badly as One Inch Ash's previous opponent.

"I feel like... Qiao Yifan might be thinking too much. Seems like he's controlling his rhythm on purpose to not completely deplete his mana so quickly. However, this leaves room for his opponent to struggle. Actually, in a situation where he has such an advantage, why doesn't Qiao Yifan just use up the rest of his mana to maximize his damage? I doubt anyone would be disappointed in him if he eventually lost the match," the commentator said with some confusion and disappointment.

Just as his words fell, the two on the field began their first ever head on exchange. Zheng Shengchao might not have been able to break through, but was able to deal a lot of damage to One Inch Ash.

"Qiao Yifan won't be wiped out before even depleting his mana, right? That would be such a shame... Qiao Yifan... he demands too much of himself..." Seeing how Zheng Shengchao gained the upper hand in this exchange, the commentator began to worry.

"Again! It seems like Zheng Shengchao is very confident in himself."

"Dark Boundary! This Dark Boundary was very timely, otherwise he might really be able to hold on against this barrage. I hope Qiao Yifan can take advantage of this opportunity and regain control over the situation..."

Yet Qiao Yifan didn't accomplish what the commentator was hoping for, continuing to stubbornly keep his slow rhythm and not depleting his mana to set Ghost Boundaries like in the previous match.

"If it's just like this... I feel like there would be no need for this trap. I think Zheng Shengchao would be more than willing to just fight Qiao Yifan head-on, right?" The more he spoke, the more the commentator felt disappointed in Qiao Yifan's actions this round.

"Zheng Shengchao is getting more and more confident as he fights, his status is at its peak." Slowly, the commentator's attention began to shift to Jade Dynasty's player.

"Blood Sword, Destruction Slash, brilliant! Soul-Devouring Crimson Grip, missed, what a shame. If that grab hit, it would have changed the situation completely. Zheng Shengchao's Severed Yearning might

not have broken through, but he has gained the upperhand now, unleashing his own barrage of attacks. Qiao Yifan is struggling to endure. Under a situation where he originally held the upper hand, Qiao Yifan didn't utilize his Ghost Boundaries to their fullest, so One Inch Ash lost a lot of health as well, with only ten percent remaining. Now, what he is about to face is an even fiercer offense from his opponent because Blood Awakening has now been activated..."

"Wait, it's been activated..." The commentator suddenly realized something was wrong upon coming to this. He was dumbstruck for a long while and it wasn't until the two on the field engaged with one another that he noticed the health of each character falling and suddenly realized: Severed Yearning's Blood Awakening had already been activated because his health had already fallen by more than 50 percent, and this all happened without any fanfare. All he had noticed was Qiao Yifan's hardship in taking these attacks, but he hadn't noticed how Qiao Yifan's One Inch Ash had been quietly chipping away at his opponent's health all of this time.

That's right. This wave of damage wasn't nearly as elegant and consistent as the last match. However, if he was as liberal with his mana and consumed it like he did in the last match, how much damage would he be able to do with the little mana he had left?

Yet now, using the head-on exchanges, One Inch Ash might've lost a lot of health, but he had also drained Severed Yearning's health by quite a bit, but how much mana had One Inch Ash used during this fight?

Ten percent!

He had only used ten percent, ten percent of his mana to take over fifty percent of his opponent's health. This was a shocking result, and One Inch Ash had taken a lot of damage to achieve it. Though he still had almost twenty percent of his mana left now, he only had ten percent of his health. He might've been able to save some mana, but did he have enough health to use it?

Just as these doubts arose in the commentator, he suddenly understood.

"It's coming!!!"

Thus, all the people watching the broadcast heard the commentator abruptly say these words.

What was coming? Just as the audience was lost in their confusion, One Inch Ash suddenly sped up the pace, Ghost Boundaries flashed continuously all over the field. This extravagant scene had One Inch Ash's mana plummeting, yet at the same time it quickly depleted Severed Yearning's health as well.

"It's enough! Qiao Yifan's remaining mana is enough to wipe out Severed Yearning. Severed Yearning is a Berserker, so he doesn't have the same resistance to Ghost Boundaries that the Ghostblade from last match had, so Ghost Boundaries deal significantly more damage to him. Qiao Yifan's remaining mana will be enough to take him out." The commentator quickly shared his findings then, but he had forgotten that the previous analysis was all in his head. Suddenly announcing this made the audience extremely confused.

However, the current situation on the field became the best annotation for the commentator's words. One Inch Ash completely took back control as he sped up without warning. Severed Yearning, who had seemingly taken control of the field for a while, was immediately drowned in Ghost Boundaries. He

couldn't orientate himself or find a way out. His health depleted rapidly. His blood may have awakened, but there was no place to utilize it. He was securely locked in One Inch Ash's Ghost Boundaries.

Finally, One Inch Ash's mana was no more, and with the last powerful skill that consumed it, Severed Yearning's life was gone, too.

Qiao Yifan had successfully taken out his second opponent.