

## Crossing 101

### Chapter 101: A Simple Test?

Ling Lan hadn't even waited for two minutes when the instructor said, "Ling Lan, it's your turn."

Under the instructor's guidance, Ling Lan touched the portal.

Her hand had barely touched the portal when she felt a tremendous sucking force pulling her entire body into it. Of course, this was just what Ling Lan felt. From an outsider's perspective, Ling Lan had only walked through the portal and disappeared.

"I hope this child can receive his inheritance!" This notion suddenly rose up within the young soldier's heart.

However, very soon he had received news from the secret monitors that that child had also been rejected and had been sent back to the login point.

*Even such an exceptionally talented child had been denied? Ling Xiao, exactly what kind of inheritor were you looking for?* It couldn't be denied that the young soldier was a little disappointed deep down, for he had really thought highly of that child. Perhaps there would be a chance in the future for him to help that child ...

The staff who were monitoring in secret had tracked Ling Lan's movements in the virtual world from the very moment she entered the portal. Only when they saw her walk into the library from the login point, where she then proceeded to sit and study, looking as if she had no intention of moving, did the staff ease their monitoring.

The young soldier didn't know that these monitors, who were led by him in name, actually had another mission. The higher-ups had instructed that whenever a child named Ling Lan attempted the legacy mission, the child should be monitored closely every step of the way.

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The moment Ling Lan entered the specialised space of the legacy mission, she actually found Little Four tucked away in a corner waiting for her. Surprised, she was just about to ask him what was going on when Little Four mysteriously pressed a finger against his lips and made a loud "Shhh!", signalling Ling Lan not to speak.

Ling Lan glared at Little Four irritably. If he was really trying to be stealthy, would he have made such a loud shushing noise? Still, Ling Lan didn't interrupt Little Four, merely waiting patiently for him to explain.

"Boss, someone is monitoring this space." Sure enough, Little Four gave her some momentous news.

"What exactly is going on?" asked Ling Lan in confusion.

“This space is not yet the real legacy mission space. It is just a transit station that the virtual world has specially set aside for this legacy mission, which is why it can be monitored,” explained Little Four. “I’ve tracked it, and it’s connected to the military.”

Ling Lan frowned, “And you still dare to stay here?” Wouldn’t the other side discover Little Four and cause them trouble?

Little Four rolled his eyes at Ling Lan, extremely displeased that she didn’t trust him. “Who am I? I am the god of the virtual world. They can only see what I want them to see. Like right now, all they can see is an image of you standing in front of that diamond-shaped crystal, investigating it seriously.” Little Four was very smug about this.

“Now who was it who acted as if a great enemy was upon us, telling me to not make a sound?” Ling Lan glared coolly at Little Four, instantly smothering his budding self-satisfaction.

Sensing that things were veering off-track, Little Four immediately adopted an obedient look, eager to please. This made Ling Lan annoyed and amused in equal measure; in the end, Ling Lan could only let it go, turning to focus on a more important question.

“About this legacy mission, how much do you know?” Since Little Four had come so early, he should have already gotten some understanding of the situation.

But reality wasn’t as simple as Ling Lan had assumed. When Little Four heard this question, his entire face fell. With a greatly stricken look, he said dejectedly, “Sorry, Boss, I can’t get into that place.” Little Four pointed to the front where the diamond-shaped crystal was hovering in the air, slowly turning on its axis.

“What is it? A portal?” Ling Lan walked over to the crystal to peer at it curiously.

Little Four said gloomily, “It is also a type of portal, but this crystal is some strong person’s solidified spiritual essence. I believe that the test space is right inside. Originally, I wanted to go inside to find out more, but I had just gotten close when I was repelled by the spiritual force around the crystal. It almost injured me,” said Little Four as he patted his little chest in remembered fear. If he had gotten hurt, his mental faculties would have been disrupted, and it might have been a very long time before he could have appeared in front of Ling Lan again.

“Oh? Then what should I do?” Hearing Little Four’s words, Ling Lan became more cautious.

“You just need to touch that crystal. That’s what I saw many of the students do,” said Little Four. “After they touched the crystal, they disappeared from this virtual world, and then one or two minutes later, they reappeared in the virtual world again, but they were already back at the login point where we first logged in.”

“Disappeared from the virtual world? Could it be a new space?” Ling Lan understood what Little Four was saying. In other words, they hadn’t been transported to another area in the virtual world, but had disappeared directly from this virtual world itself.

Little Four thought for a moment before saying, “I have some incomplete data here — it seems that there is a theory that when a person’s strength reaches a certain level, a realm will emerge. And every individual’s realm is an independent space.”

Hearing this, Ling Lan couldn't help but think of Dao. The essence of Dao can weaken an opponent's abilities — was it then also a type of realm, except that this realm was not yet complete?

The notion came and went, and Ling Lan moved on to her next question, "Did all those students fail the mission?"

"Of course! Otherwise the next person wouldn't be able to enter. This legacy mission is really very interesting, only allowing one person to enter at a time. Only when the person inside has failed can the next person go in. Luckily the testing time is quick — the results are typically out within two or three minutes. There was even one student who didn't even manage to last 30 seconds before being sent to the login point. How stupid," said Little Four with clear schadenfreude.

"Perhaps I won't do much better," said Ling Lan disapprovingly. Who knew what things would be tested inside — no one could guarantee that they would definitely be able to pass.

"Boss will surely do fine and take down this legacy mission." said Little Four with a pout. In his mind, Ling Lan was the smartest!

"Little Four, thank you." Ling Lan was very touched by Little Four's faith in her. She stroked Little Four's small head, while her mind was working through her next options.

With some doubt, Ling Lan said, "Little Four, I want to give up on this mission. You know why ... I don't want the military to notice me." It would be fine if she didn't manage to complete it, but if by chance she really managed to complete it, it might result in some negative repercussions for her.

Puzzled, Little Four said, "Even so, you don't have to give up, right? I can create an illusion, so no matter whether Boss succeeds or fails, I can make it look like you're chased out after 3 minutes."

"Little Four, you can create illusions?" Ling Lan was extremely surprised. But then, she recalled that Little Four could alter human brainwaves, so of course he could also mimic human brainwaves to make an illusory Ling Lan appear in the virtual world.

"However, if I stay inside, it will still be useless when the next person finds that they can't get in," said Ling Lan with a sigh.

"That's easy. I'll just make a new space and let the children after that enter that new space. And then, I'll set it so that they'll be sent back to the login point at a random time between one to three minutes." Little Four didn't see the problem.

"And what about the contents of the test?" After all, quite a few students had already entered the real legacy mission space to take the real test. If by any chance it was discovered that the test contents were different, it would be bad.

"Tch, Boss, you really have too many questions. Wouldn't you already be inside the real test by then? As long as you're inside, when you take the test, I'll be able to find out the test contents then. At that time, I'll just copy it over ... Also, if by any chance Boss fails and gets thrown out, I won't even have to make a new space anymore. So, Boss, just go in and leave everything to Little Four."

Little Four couldn't stand it any longer and nudged Ling Lan impatiently to go in. Although Little Four could give those monitors an illusion, he couldn't just let Ling Lan continue to just stand still in front of the crystal — that would be suspicious.

Ling Lan finally relaxed. She put her hand onto the crystal floating in the air — for some reason, when she touched the crystal, she felt an indescribable sense of kinship, warming her deeply from the inside ...

Then, she was enveloped by the warmth of this spiritual energy and was brought to a place shrouded in fog. There was nothing at all in her surroundings other than semi-transparent fog and mist.

Just as Ling Lan was wondering what she should do, the mist suddenly condensed to form a grey figure. This figure was short and small, roughly the height and size of the present Ling Lan. And then, the little figure started to go through a set of combat arts.

Ling Lan took a close look and found herself speechless. Was this the test? Wasn't this just a little too easy? It turned out that that little figure was going through one of the basic combat arts that all students learned from the academy in grade one.

"Scout basics combat arts?" Ling Lan tentatively gave her answer, but found that the little figure was still going through the motions without stopping.

So it wasn't testing her for the name of the art? A thought flashed through Ling Lan's mind, and she struck a pose and begun following the grey figure to go through this set of basic combat arts. However, Ling Lan started from the very first stance; she wanted to prove her hypothesis.

Sure enough, Ling Lan found that the moment she started, that little figure restarted to follow Ling Lan as she went through the movements. As she had guessed, it was indeed a test of body language. Of course, it wasn't impossible for it to also be a test of combat art names, so Ling Lan decided to cover all her bases to make sure that she would pass safely.

Ling Lan called out the name of each move as she performed them, until she and the grey figure were moving completely in sync. When Ling Lan finally finished going through the entire set of combat arts, the grey figure disappeared, leaving Ling Lan standing alone in the space once again. She hadn't been thrown out, so it looked like she had passed this first round of testing.

Ling Lan let out a sigh of relief. Thank goodness she had guessed correctly. That one set of combat arts had taken up roughly two to three minutes ... which meant that most students had failed in the second round. What in the world was this second round testing for which would cause all of the students to fail?

Ling Lan's heartbeat became a little erratic just thinking about it. At this moment, the mist once again condensed into a human figure, but the figure this time was no longer a small child, but a bulky adult. This figure proceeded to go through yet another set of combat arts, but this particular set made Ling Lan's facial expression change drastically.

## **Chapter 102: A Test of Questions and Answers!**

Ling-style killing arts! That was one of the Ling family loyalists' specialised combat arts — why would it appear here in this mission space? Doubt rose in Ling Lan's heart. If it could be said that she wasn't

particularly concerned about this legacy mission at the start, now that she had seen this set of killing arts, Ling Lan had no choice but to take it seriously.

Ling Lan did not hesitate — she quickly followed the figure's lead to go through every punch and kick of the Ling-style killing arts perfectly. Having grown up practising these arts in combat training with the Ling family loyalists, Ling Lan had long had it ingrained in her memory.

Once Ling Lan had gone through the full set of the killing arts perfectly, the grey figure dissipated once again. At the same time, Ling Lan felt as if the surrounding fog and mist were gradually melting away, and soon, she could clearly see the scenery before her.

She was standing on a lush and green lawn. In the distance, there were the highs and lows of mountain ranges, circled by clouds and mist; nearby, a stream was trickling, and the air was filled with birdsong and the scent of flowers. A lovely and tranquil mountain valley scene had just appeared so abruptly before Ling Lan's eyes.

Ling Lan had never seen scenery as beautiful as this, which caused her heart to become unbelievably quiet in an instant. At that moment, a sheet of white paper suddenly descended from the skies, drifting down leisurely to float miraculously at her eye level and unfurled itself.

On it was a line of writing. It was a request: *This is a beautiful mountain valley, but unfortunately, till now it still has no name. Please give it a nice name now.*

Ling Lan had just finished scanning these words when an exquisite Chinese writing brush appeared beside the white paper.

That's strange. Why would such an ancient thing appear in this modern place?

Ling Lan's brows furrowed. Her gaze was fixed on the writing brush — the more she looked at it, the stranger it seemed. This was because the design of the brush actually seemed somewhat familiar to her, but she just couldn't recall where she had seen it before.

The academy? Ling Lan silently shook her head, eliminating this possibility. The academy was too advanced — if you told her that there were some things that defied reality there, Ling Lan might still believe you, but for an almost extinct antique such as a Chinese writing brush to appear there was almost impossible.

In that case, the only possibility was her house.

When and where would she have seen a writing brush like this one in her house? A writing brush would typically appear in a study room, but the study in the old Ling family mansion belonged to her father. Thus, the writing brushes in there were all bold and simple in design — there was no such elegantly exquisite writing brush there, which was clearly meant for women ...

For women? The study? Ling Lan suddenly recalled an incident ... That was back when she had first started learning how to read and write. She had been dragged into the study by her mum to practise calligraphy. Her mum had said that this was a Ling family tradition — every descendant of the Ling family must learn how to do it well. Back then, Ling Lan had been miserable. Her tiny fingers hadn't been able to hold any of her father's large writing brushes in the proper grip. In the end, she could only pretend to be clueless and innocent, and just grip the writing brush as if it were a mop.

Seeing Ling Lan's put-out expression, Lan Luofeng had been giggling with amusement. However, she also knew then that she had been careless, not having prepared a small writing brush more appropriate for Ling Lan. In the end, in order to let Ling Lan grip the brush correctly, she had taken out a small writing brush that she treasured dearly, lending it to Ling Lan. She had also told Ling Lan with a tender look that this was a love token given to her by her father Ling Xiao.

She remembered that she had reflexively complained right then that her dad was really such a cheapskate, while her mum was just too gullible. Lan Luofeng hadn't known whether to laugh or cry, and had knocked her smartly on the head. Still, that little writing brush had really been so pretty and exquisite that Ling Lan had played with it curiously for a good long while that day. But starting from the second day, that delicate little writing brush had once again been secreted away by Lan Luofeng. In its place was an extremely common small writing brush. From then on, Ling Lan had never again seen that love-token writing brush.

Five years had passed since then, and Ling Lan had almost entirely forgotten that event as well as that brush.

Ling Lan suppressed the emotions roiling within her. Carefully, she picked up the exquisite writing brush before her and twirled it in her palms. A phoenix with its wings outstretched in flight was carved on the shaft of the brush. It was exactly like the one she had seen in the past — sure enough, this brush was the one from her memory.

Could it be that this legacy had something to do with the Ling family? Something to do with her dad? Or perhaps this legacy *was* from her dad?

Ling Lan felt as if she were going mad, otherwise why would she even have these kinds of thoughts? Legacy missions could only be issued by someone at the level of an imperial operator or beyond. And anyone at that level would undoubtedly be a terrifying existence, almost a symbol of immortality. How could that short-lived dad of hers fall into this category?

But what if it were true? Ling Lan's heart started pounding violently ...

Right then, another line of writing suddenly appeared on the paper: *You still have one minute to think. The countdown begins now. 60, 59, 58 ...*

F\*ck! Ling Lan's emotional feelings fled instantly. She started thinking hard on what name she should give to this valley. At this moment, Ling Lan was somewhat regretful that she had gotten distracted by the writing brush, and had not used her time wisely to think about this problem.

"A beautiful valley, an exquisite brush? What exactly is this legacy mission trying to tell me with this imagery?" The CPU of Ling Lan's little brain was whirring at full speed, trying to find any hint she could from her surroundings.

The writing brush was her mum's love-token? In that case, could this lovely valley also have something to do with her mum? Ling Lan began scouring through the conversations she had had with her mum, hoping that she would be able to find some clue there.

43, 42, 41 ... time continued to slip away bit by bit. Ling Lan's forehead began to bead up with sweat — Goddammit, if only Little Four were here.

*“Boss, looking for me?”* Little Four’s voice suddenly rang out from within her consciousness. Ling Lan was startled, *“Little Four, you’re here?”*

*“Yup, I’ve been watching all this time. It’s just that I was sealed by an energy force and couldn’t talk to you. But when you thought of me just now, that energy just disappeared,”* replied Little Four.

*“Enough about that for now. There’s still about 30 seconds left. Quick, help me think, when I talked with my mum before this, did she ever mention a place like this?”* Ling Lan was burning with anxiety, throwing out the question hurriedly.

*“That’s a bit too broad. Are there any more hints?”* Little Four also became anxious, and his core processing chip started running in overdrive.

*“Whatever location for my parents’ engagement, dating, or proposal, or perhaps a marriage spot or a honeymoon destination ... or maybe some country that she has a deep impression of, or even an ideal country to build a home?”* Ling Lan ran through anything she could think of — all she could do now was gamble.

*“Dating spots ... other than the Ling estates, it was military camps. Your dad is really unromantic!”* muttered Little Four. How in the world had Mama Lan been wooed by this? *“Engagement? Proposal? Marriage? Honeymoon? Huh?! The family estates? Military camps? Hells, did your dad only know how to run between the family grounds and the military camps?! Did he never even consider exploring other places?!”*

Little Four was infuriated. No matter how hard he looked, Ling Xiao and Lan Luofeng’s romance history only went back and forth between military camps and the old Ling family estates. There was nothing at all connected with this beautiful valley before them right now.

*“Then what about dreams? Or ideals? Didn’t my mum have any places which she really wanted to visit?”* Ling Lan saw the number on the paper dropping from double digits into single digits, and couldn’t help but yell.

*“I’ve got it! It’s Belief! Mama Lan most wanted to go to Belief ...”* Little Four finally located the place that Lan Luofeng missed the most.

At this point, the countdown had already reached 3. Ling Lan didn’t hesitate, quickly writing down ‘Belief’. The moment the final ‘f’ was written, the countdown timer hit zero.

Ling Lan stared blankly at her answer. She honestly had no idea what kind of place ‘Belief’ was, so she didn’t know if this answer that Little Four provided was right or not. Whatever the result, she had already tried her best.

The words on the paper slowly faded away, including Ling Lan’s answer, and the paper turned back into a completely white sheet. Ling Lan took in a deep breath and waited for the final determination of the legacy mission.

**You Pass!** Two words in bold and vigorous cursive writing emerged on the paper. When Ling Lan saw the two words, the tension in her heart eased, and she soon started to feel fatigue settling into her body and mind. The intense pressure and anxiety within that short one minute had really taken a toll on her mental resources.

When the two words disappeared once more, new questions appeared. However, these questions were not at all difficult, because they were clearly a type of self-introduction.

*"Name: Ling Lan!"*

*"Father: Ling Xiao!"*

*"Mother: Lan Luofeng!"*

*"Age: 7 years!"*

*"What does your father like best?"* The fifth question made Ling Lan pause. She stopped the brush in her hand, thinking back on what Lan Luofeng had said.

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"Baby Ling Lan, do you know what your father likes?" Lan Luofeng was hugging Ling Lan, showing her a photo of her and Ling Xiao together, as she asked Ling Lan this.

Ling Lan rolled her eyes mentally. If her mum didn't tell her, how would she know?

"Your father really, really likes mecha. You could even say that, in his life, besides mecha, there is still only mecha. Mummy was sometimes jealous of his mecha, but your daddy was the coolest when he was piloting his mecha. No one else could compare." Mama Lan was starting to get lost in her fantasies again, her face dreamy with recollection. This made the one-year-old baby Ling Lan whack Ling Xiao's charming smiling face in the photo with a small hand.

*"You menace!"* scolded Ling Lan internally. The moment her dad was brought up, her mum would become unsteady.

"Still, what your dad loved most was me. Did you know that? Your daddy told me once ... if he had to choose between me and mecha, he would abandon mecha without question, and choose me." At this point in her story, Lan Luofeng blushed. "Wait till I meet him again. I will definitely make him throw away his mecha, and accompany me forever ... like he promised."

Ling Lan felt a faint sense of melancholy from these words. Loving so deeply that she just could not accept the other's death ... whenever Lan Luofeng mentioned Ling Xiao, she spoke of him as if he were just on a long journey away, as if he hadn't truly departed.

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Wasn't mum the one dad loved the most? This was probably also what her mum wished for ... Ling Lan sighed, and behind the question of *'what does your father like best'*, she wrote down 'Lan Luofeng'.

However, the next question gave Ling Lan yet another headache — why were the questions of this legacy mission so bizarre?

*"Your mother's sleeping habit?"* Ling Lan's face couldn't help but twitch at this question. Without hesitation, she put down 'grinding her teeth'.

When Ling Lan stopped writing, a final question appeared on the paper. *"Do you need to modify your answers?"*



Ling Lan resolutely wrote 'no'. At the final stroke, the brush in Ling Lan's hand instantly turned into black mist and dissipated into the air. The words on the paper also disappeared once again.

And then, very quickly, a new line of writing emerged on the paper.

*"Congratulations on advancing to the next round!"*

### **Chapter 103: A Heartless Dad?**

At the appearance of this line of text, the beautiful valley before Ling Lan's eyes shattered like glass and dissipated. In the blink of an eye, a new scene unfolded before Ling Lan's eyes. She was now in some luxurious hall, a hall which Ling Lan could not be more familiar with. It was the hall of the home she had lived in for a full 7 years — the Ling family mansion.

Ling Lan's gaze revealed a trace of surprise at this unexpected scene. The cautious Ling Lan did not choose to walk around randomly, but instead stood still where she was. She tapped lightly on her own head as she thought: *Was this originally set up this way? Or had the legacy mission extracted this image from her memories to create an impromptu illusion?*

She needed to figure this out, otherwise she might make a wrong choice in the upcoming round of tests and fail the mission. Although she had already gone further than any of the other children before her, Ling Lan was still unwilling to accept failure down to her very bones.

Ling Lan decided that she would first investigate the details of this great hall. If this scenery was the original setting of the legacy mission, then it was very likely related to her father Ling Xiao. If that was the case, this mansion drawn from Ling Xiao's memories would most definitely have some differences in comparison to the current mansion. Her father had already been dead for almost 8 years after all. On the other hand, if this illusion was born from an extraction of her memories, then she shouldn't be able to find any differences in her surroundings.

Ling Lan took a careful look around, and very soon, she had found something different. There was an additional woollen army coat on one of the armchairs in the hall, and on the wall behind it, the space beside her parents' wedding photo was empty. It was missing a portrait of herself.

Every year, Lan Luofeng would choose one of Ling Lan's newest photos to convert into a portrait, and then hang it beside their wedding photo in the great hall. The portrait had already been changed seven times without skipping a year. According to Lan Luofeng, she wanted Ling Xiao to keep watching Ling Lan as she grew up.

But in Ling Lan's opinion, Lan Luofeng was clearly just too free and needed to find something to do. Still, to keep her mother happy, Ling Lan was glad to oblige.

"From this, it looks like this scene is definitely not drawn from my memory. From the time I was born, my picture has always been hung here." Ling Lan's lips quirked up in a small smile. Since she had gotten her answer, her following choices would be much easier.

When Ling Lan took her first step, a clear and resounding voice rang out in the hall. "Please choose a room as you wish. The test content of every room is different. Some are easy, while some are difficult ..."

The corner of Ling Lan's lips quirked upwards. This was probably a trap. Ever since she had entered this legacy mission, she had not seen any task that depended purely on luck. This was obviously abnormal if it really was as she thought.

As if sensing Ling Lan's thoughts, the clear voice continued to say, "This has nothing to do with being fair. Sometimes, luck is also a type of strength." Of course, it didn't change the fact that, whether you liked it or not, this was how it would be.

The clear voice had barely faded when the doors of all the rooms facing the hall swung open in unison with crisp sounds. The opened doorways seemed to beckon Ling Lan to enter.

"Isn't this just a misleading trick?" Ling Lan already had an answer in her heart. If this were someone who didn't know the Ling family mansion, they would definitely be tricked by this scene before them. This mission had been silently eliminating all candidates who weren't from the Ling family from the very beginning. This was probably why all the children before her hadn't been able to pass — they were all not Ling Lan.

"Were you waiting for me? Oh, Father!" By this point, Ling Lan could pretty much confirm that this legacy mission had been created by her father Ling Xiao.

Oh dad, what kind of person are you, really? Ling Lan smiled wryly. She really regretted not having looked up information on Ling Xiao, causing her to be floundering in confusion right now.

Ling Lan settled her emotions and then began walking determinedly across the hall. She ignored the stairways curling off to the sides, walking directly to the centre of the corridor.

There were rooms along both sides of the corridor. Right now, all the room doors were already open. As Ling Lan walked down the hallway, she could see the decorations and contents of the rooms. Some of them were the same as their current counterparts, while others were completely different. Was this how it was in her father's memory?

She walked over to stand before a full-length mirror. The mirror was very tall and large, reaching up to 2.5 metres tall and spanning 4 metres wide.

Without any hesitation, Ling Lan pushed her palms against the mirror and something unexpected occurred. The mirror actually broke apart from the middle, folding in on itself in four different directions until it finally disappeared to reveal a hidden passage. At the end of the 4-metre wide passage was a spacious staircase draped with a shaggy white carpet.

Ling Lan had just stepped into the passage when the mirror reassembled itself behind her, returning to its original appearance in the blink of an eye. It was once more a flawless full-length mirror, its fine cracks imperceptible to the naked eye. Modern-day technology was already able to achieve this flawless perfection.

The Ling family mansion was split into two independent areas. The front section was for entertaining guests, though it naturally included a master bedroom for the master, along with studies and other common rooms to fend off spying.

Meanwhile, the hidden back area was where the Ling family head truly resided. Besides the Ling family head, this secret was only known to a few old loyal servants who frequently visited the mansion.

Therefore, even if other students had passed the previous few rounds by chance, once they got here, they would still be unable to find the correct room. Furthermore, even if someone accidentally touched the mirror, it still wouldn't open. This was because the force necessary to open the mirror corresponded to the position touched. If the position touched was different, the force needed to trigger the mirror to open would also be different.

Of course, this did not exclude the possibility of someone being phenomenally lucky, being able to pass every round of the test by sheer luck ... This sort of person would obviously be someone favoured by the heavens, a destined winner in life, the main character of a story — Ling Lan would have no regrets losing the legacy to such a person; it was stupid to try and match an abnormality.

Ling Lan slowly walked up the staircase. For some reason, her heart started pounding dramatically and her palms started oozing sweat. Would Ling Xiao, her father in this life, really appear in that room?

Ling Lan finally arrived at the study. Her mum Lan Luofeng had once said that this study belonged to Ling Xiao. Flipped around, it meant that Ling Xiao also only existed within that study room. The moment Ling Xiao walked out of that study, Ling Xiao was no longer Ling Xiao, but Lan Luofeng's hubby.

Ling Lan had always felt that her mum was rather domineering — she just hid it very deeply. In particular, her soft-touch methods were on a level of its own; tears especially, were one of her sure-win tactics. Many times Ling Lan had surrendered to these methods, and she believed that her father would also have been powerless against them.

Thus, Ling Lan chose the study. Since this was a legacy mission set by Ling Xiao, then he would only be able to pass on the legacy when he was truly Ling Xiao.

Ling Lan took a deep breath and placed her right hand on the door handle of the room. With a strong push, the door easily swung open, and everything within the study was revealed before her eyes.

Abruptly, silent tears fell from Ling Lan's eyes ...

Behind the study desk, a handsome young man was smiling gently as he looked at her. And that man was her father, Ling Xiao.

Only then did Ling Lan notice that, over the span of these 7 years, under Lan Luofeng's daily nagging and bombardment of stories, she had already subconsciously accepted this man before her as her father. It was only because Ling Xiao wasn't physically around that these affectionate emotions had been deeply buried within Ling Lan's heart, and had never been discovered by herself. And now, really seeing her father standing before her, Ling Lan could no longer control the emotions in her heart. The tears could not be stopped as she involuntarily began to cry.

The current Ling Xiao should be a memory-entity from 8 years ago. He was utterly unmoved by Ling Lan's emotional turmoil, only giving her a slight nod before saying, "Being able to get here, you should be my child Ling Lan."

However, he quickly scoffed at himself and said, "Well, not definitely. I believe that the military will not let go of this legacy so easily. Perhaps you all really managed to crack this mission. After all, the previous rounds and questions weren't that difficult." With these words, a cold glint suddenly flashed across Ling Xiao's eyes. Ling Lan abruptly felt a crushing wave of pressure sweep towards her, almost flattening her to the ground. Fortunately, Ling Lan had already been fashioned by the learning space into a little anomaly — she immediately leaked a little essence of Dao to bear the burden of this endless pressure.

Still, just this small taste had told Ling Lan that her father was, as expected, very strong. Anyone who could issue a legacy mission was no ordinary person.

It seemed that Ling Xiao only wanted to posture a little, and he may also be wary in case the one who passed was really his child. Very quickly, he had retracted the pressure emanating from his body.

"If the one inheriting my legacy is not my child, I have only one wish. After you have learnt it, look for my child, and pass these things on to him." Ling Xiao's words made Ling Lan's tears fall even more fiercely; this legacy had really been left for her by her father.

Ling Xiao's attitude gentled abruptly, and he said, "If you want to receive my legacy, there is one more mission you must complete. Find me something I need."

With those words, Ling Xiao said nothing further, only looking straight at Ling Lan with a smile. Ling Lan hurriedly wiped away her tears. This wasn't the time for her to mope and be melancholy; she had to finish this mission first.

Ling Lan asked carefully, "Could you give a little more detail?"

All that answered Ling Lan was still just Ling Xiao's smile. Ling Lan tried a few other things, beating around the bush, but unfortunately, Ling Xiao just smiled at everything. Ling Lan was rather put out by this, a little resentful that her dad had made this legacy mission so complicated.

With no other choice, Ling Lan could only observe the study room closely in hopes that she would be able to locate some kind of clue. Sadly, Ling Lan was quickly disappointed. She noticed that this study was almost identical to the study in her memory. Other than Ling Xiao sitting behind the desk, all the decorations and furniture in the room were exactly the same. It was clear to see how much Lan Luofeng had treasured Ling Xiao's study, unwilling to change any bit of it after his death.

Ling Lan was frustrated. What should she do? What thing could her old dad need? Ling Lan could only take a closer look at Ling Xiao, and hope that she would be able to discern something from his facial expressions and body language.

At that moment, Ling Xiao looked as if he were enjoying the show. His jaw was cradled in his left hand, which was leaning artlessly against the arm of the chair. His right hand was tapping lightly on the surface of the desk as he looked at her with a half-smile.

Dammit, this heartless old man of hers, actually tormenting his own child so ... Ling Lan was full of complaints.

Although Ling Lan understood deep down that the Ling Xiao before her now was the Ling Xiao of 8 years ago who knew nothing of the person standing before him now, and that this sort of irritating attitude was definitely not targeted at her specifically ... she just couldn't help but feel annoyed.

#### **Chapter 104: The World of Belief!**

Also, why did he have to keep tapping his fingers? Didn't he know that all that noise would interfere with her thinking process?

Wait ... tapping noises? Ling Lan suddenly recalled something Lan Luofeng had mentioned before. When her mum had first met her dad, she had been attracted by the noise her dad had made by tapping on a table. It was because of that that they had gotten to know each other, and their love story had taken off and became unstoppable ...

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Back then, her mum had been a fresh-faced 16 year old maiden who had just graduated from a scout academy. As she hadn't been particularly talented and didn't have good potential, she hadn't managed to get into any of the major military schools of the Federation. However, Lan Luofeng had dreamed of being in the military since young, so she had decisively signed up to serve as a foot soldier, finally succeeding in becoming a common starship JMC<sup>1</sup> female trooper.

After 3 months of training for new recruits, her mum had been assigned to the starship fleet belonging to her dad, finally becoming the second mainship's JMC.

Subsequently, whenever Lan Luofeng had gone out to eat with the other female troopers of the same rank, she would find that no matter where they sat, some mecha fighters would appear by their side. Among them was a young man, who seemed to be their team leader. He appeared especially handsome and powerful, drawing the admiration of many of the female troopers.

However, the sense of hierarchy within the military camps was very strong. Even the most average mecha fighter held the military rank of second lieutenant, not to mention one at captain level. Meanwhile, they were merely some common female troopers of the lowest possible rank. They just didn't have the right to initiate conversation with a mecha fighter. They could only fantasize every day that these mecha fighters would one day greet them first ... Many girls had been willing to become soldiers, largely for the purpose of reeling in a rich and promising husband.

Lan Luofeng was the only girl who didn't think anything of this. She was still very young and hadn't become interested in love yet, which was why she was rather slow when it came to these things. However, even so, Lan Luofeng had also been surprised sometimes, wondering why she would run into that mecha officer so often — no matter where she sat, she would bump into him.

Back when she had first heard the story, Ling Lan had known right away that it was because her dad had already started crushing on her mum. That's why he was using this sort of 'serendipitous meeting' method to increase her mum's impression of him ... he had really been quite desperate.

Just like that, a month had passed by in fits and starts. Then one day, Lan Luofeng had 'unfortunately' ended up alone. The other JMCs in her class had been sent out to carry out various competition missions

for the various divisions of the Federation, because the mecha fighter confrontation event had been drawn by the second mainship. Consequently, the second mainship had sent out the main force of their mecha battle squad, and the JMCs in charge of those mecha had to go with them. In the end, only three JMCs were left on the second mainship. Every class of JMCs had had to leave a member behind on duty; Lan Luofeng's class had left the youngest member of their class, Lan Luofeng, behind.

And so when it was time to eat, Lan Luofeng could only go eat by herself. Just as she had sat down to begin her meal, someone suddenly sat down across from her. It was that young and handsome mecha officer who kept bumping into her whom she still didn't know.

Lan Luofeng found it strange that the other would choose to sit at her dining table when there were so many other empty seats and tables around. However, they were in a public canteen — anyone could freely choose where they wanted to sit. Despite the strangeness, Lan Luofeng didn't think too much about it and just continued to eat her food.

Naturally, Ling Xiao, who had worked so hard to create this opportunity, was unwilling to retreat without attempting anything. Let it be known that for the sake of getting some time alone with Lan Luofeng, he had cracked his head to squeeze out every ounce of ingenuity he had. He had purposely volunteered his unit for the mecha confrontation event mission, just so he could send away all those annoying JMCs hanging around.

Yet, he had never gotten to know a girl before, so he was at a loss on what to do next. In the end, he had clumsily chosen to attract Lan Luofeng's attention by making noise.

So, Ling Xiao had used his fingers to knock on the surface of the table lightly. Three long two short. Pause. Followed by another three long two short. Just like that, he started tapping out a consistent rhythm. At first, Lan Luofeng had found it strange, and then her attention had been captured, curious. When she saw that no one else was looking, she quietly asked Ling Xiao what he was doing with this rhythmic tapping.

Smiling, Ling Xiao told Lan Luofeng all the information he had prepared beforehand. Apparently, this kind of knocking was a type of code, called the Duomo code. It was a type of secret code shared between a JMC and the mecha fighter they were responsible for. Back during the warring period, there had been an incident where the communications channel connecting a JMC and their mecha had been hacked and deciphered ... in the end, the enemy had used the information gained from this hacking to set up an ambush, resulting in the complete destruction of an entire mecha troop. Later, a JMC named Duomo had thought up this method of communication. Using the code he thought up, he had helped his mecha fighter to escape the enemy's ambush again and again, completing their missions successfully to return safely.

From then onwards, every JMC would create their own unique Duomo code, to prevent a similar situation from happening ever again.

As a JMC, Lan Luofeng was naturally very interested in this sort of code. She sincerely requested to learn more about this code, but Ling Xiao seemed rather reluctant to say more. However, under Lan Luofeng's repeated pleading, he finally agreed, making Lan Luofeng feel extremely grateful.

Listening to the story up till this point, Ling Lan could only sigh at her mum's naïveté. Her dad had obviously been putting on an act to reel her mum in. Still, her mum couldn't be blamed for getting hooked so easily — her dad had clearly grasped her mum's vital point. Any dutiful JMC with ambition would not be able to resist this temptation. All she could say was that her old man had just been too shameless.

Whenever Lan Luofeng told the story, at this point, she would hold her face in her hands and sigh dreamily. She would marvel at the fact that Ling Lan's dad and her were just so meant to be — because, in their following conversations, she had found out that Ling Xiao was also a mecha fighter of the second mainship, and on top of that, he was one of the mecha fighters she was responsible for. But Ling Xiao later told her that he had known she was the one from the very beginning. Her voice had been different from anyone else's — soft and sweet, so very comfortable to listen to. His heart had imprinted on it from the very moment he had first heard her speak.

When Lan Luofeng told Ling Lan this, Ling Lan couldn't help but stifle a grin. She just knew that her dad had harboured impure intentions, and it looked like he had a voice kink as well.

After spending time alone together, just the two of them, for about half a month, the temperature of their feelings rose quickly. The two of them then agreed to become an exclusive JMC and mecha fighter pair, and together they created a Duomo code that belonged only to them.

Of course, this Duomo code hadn't yet found its way to the battlefield when, after the other JMCs returned, it had begun to be used frequently by them in daily life. Because they were afraid the other JMCs would find out about the two of them (it was primarily Lan Luofeng who was shy — who asked her to be the youngest and yet be the first one to get a boyfriend?), so every time they wanted to date, Ling Xiao would sit at the table beside Lan Luofeng's during meal times and rap on the table with his fingers. In their code, he would tell her where and when to meet, and regardless of whether Lan Luofeng was free, she would always rap back in their code to tell Ling Xiao if she would meet him or not.

At this point of the story, Ling Lan was really speechless. Could this still be considered dating? Why did it seem more like undercover spies trying to meet up? Still, Ling Lan was glad for her mum. Her first love had been so perfect that she had directly gotten married to her dad. It was just unfortunate that her dad had died young ... this should be blamed on this current world, full of war and strife, no peace in sight.

In order to make her mum happy, Ling Lan had expressed great interest in their Duomo code and said that she wanted to learn it. Hearing this, Lan Luofeng had been overjoyed, and had passed everything about this Duomo code belonging to her and Ling Xiao on to Ling Lan.

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Thinking back on this, Ling Lan began listening closely to Ling Xiao's tapping sounds. One long two short, three long one short, two long one short, four continuous short taps ... Ling Xiao's tapping was very systematic. Four distinctly different sound sections, representing four syllables — posepro kento? kento posepro? token propose? It was 'proposal token' <sup>2</sup> !

Ugh. Dad, how much did you love mum, really? Ling Lan thought back on all the tests she had gone through thus far; they all had something to do with her mother to some extent.

Frankly, Ling Lan was wrongly blaming Ling Xiao. Even before Ling Xiao had left for the death tunnel, he had had a premonition that something would go wrong. However, a military order was absolute — he couldn't not go. So, before he had left, he had condensed his spirit energy to create this legacy mission, in hopes that his child would be able to obtain his legacy.

Still, he knew very well that the upper ranks of the military were greedy for the way he had managed to advance to legendary operator status. Thus, he had not given the legacy mission directly to Lan Luofeng, but had chosen to submit it to his direct superior instead. He had been afraid that Lan Luofeng and Ling Lan would have gotten into trouble for the treasure they possessed, and be targeted and killed by those avaricious people who would do anything to get their hands on his legacy.

However, Ling Xiao had also known, that submitting it to his superior might mean that this legacy would never reach the hands of his child either. Thus, he had made further arrangements. He left a message for the old dean of the Central Scout Academy, hoping that once his child Ling Lan entered the scout academy, the dean would submit a request to the military on his behalf to get the legacy back. So that the old dean would put his back into it, Ling Xiao had agreed to release this legacy to the entire Central Scout Academy. Any child who could pass his tests would be able to obtain his legacy.

Ling Xiao had worked so hard to arrange all this — naturally, he didn't want anyone else to obtain his legacy. So, when creating the contents of the test, he had used a progressive advancement method, which would slowly eliminate any outsiders.

In the first round of tests, he had used the foundational combat arts of the scout academy, to give the impression that he was judging all the children equally. Although this set of combat arts was pretty much general knowledge, this round could successfully exclude all adults. He had set it to be a mirroring test, not just for testing purposes, but also to immediately chase out anyone whose body size exceeded 1.6 metres, eliminating almost all adults. This had caused all the fighters of the military who attempted the mission to fail in the very first round.

Of course, if Ling Lan had grown up before making contact with this legacy mission, she would also have been chased out and wouldn't have been able to obtain the legacy. However, Ling Xiao's legacy was only effective when practised at age 10 and below. After the age of 13, there was basically no chance of training according to the legacy anymore anyway. Ling Xiao could only hope that Ling Lan would be able to enter the legacy tests before she exceeded the age limit.

After ensuring that only children would be able to proceed, Ling Xiao had revealed his true intention from the second round onwards, by using the killing arts of the Ling family loyalists. This move pretty much killed all chances of any other children entering the following rounds of testing. Of course, if the military really wanted to, they could still find a way to get hold of the Ling family loyalists' killing arts and assist other children to enter the third round.

Therefore, in the third round, Ling Xiao had chosen to use a secret base only known to him and Lan Luofeng. Only Lan Luofeng would know how that lovely valley came to be.

Within the military camp, when did they ever have the chance to go out and see those beautiful sceneries? Even if they had entered the virtual world, they would have been stuck inside the 7th Division's world. In order to make Lan Luofeng happy, Ling Xiao had brought her into his mecha <Belief>



and let <Belief> create an immersive holograph of that lovely valley scene. In her great delight, Lan Luofeng had playfully named it as the 'World of Belief' ...

### **Chapter 105: The Real Token!**

Ling Xiao believed, that Lan Luofeng would definitely tell Ling Lan about how they had met and fallen in love, and about his mecha. (On the second point, he was mistaken. Lan Luofeng hadn't told Ling Lan about his mecha, since Lan Luofeng believed that it was still a bit too early to tell Ling Lan about things to do with mecha.)

Fortunately, Lan Luofeng had once revealed that the place she most wanted to visit was the 'World of Belief', which had been recorded down by Little Four, allowing him to find the correct answer to that earlier question. It had to be said that Ling Lan had passed that test by the skin of her teeth. Still, even if Ling Lan had failed, she could have still gone home to ask Lan Luofeng for the correct answers and attempt the mission again later.

Ling Xiao had not restricted the number of times someone could take the tests, for he himself was afraid that his questions were too left-field that even Lan Luofeng might have forgotten about some of the answers.

Ling Xiao was also afraid that someone would succeed by pure chance, blurting out his mecha's name on a lucky guess, so he had set up another obstacle. If a candidate randomly entered any of the rooms from the main hall, Ling Xiao would let the candidate know the Ling family training methods. If the candidate trained hard with that, he or she would still be able to achieve imperial operator level — his father had trained with that set of methods back in those days; it was truly a pretty good training method.

In this manner, Ling Xiao would be able to pull the wool over everyone's eyes and continue to wait for his child to enter the mission for testing. Because, only his child would know that the Ling family mansion was split between the front and back sections, and be able to find the correct room.

Of the rooms in the back section, such as the bedrooms and other studies etcetera, it wasn't as complicated as Ling Lan had assumed. Ling Xiao only existed within his study. In other words, even if Ling Lan had gone into any of the other rooms, there would be no one there to assign any tasks. Only when she entered the study would she see the holographic image Ling Xiao left behind.

But in the end, Ling Xiao had still been uneasy. After all, the military's strength was truly formidable — he had no way to guarantee that those loyalists from the Ling family mansion wouldn't betray him and leak the mansion's secrets to the military. So, he finally decided to add one last test. The content of this test was truly a secret belonging only to him and Lan Luofeng.

Mind you, Ling Xiao and Lan Luofeng's exclusive Duomo code had never been used on the outside before. In other words, this code was only known to the two of them. As such, the only people who would be able to answer this test would be Lan Luofeng, and one other — who was naturally the person who had personally learned the Duomo code from Lan Luofeng. Without a doubt, this other person could only be his child.

Just as Ling Xiao predicted, Ling Lan used the Duomo code to crack the final test.

Having thought of an answer, Ling Lan decisively turned and left the study. She went to the master bedroom and headed straight for the dressing table to find her mum's jewellery box.

Inside the jewellery box were some luxurious and exquisite accessories. Ling Lan casually pawed through them, but didn't find what she was looking for. She quickly cast it aside and changed directions. She walked to the singular large bed within the bedroom. Ling Lan was very familiar with this bed — she had been sleeping on it from birth. She had only said goodbye to it after she had been able to speak coherently enough to ask for her own bedroom.

During that time, she had found out that Lan Luofeng had a secret compartment to hide her precious things in on this bed. Ling Lan carefully felt along the edges of the bed, touched a spot, and then a small plasma screen suddenly emerged on the smooth headboard of the bed. There was a selection keyboard of 10 number keys displayed on it. Without having to think, Ling Lan directly entered the number code she knew by heart. If Lan Luofeng had never changed it, the code shouldn't be wrong.

After entering the code, it didn't take 5 seconds before the screen suddenly popped out, and an approximately 30 cm by 50 cm drawer appeared just like that before Ling Lan.

As expected, this secret compartment had long been here! The compartment was empty, nothing at all within it, except for an extremely exquisite little box. Ling Lan took out the box and opened it. A large, glittering diamond ring appeared before Ling Lan, shining radiantly under the lamp light. It was the wedding ring that her mum had cherished all this while.

Ling Lan's lips quirked in a slight smile, knowing she had found her target. She closed the box, and holding it in her hand, she made her way back to Ling Xiao's study.

Seeing her return, Ling Xiao asked with a half-smile, "Found what I want?"

Ling Lan just opened her right hand and showed Ling Xiao the box. Without saying a word, she peered intently at Ling Xiao.

The smile on Ling Xiao's lips grew wider. "This is the thing I want?"

Ling Lan still said nothing, only opening the box to reveal the large diamond ring inside it.

"This is your answer?" said Ling Xiao with a raised brow, waiting for Ling Lan's verbal confirmation.

"Lan Luofeng's wedding ring. You gave it to her," replied Ling Lan calmly.

Ling Xiao laughed uproariously. Then, his expression was admiring as he said, "Not bad. You actually found the answer. Could you tell me, how exactly did you figure out that this ring was the answer I wanted for this mission?"

"I only said that this was a wedding ring. I never said that this was the mission answer." Ling Lan's words stopped Ling Xiao's laughter in its tracks. He froze, stunned by Ling Lan's unexpected response.

This time, it was Ling Lan's turn to laugh. Hells, she had finally managed to give her heartless old man a taste of his own medicine! All this while, she had only been helplessly toyed around with by her old man.

Ling Xiao's awkwardness only lasted for a moment. He quickly collected himself, and said with some amusement, "In that case, why did you bring it here to show me?"

"Because, you need it to open the door to get the thing you need." Ling Lan took out the ring and waved it at Ling Xiao.

"Oh? I really don't know what thing I need other than this ring. I'm very sorry, you've failed the mission." Ling Xiao's smile turned cold, and he mercilessly declared Ling Lan's failure. His clearly disappointed expression seemed to tell Ling Lan that she had really been mistaken.

"This is just a proposal ring, not a proposal token. Although it's only different by one word, what's wrong is wrong. Right? Oh, father of mine?" Ling Lan mercilessly tore apart Ling Xiao's lie. "Stop faking. If I were to really choose this diamond ring as my final answer, then the mission would truly be a failure."

Ling Xiao seemed utterly unmoved. He only sighed softly and said, "You've already come so far. If you fail just like this and go back, you'll probably be unable to accept it either. Let's do this. I'll give you one chance. I hope you'll be able to convince me."

Ling Lan knew that this was likely a part of her dad's test as well, and so did not bother being polite. She walked directly to stand behind her father and poked him with a finger, saying, "Dad, please move aside for a moment."

With an indulgent expression, Ling Xiao stood up, cooperatively giving up the study desk. Since he had already chosen to give the candidate a chance, let him do as he will.

Ling Lan brazenly sat down in the chair Ling Xiao had just vacated, and pulled out the middle drawer of the study table. She reached into it with an open palm, palm first, to lay her hand flat against the underneath of the desk surface. After waiting for 3 seconds, nothing changed. Ling Lan abruptly realised that within this memory of Ling Xiao's 8 years ago, the Ling family safe hadn't yet been programmed to recognise her fingerprints.

Moodily, Ling Lan stood up and said to Ling Xiao, "Lend me your palm."

That said, she pulled over her father's palm and placed it against the bottom of the table surface, holding it there for 3 seconds. Then, a soft, almost imperceptible click could be heard coming from a bookcase to the side.

Ling Lan walked right up to the fourth bookcase. The bookcase was already filled to bursting with all sorts of paper-based reading material. This sort of ancient reading method was rarely found anymore in this modern generation. Now, in this world, all existing paper-based reading material were old texts inherited from several centuries up to even a millennium ago. Whenever a typical person saw this type of old texts, they would feel respect well out from within; they wouldn't dare to move around the texts recklessly, much less even try to touch these precious artefacts.

However, Ling Lan's following actions were barbaric. If her actions had been seen by any lovers of old books, she would most certainly be mobbed and critiqued to death.

Ling Lan savagely grabbed hold of one particular book and pulled harshly. The book was torn and a round shaped hole with many facets was revealed.

It turned out that Ling Lan had only torn off a protective back cover on the 'book'. Of course, if she hadn't used her father's palm print to unlock the cover first, even if Ling Lan had used all of her strength, she still wouldn't have been able to peel off this protective covering.

Ling Lan lined up the diamond side of the ring against that multi-faceted round hole, and it fit perfectly. This time, the wait was longer — after about 6 seconds, a 'clack' came from within the bookcase.

The book Ling Lan grabbed this time was just right beside the 'book' with a hole. This time, Ling Lan didn't pull, but pushed it forwards. Following that, the entire shelf of books abruptly disappeared, revealing a square safe about 30 cubic centimetres large.

Apparently, the diamond ring was only the key to open the safe. However, the diamond ring itself was also a test — if a candidate randomly lucked out during the search and found it, he would be tricked by Ling Xiao's earlier words and really take the diamond ring to be the real answer Ling Xiao wanted. In that scenario, what the candidate would receive in the end would still be that set of Ling family training methods and not Ling Xiao's true legacy.

Of course, if this were the real world, Ling Lan wouldn't even have to take the extra step to find the ring. Many times before this, when Lan Luofeng hadn't been around, Ling Lan had let Little Four 'communicate' directly with the A.I. of the safe, opening it easily that way.

However, right now, they were in the mission world, so Ling Lan had no choice but to be a little more careful. She didn't know what the consequences would be if she skipped this step — what if her old man was a stickler for tradition and required everything to follow its proper procedure? If she tried fooling around with any shortcuts in that scenario, she would just be tanking her own chances. Ling Lan decided that it would be better to play it safe. She would rather spend a little more time and make sure this mission was completed properly.

Ling Lan skilfully entered the code to open the safe. Lan Luofeng had never changed the passcode, so the code she knew was the same as the one used here.

Inside the safe were plenty of antiques, along with many strange and rare odds and ends. They had all been collected by the many generations of Ling family heads, including some cool stuff that Ling Xiao himself had found, such as the exquisite writing brush Ling Lan had once used.

Ling Lan desultorily pawed through the items and picked out three from the pile. She placed them in front of Ling Xiao and said, "Dad, *this* is the proposal token you wanted. All three of them."

All three items looked exceedingly common — a white sheet of paper that could be bought from any road-side stall, a chip that couldn't be more common, and a keychain shaped like a mecha.

### **Chapter 106: Vision and Hand Speed!**

That sheet of white paper was already filled with writing — it held the marriage vows Ling Xiao had written for Lan Luofeng! Every vow on the paper just proved that Ling Xiao was totally henpecked <sup>1</sup>.

The chip, was the control chip of Ling Xiao's wealth. With this chip alone, Lan Luofeng would be able to forcefully transfer all of Ling Xiao's worldly possessions to someone else's communicator without having to get Ling Xiao's approval.

Meanwhile, that keychain was modelled after Ling Xiao's mecha. What this really represented, or if there was any deeper meaning to it, Lan Luofeng had never told Ling Lan. She had only told Ling Lan that of these three things, the most valuable was actually this keychain, but now it had become just a souvenir ...

Ling Xiao looked at the three items before him with a complicated expression, but he was clearly moved. However, he very quickly managed to calm his almost overflowing emotions and raised his head to smile blindingly at Ling Lan. "Congratulations, Ling Lan, you've passed. You shall receive Ling Xiao's legacy, my legacy ... my child, I'm so very happy today!"

Ling Xiao's smile caused Ling Lan to become awestruck. Now she finally understood why her mum would always lose her mind in fantasies whenever she talked about her dad — her dad's sincere smile was just too stunning. Even in this future world where one could find beautiful men and women everywhere, her dad's looks were definitely still of the godlike legendary level.

Ling Xiao made Ling Lan stand before him. At this moment, he was silent. After a long while, a light trace of loss appeared on his expression, and he said, "Honestly, I don't wish for this legacy mission to appear. Because, its appearance would mean that I'm really gone. If possible, I really want to accompany my wife, and be by your side as you grow up ... I can't bear to let you both go. My child, I don't even know if you're a boy or a girl. I really wish I could see for myself how you look like, whether you resemble me or your mum ..."

Ling Xiao's loss of composure lasted for only a split second; he soon regained his equilibrium and said self-mockingly, "What's with this sentimentality ... is this the result of the wavering of belief? What a terrible feeling."

Ling Xiao recovered his usual smile once more and looked at Ling Lan. The nameless tenderness in his gaze caused Ling Lan's heart to spasm, as all sorts of emotions rose up within her heart.

Ling Lan knew very well that Ling Xiao was definitely not looking at her right now. This Ling Xiao was a manifestation of spiritual energy from 8 years ago — perhaps this affectionate gaze was meant for Lan Luofeng, and maybe included some anticipation for his then unborn child? But for some unknown reason, this scene just tugged at Ling Lan's heartstrings, making her heart ache. She didn't know if it was because she had merged with this body completely, causing her to be unable to control her emotions when faced with this body's biological father.

Ling Xiao said, "I believe that my child is the strongest child. I will entrust your mum to you. You must definitely make her happy! I'm an irresponsible husband, and also an irresponsible father. I've failed you both."

Ling Lan tried to speak, but Ling Xiao made a stopping motion, "Don't speak. Let me hold on to my fantasy a while longer ... you will call me 'Daddy' earnestly, and then say 'I love you'."

That said, Ling Xiao smiled bitterly and said hoarsely, “Isn’t that just a useless daydream? An irresponsible person like me ... if I get a scolding, it would already be too easy on me. What right do I have to ask you, my child, to call me ‘daddy’<sup>2</sup>?”

Ling Lan’s mouth twitched, but she did not call out ‘daddy’ in the end. Although she knew that Ling Xiao was her dad of this life, and Ling Xiao was extremely familiar to her due to the constant reminiscences of her mum ... The address of ‘daddy’ was really quite difficult for the mentally mature Ling Lan to voice out.

Ling Lan could only put the blame on this man across from her — he was just too young, causing her mind to inexplicably rebel against the very idea.

Dejection flashed through Ling Xiao’s gaze; those words of his were actually an indirect plea for his child to call him ‘daddy’. He didn’t dare to ask directly, because he felt he had wronged his child.

Sadly, the truth was really just as he had feared. His child truly hated him and was unwilling to call him ‘daddy’ — this reality made him feel very hurt. The Ling Xiao of 8 years ago had imagined many possibilities of this encounter, and this was one which he had most hoped not to see ...

Regardless of how dejected Ling Xiao felt, he still began to teach his first lesson.

Ling Lan thought that the first lesson would be Ling Xiao’s exclusive physical skills or something along those lines — mind you, the very first lesson she received when she first entered the learning space, and also when she first entered the Central Scout Academy, was physical skills (other than theoretical studies). After all, the basics were the most important.

“Are you wondering why we aren’t starting with physical skills?” asked the Ling Xiao of 8 years ago, having predicted Ling Lan’s puzzlement.

Since Ling Xiao was the one to ask, Ling Lan naturally nodded without any hesitation, and waited for Ling Xiao to explain.

Smiling, Ling Xiao told Ling Lan that the academy’s basic physical skills set was the accumulation of the efforts of countless talents over tens of thousands of years. It was definitely one of the best foundational physical skills set available, so before Ling Lan fully mastered that set of physical skills, he would not teach Ling Lan any other physical skills, including his own exclusive physical skills. Many people, before their basics had been built properly, would already attempt to learn physical skills or spiritual skills of a higher level — this was completely wrong. Think about it. If you try to build a building when your foundations haven’t even been settled yet, how would you be able to build a tall building?

Ling Xiao was unsure how the other legendary operators had advanced to their level, but Ling Xiao’s advancement was closely tied to his foundations. Back then, Ling Xiao had only wanted to prove himself to his father his own way, and so had refused to learn the Ling family’s secret physical skills. Instead, he had trained in the academy’s foundational physical skills until he mastered it to its extreme. In the process, he had touched on the most profound meaning of foundational physical skills, which showed him a path to advance to legendary status ...

“What does it mean to fully master it?” asked Ling Lan, puzzled. She already knew the foundational physical skills by heart — could it be that she still hadn’t been doing it right?

“When you can execute this set of physical skills without having to think about it, no longer limited to the stances — about then, you will naturally understand,” explained Ling Xiao briefly. He didn’t want Ling Lan to be impatient — she was still young and had plenty of time.

“Now, what I *can* teach you is how to improve your eyesight and hand speed. These are things that you cannot lack for either combat or operating mecha,” said Ling Xiao. “They are both things that require hard work to train, especially finger speed. That needs to be trained beginning from youth, while the bones of the fingers haven’t fully grown yet and are still extremely flexible. Only then can you develop your personal limits to its maximum.”

That said, Ling Xiao suddenly lifted up a palm. A clear and translucent round bead was clamped between two of his fingers. And then all his fingers started to dance, causing the bead to tumble freely amidst the five fingers. It started out slow, but the speed gradually became faster and faster — in the end, Ling Lan, who took pride in her eyesight, couldn’t even see a shadow of the bead anymore. Ling Xiao’s fingers had become mere afterimages in the air, so quick that she couldn’t even tell which finger was which ...

Just as Ling Lan was staring as if in a trance, Ling Xiao suddenly folded his fingers to make a fist. The abrupt shift from movement to stillness disoriented Ling Lan’s eyes, making them ache, extremely uncomfortable.

“Your vision hasn’t reached the level of my hand speed, which is why you feel the strain. Close your eyes and rest for a bit.” Ling Lan did as Ling Xiao said, and soon found that her eyes no longer felt stretched and achy. Only then did she open her eyes again.

“That’s where the limit of your eyesight is. You feel it now? From now on, you must train your hand speed. At the same time, you must get your vision up to the level of your hand speed. This requires slow and steady training. There is no shortcut,” said Ling Xiao to Ling Lan. Legacy missions weren’t as miraculous as most people thought — there is no way for someone to ascend to the heavens in one step. To succeed, it all still depended on your own effort to earn it; the legacy mission would only show you how to do so more efficiently, that’s all.

“I understand.” Ling Lan nodded, heart filled with gratitude for Ling Xiao’s mentoring. As he trained her hand speed and vision, Ling Xiao had indirectly been telling Ling Lan that, to become strong, she needed to rely on her own efforts — no one else could do it for her.

“Just now, was that already your fastest speed?” Ling Lan, who was in a great mood, finally displayed the curiosity a 7 year old child should have.

Ling Xiao only smiled silently, but spread out his fingers once more. In his palm was no longer just the one crystal bead from before, but a whole nine beads. Ling Lan found herself tongue-tied with astonishment. Before she could find her voice to ask, Ling Xiao’s fingers started moving once more. The nine crystal beads collided with each other within his palm, emitting clear and reverberating bell-like sounds. As they collided with one another, the beads started bouncing irregularly — this was the hardest thing to control, because you had to predict where each bead would go. Ling Lan was sure she could control one bead with no pressure, two if the speed wasn’t too fast, but three would be tricky.

However, Ling Xiao easily controlled all nine beads, his fingers flying swiftly to block every single one before they could fall, only allowing them to roll around in his palm.

Gradually, Ling Xiao's speed became faster and faster, until finally, the sounds of the beads colliding meshed into one solid sound, no gaps between collisions. At this point, Ling Lan could no longer see what was going on in Ling Xiao's hand — everything was just a blur.

Ling Lan thought that this was already the limit, but unexpectedly, something even more astonishing happened. Gradually, Ling Lan couldn't even see the blur of shadows anymore ... It was as if Ling Xiao had spread open his palm like a lotus flower, but there was no sign of those beads within it.

Ling Lan knew this was a false impression; Ling Xiao's speed had just reached a frightening level, enough to fool the eyes into registering this illusion, defaulting back into the original setting. This was a misperception, an illusion born of sheer overwhelming speed.

Before Ling Lan could regain her senses, she heard several consecutive clacking noises, nine in total. Following these sounds, Ling Xiao abruptly stopped the motions of his fingers. At this moment, Ling Lan felt a throbbing pain in her eyes, and tears begin to spill over from them in a flood. They had been working too hard to try and see a speed too far beyond their limits, and had finally incurred the backlash.

It took a while, but Ling Lan finally felt comfortable again. She opened her eyes and saw Ling Xiao standing before her with a smile, his right hand in a loose fist.

"I'm alright now," said Ling Lan embarrassedly. She focused her attention on Ling Xiao's right hand.

Ling Xiao slowly opened his right palm. In the middle of his palm, the initially solid crystal beads had been turned into a heap of powder. Ling Xiao shook his fingers lightly, and the fine powder scattered, sifting through his fingers to drift slowly to the ground. Under the refraction of the light, the crystal powder sparkled, sending out countless glimmering rays, immersing the two of them in an illusion of a magical realm.

### **Chapter 107: Transported to the Capital?**

Ling Lan wasn't bedazzled by this magical scene; her expression changed slightly in awareness. Although Ling Lan hadn't been able to see what was going on in Ling Xiao's palm earlier, she could tell that Ling Xiao's fingers hadn't been exerting much pressure; he had just simply been blocking the paths of those crystal beads to prevent them from falling off his palm. But it was precisely this sort of forceless pressure that, under the workings of extreme speed, had shattered the crystal beads from the inside out. It was clear to see just how much destructive power it had.

"Looks like, you've understood." Ling Xiao was very pleased with Ling Lan's reaction. He had thought that he would have to explain in further detail, but unexpectedly, Ling Lan had actually grasped the deeper meaning already.

"Yep, when anything reaches a certain limit, a great energy will be created," said Ling Lan carefully, summarizing her thoughts.

Ling Lan was very excited internally, because she had finally met someone she could discuss these things with. In the learning space, her instructors only let her feel things out for herself, never ever telling her much about Dao, causing Ling Lan to feel extremely lost.



“That’s right. I didn’t expect you to notice that point. I call it ‘Shi’<sup>1</sup>, and there isn’t just one type of Shi, but many. However, Ling Lan, you must remember not to bite off more than you can chew. More Shi is not always better.” Ling Xiao glanced coolly at Ling Lan, rapidly cooling down her initially bubbling excitement.

Ling Xiao’s reminder caused Ling Lan to become thoughtful. After that, Ling Xiao didn’t let Ling Lan remain for long in the mission space. He only told her that in future, she could access this place directly to find him by using his spirit crystal, with no need to take the test again. Then, Ling Lan was immediately sent back to the login point of the academy’s virtual world.

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“You finally appeared, Boss!” When Little Four saw Ling Lan, he burst out in tears and pounced on her, clearly upset.

Ling Lan reflexively caught hold of Little Four, and cautioned him saying, “You coming out like this, won’t it be suspicious?”

Little Four sniffled, “It’s no problem, Boss. This is a special space I created. We can see outside, but they can’t see us.”

“Right, in the mission space, why did you become silent after I arrived at the Ling family mansion?” Ling Lan had thought it strange. If she hadn’t been afraid that her dad wouldn’t acknowledge it, she would really have liked to just let Little Four open the safe directly. She had originally thought that Little Four would jump out straightaway to critique her dad’s pedantry, but Little Four had been surprisingly silent and non-reactive.

Back then, she had been too caught up with the mission, so although Ling Lan was puzzled, she didn’t have the mind to go ask Little Four about it. But now, Ling Lan’s curiosity was back.

Ling Lan’s words caused Little Four to recall his misery, and he started crying once more. Under Ling Lan’s consolation, he managed to tell her the reason in between sobs — apparently, when Ling Lan had entered the study and seen Ling Xiao smiling face, what greeted Little Four had instead been Ling Xiao’s sharp and cold gaze. That piercing gaze had scrambled Little Four’s operations, kicking him right out of the legacy space. This was also the reason why Little Four had been unresponsive — he had been kicked out by Ling Xiao at that point.

Ling Lan frowned, a little worried. Did this mean that anyone with strong spiritual strength would be able to discover Little Four’s existence?

Little Four sensed Ling Lan’s anxiety for him, and his core chip actually started to heat up. However, this heat was warm and very comfortable, cheering him up immensely. He said then to Ling Lan, “Boss, don’t worry. I’ve met other people before with great mental and spiritual energy, but they never noticed me. Perhaps it was because I entered your dad’s legacy space, which is equivalent to entering his spiritual self, that’s why he noticed me.”

“Hmm, yup, what you say makes sense. Still, please be careful after this. Don’t simply go into other people’s spiritual self. Let’s avoid the risk.” Ling Lan felt that what Little Four said made sense, but still

cautioned Little Four to be more careful in the virtual world from now on. He shouldn't get too caught up in thinking he was a god.

The two of them talked for a little bit longer. During this time, Little Four was multitasking — he was also controlling the fake Ling Lan he had created to walk out of the library and slowly make its way to the login point. Then, he made the fake Ling Lan go through the motions of logging out.

Due to expending so much brainpower during the legacy mission, Ling Lan was somewhat fatigued. So, she logged out of the virtual world together with Little Four and went off to take a good long rest.

Meanwhile, due to Little Four's thorough arrangements, neither the monitoring military nor the other students entering for the test noticed that Ling Lan had already sneakily obtained Ling Xiao's legacy. To create the false impression that the legacy mission was still uncracked, Little Four left the virtual pocket testing space up. Until one day, it disappeared along with Ling Xiao's legacy mission, throwing the military into disarray, unable to figure out what had happened ...

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After Ling Lan received her father's legacy, she began practising the bead exercise every day with both hands at the same time. Of course, Ling Lan did not practise with those precious crystal beads, but with sturdy steel beads instead.

Qi Long and the others, who had been hanging out with Ling Lan all this while, saw Ling Lan forever carrying around two steel beads to fiddle with, and was overcome with curiosity. So they asked Ling Lan why she was doing so.

Ling Lan felt that this was not any special training method that she needed to keep secret — Ling Xiao himself had said before that this was just a small technique to train up hand speed, the key was whether one had enough determination to keep working on it without giving up. Thus, she generously told them what she was doing, and explained what benefits the training would bring.

When Qi Long and the others heard this, they immediately had stars in their eyes. Hand speed had always been a troublesome issue for fighters and mecha operators — even though the Federation had also tried to develop some training methods to increase hand speed, the effectiveness of those methods was limited, yielding only slight improvements. The moment one hit a bottleneck, there would be no more effect from then onwards.

The others in the group rushed to follow Ling Lan and train together, and so a trend swept through the Central Scout Academy — several bored students of the second grade Class-A, no matter if they were reading, eating, or chatting, would always be seen fiddling with a small steel bead in their hands, rolling it round and round in their palms ...

Just like that, they trained steadily for several months, and Ling Lan abruptly found that she had not experienced any improvement in an entire month. Every night, using three steel beads simultaneously, her training would break down at the 3.0127 minute mark. For a whole month she struggled and hovered on this time frame, and Ling Lan just knew that she had encountered her first bottleneck.

Ling Lan really wanted to break through this bottleneck, so she specially increased the practise time for hand speed ... but the more impatient she was, the worse the effect. Ling Lan found that after several

consecutive days of forceful extended training, her hand speed actually deteriorated to a certain degree instead. She knew then that she couldn't continue this sort of self-punishing training anymore, otherwise, not only would there be no effect, she may even cause some unnecessary problem to appear in her two hands.

Ling Lan decided to rest well for a bit — besides the missions from the learning space which had never stopped, whether it was in reality or within the virtual world, Ling Lan chose to stop everything. Her typically busy life abruptly became free, causing her to feel a little out of sorts.

Seeing his boss's clear discomfort, Little Four thought of a good way to kill time and relax at the same time. He prepared an adult appearance for Ling Lan to use in the virtual network so that she could go explore the virtual world outside and expand her horizons.

Little Four's suggestion touched Ling Lan deeply. After all, she had never been to the real virtual world — the virtual world of the Central Scout Academy, at the end of the day, was just a platform for the students to familiarise themselves with the virtual world.

Immediate action is better than anticipation — that very afternoon, Ling Lan made Little Four get everything ready, and then she logged into the virtual world, prepared for her first foray into the outside world.

Ling Lan entered the login point — it was still the same hall she had first logged into, no changes whatsoever. At first, Ling Lan thought Little Four had forgotten about modifying her appearance, so she said moodily, "Little Four, why didn't you help to change my appearance?" Sigh, a kid was still a kid after all, easily dropping the ball at crucial moments.

Speechless, Little Four made a floor-length mirror appear in front of Ling Lan, presenting Ling Lan's current appearance to her.

"Hehehe ..." giggled Ling Lan in embarrassment. It turned out that Ling Lan's appearance had already been changed. When Ling Lan had logged in, Little Four had immediately modified her brainwaves, helping her into her virtual disguise instantaneously.

Ling Lan's current form was that of a girl around sixteen years old, in the flower of her youth — her looks bore some resemblance to the Ling Lan of her last life, with a steam-bun face <sup>2</sup> and a pair of big lively eyes, extremely alert and adorable.

"This appearance ... isn't it just too 'kawaii' <sup>3</sup>?" She looked like a total loli <sup>4</sup>! Ling Lan felt a little awkward. To be honest, she had already gotten used to her shota <sup>5</sup> face of this life that leaned more towards the boyish side.

"This way, no one will ever suspect that you're Ling Lan!" Little Four was perplexed. He had gone to so much effort to create a human appearance that was completely different from the current Ling Lan — why would Boss have any complaints?

"That's true." Ling Lan finally got with the program. If they had fashioned an appearance that had similar qualities to her current self, though the probability of being discovered was still very low, there was always the slight chance she would be discovered. Little Four had really considered everything very thoroughly.

Ling Lan didn't hold back her admiration, showering Little Four generously with praise, sending Little Four straight into a happy daze.

When he heard Ling Lan request to go to the capital, still hazy with pleasure, Little Four didn't look at the name of the planet, choosing a capital quickly and beginning their transportation ...

*Cough cough*, who asked every planet to have a capital? Little Four had just sent Ling Lan off when he noticed the problem. However, Little Four didn't dare to say anything. He had just received Ling Lan's praise — if he revealed his mistake now, wouldn't that just be slapping himself in the face? Besides, planet Azure's capital was still a capital! His boss hadn't really specified that she wanted to go to the capital of planet Doha ...

At this point, Ling Lan had no idea that her current position was already no longer on the planet of Doha where she lived. Instead, she was now on planet Azure, a planet on the fringes of the Federation several hundred thousands of light-years away.

Ling Lan stood at the transfer point, looking around in shock and surprise at the vintage scene before her. She could almost believe that she had returned to the olden times. *"I thought that the capital should be even more advanced and futuristic than the city we live in. Who knew it'd be this traditional?"*

*"Every city's setting is different. The capitals here all have more traditional settings."* Little Four secretly wiped the sweat off his forehead; at least that excuse had sounded somewhat plausible.

## **Chapter 108: A Dangerous Man!**

*"That's true. But compared to a modern science-fiction type setting, I like this better."* Ling Lan smiled. The familiar architecture and the familiar surroundings made her feel at ease instantly, sweeping away the tiredness that had been accumulated over several months of high-intensity training.

When Little Four heard that Ling Lan liked it here, all his nerves and anxiety fled. Now wasn't this just a fortuitous mistake? Thinking of this, Little Four started to become a little smug — *as I thought, I'm really the smartest intelligent bio-entity. Even when I make a mistake, I make it in such a perfect way!*

Leaving Little Four's private celebration aside, Ling Lan brought Little Four along as she toured the entire capital city. Of course, she was only window shopping. For one, this identity didn't have a corresponding central bank account, and so had no way to pay with credits. Although Little Four could have found a way to handle it, Ling Lan was of the mind that they should avoid doing unnecessary things to avoid trouble. Most importantly, she was afraid that the central bank would run scans at irregular intervals — if anything was exposed, it would be troublesome for both her and Little Four.

Secondly, this identity also didn't have any safe dummy mailing address. Was she supposed to get the stores to deliver anything she bought to the Ling family estates? Then what would be the point of going to the trouble of making this fake identity?

Ling Lan was just like an imprisoned bird which had been set free — she was full of enthusiasm no matter what she saw. Being able to freely walk the streets and browse was fulfilling a dream of hers which spanned both her lives.

In her previous life, she had always been confined to her sickbed. She dreamt every day of having the chance to go out and explore the streets, but unfortunately, till the end, that dream had never been realised. And then, since she had been born in this world, she had always been restricted to her home. And after that, she became restricted to the scout academy — although the virtual world of the scout academy also had shops, the items they offered were extremely monotonous, all having something to do with learning. Furthermore, the shops were all too science-fictiony, so Ling Lan just couldn't experience any of the enjoyment of regular shopping there.

However, this capital was completely different. The classical buildings, as well as the decorations of the stores were all very similar to that of the stores in her previous life, giving her the satisfying feeling of 'flattening a road'<sup>1</sup>. Her mood was endlessly buoyant.

If it weren't for the fact that every time she entered a store, a store introduction would pop up right before her eyes, Ling Lan might have believed that she was actually browsing a real street.

The capital truly lived up to its status as the capital. Whether it was in terms of fashion, food, activity, or accommodation, the sheer variety was dazzling. Just as Ling Lan was engrossed in her sightseeing, the people around her, who had also been busy with their shopping, suddenly stopped walking, as if receiving some unknown signal. On their faces were expressions of excitement. Some of them even yelled out involuntarily.

Very quickly, they changed their personal plans, all of them heading mutually towards the same direction.

*"What's going on?"* Ling Lan was a little bewildered by this, and hurried to ask Little Four.

Without delay, Little Four immediately began a search. Then, with a surprised expression, he said, *"There's actually a mecha combat tournament happening here. And it's a cross-level J6 challenge against a J8, can this be real?"*

Ling Lan, who knew almost nothing about the world outside in this life, said dumbly, *"J6? J8? What's that?"*

Little Four slapped his forehead; only now did he remember that he had forgotten to supplement Ling Lan's knowledge on this front. So, he quickly gave a general overview of what mecha combat tournaments were all about.

In the virtual world, this mecha combat tournament was actually a type of combat game that was open to all members of the public. Any citizen could participate in the combat game as long as they were 13 years old and above. Meanwhile, the students of the scout academy could get rid of the seal of the scout academy once they turned 13, and enter the real virtual world. In other words, if they followed the normal schedule, Ling Lan would only be able to come here after she turned 13.

Regardless of age, any newbie who just started the game would be at level J0. They needed to learn how to operate mecha and go through related combat training before unlocking the newbie arena. After earning 100 points, they would successfully move forward into level J1; and after accumulating 1000 points, they'd enter level J2. Calculating forwards from this, you can just imagine what an astronomical number of points was needed to achieve level J9.

Little Four told Ling Lan that very few mecha operators managed to advance to level J9 — of the billions of people in the entire Federation, there were only about three to four thousand people who had done it. Of course, there is also a level higher than J9, but those people who could achieve it would not bother with this sort of mecha combat game for the masses. Little Four didn't elaborate much on that, for he felt that these things were still a little too far off for Ling Lan to worry about.

*"It's lucky then that cross-level challenges are allowed?"* Otherwise, going according to the regular flow, slowly accumulating points bit by bit, who knows how many months and years it would take to enter J9? Ling Lan felt a little dizzy just looking at the countless number of zeroes behind that extrapolated number.

*"It's allowed, but the conditions for a cross-level challenge is very strict. If a challenger fails, the punishment may make the person regret it so much that they'd kill themselves ..."* said Little Four in a flat tone. Advantages are not so easily obtained.

*"For a cross-level challenge, winning one fight isn't enough. You would have to consecutively defeat three randomly selected high-level opponents over the course of three days before your cross-level challenge is considered successful. Only then will you really enter the ranks of that level. But if you lose, the point deduction is extremely harsh. Take that J6 for example, he might very likely lose so many marks that he would fall directly back to level J3, maybe even J2."* Little Four explained the rules and punishment related to this cross-level challenge.

*"Well, it still seems worth it. Even if he falls down to J2 or J3, he can just challenge a J7 or J8 next time. As long as he can manage 3 wins sometime, won't he be right back up?"* said Ling Lan, disagreeing.

*"How could it be that easy? Each person only has three chances to initiate a cross-level challenge every year. Unless he wins all three times, otherwise, if he loses just once, he would have to start over and accumulate points again. As everyone knows, points are extremely hard to collect in the mecha combat tournaments. It requires a lot of time and matches. More importantly, the so-called cross-level challenges are actually just a cross-1-level challenge. A J2 can only challenge a J4, a J3 can only challenge a J5 ... so even if he waits a whole year, he still wouldn't be able to return to his original position. Boss, do you still think this kind of cross-level challenge is worth it?"*

Little Four's words stunned Ling Lan. *"So that's how it is. Then, isn't the cross-level challenge just for show? Probably very few people would choose to try a cross-level challenge, right?"* It looked like the creator of the game really hated people who took shortcuts, actually posing such imposing restrictions and obstacles.

*"Of course, otherwise the people here wouldn't be so worked up over this current challenge. There might still be many cross-level challenges in the lower levels, but a high-level cross-level challenge is very rarely seen. Especially this type of J6 vs J8 challenge — I've heard that you might not even see one within 100 years. Boss, you're really quite lucky."* Little Four reported everything he had learned from his searches to Ling Lan, telling her that this upcoming mecha fight was really very uncommon.

*"Then let's go take a look."* Ling Lan's interest was thoroughly piqued by Little Four. They moved along with the crowd towards their destination — a seven-storey tall pagoda.

*“Drats, we need to buy tickets.”* Ling Lan was about to walk through the entrance when a line of text suddenly appeared before her. Her mood fell — apparently tickets were required to enter.

This was also the first time Little Four was entering a battle stadium to watch a mecha fight, so he hadn't known they had needed tickets either. Hearing Ling Lan's words, he said, *“Wait one moment,”* and disappeared.

Ling Lan thought that Little Four would be away for some time, but surprisingly, it had only been a few seconds when Little Four returned. He made a victory pose with his hands and said smugly, *“Boss, everything's settled.”*

As Little Four was speaking, another person completely covered up in a black windbreaker was just about to buy the ticket number he was interested in when a notification popped up on his communicator: *“Sorry, the ticket number you've selected is no longer available. Please make a new selection.”*

*“Eh? Weird, someone was actually faster than me? It's been taken ...”* muttered the person to himself. He had no choice but to choose the seat right next to the one he had wanted. Seeing the words ‘purchase successful’ appear, he closed his communicator and walked into the battle stadium.

At this moment, Little Four was extremely pleased with himself. He had finally gotten the chance to show off his skills as an omnipotent underling in front of Ling Lan — for a godlike existence like him, sneaking Ling Lan in without a ticket was nothing.

Um ... no, Little Four was an obedient babe — he would never do this sort of underhanded thing. He was just ... doing a favour, yep, doing a favour by showing up to watch.

Receiving Little Four's confirmation, Ling Lan walked towards the entrance of the battle stadium once more. This time, the words that appeared before her was no longer a reminder to buy a ticket. Instead, the words were a welcome — thank you for your patronage, your seat number is XX-section XX-row XX-number.

Ling Lan sighed in wonder yet again; Little Four was truly very useful. Whether it was in the real world or in the virtual world, she just couldn't get by without Little Four's help.

Ling Lan stepped through the gates and felt the scenery twist before eyes. And then, she found herself standing at the entrance to a random passage, rows and rows of seats before her.

*“Could you please give way?”* An icy voice rang out from behind Ling Lan. She quickly turned and saw a man in a windbreaker standing there. What surprised Ling Lan was that the man's face was almost wrapped up completely by the large hood of the windbreaker — only his lower jaw and slightly quirked thin lips could be seen from within its shadow.

*“Uh ... sorry.”* Ling Lan ducked her head apologetically, and hurried to give way. Her head lowered, Ling Lan did not let the other discover her shock. She clenched her fists tightly, annoyed at herself for being careless.

Just now, Ling Lan actually hadn't sensed the presence of anyone behind her. This was the first time someone had been able to get close to her without her noticing — if the other had had any bad

intentions and ambushed her, she would definitely have been KO-ed directly and become deader than dead.

And when she had faced the man, a pressing sense of danger had risen from her heart. This was the first time she could actually feel danger emanating from a person's body.

The man did not say anything, only nodding at Ling Lan lightly to signify thanks before moving past Ling Lan. It looked like he was also an audience member who had come to watch the match.

Ling Lan did not follow after him right away; she was still a little wary of that man, and decided that it would be a better idea to keep some distance from him. The man finally walked off into the distance, far enough that Ling Lan could no longer see his silhouette. Then, she heard Little Four say, *"Oh crap, that fellow is a hacker ... no, he's very likely one of those rumoured spectres."*

*"Little Four, by spectre, do you mean those beings capable of wiping out a person's consciousness in the virtual world?"*

*"Of course! The aura of that person is very similar — it's a type of spiritual mutation that belongs to a spectre hacker,"* confirmed Little Four.

Even within the virtual world, Ling Lan could feel cold sweat breaking out on her forehead at these words. No wonder she had sensed so much danger from the man — it turned out that he was a being who could kill someone without a trace ... Boo hoo hoo, this virtual world was really very dangerous.

Even if Ling Lan could KO a person like this a hundred thousand times over in real life, in the virtual world, she still needed to give these people a wide berth.

## **Chapter 109: God View!**

"Boss, do you want to know that person's real identity? I can go find out!" Little Four's eyes were sparkling, as if he had found some great new toy.

Ling Lan was just about to agree when she suddenly grew cautious and asked, "How are you planning to find out?"

Little Four said excitedly, "Of course by infiltrating the other's spiritual self! Then I'll be able to see the other's true identity."

"Not allowed!" barked Ling Lan fiercely inside the mind-space.

Ling Lan had not forgotten about what had happened within her dad's mission space. Little Four had said then that a strong person's spiritual self would be able to discover him, and may even take control of Little Four to harm him. Who knew if this hacker-evolved spectre would be able to cause some catastrophic damage to Little Four?

"Why?" Little Four was taken aback by Ling Lan's sharp rebuke. Mind you, even when Ling Lan had been applying domestic violence in the past, she had never before treated him so sternly. That scary expression and tone of voice didn't just shock Little Four but also hurt him. He wilted, a depressed expression on his face. He started to wonder if Ling Lan didn't like him anymore, treating him this way.



“First off, we have no conflict with him. Why poke a sleeping tiger? If we anger him, and he decides to come after us, we’ll be in a lot of trouble ...”

Little Four was just about to say that he wasn’t at all afraid of that, because he could handle everything just fine, but Ling Lan pressed down on his little shoulder at that moment. She said earnestly, “Most importantly, I don’t want you, Little Four, to be in danger. If anything happened to you, I would regret it for the rest of my life. So, Little Four, you must promise me. You must protect yourself well, so that you can stay by my side forever and ever, until the day I leave this world ...”

Hearing this little speech by Ling Lan, all of Little Four’s sadness and resentment disappeared ... he felt as if his CPU was overloaded — not just that, his core chip was starting to heat up, becoming hotter and hotter, almost reaching critical levels. He should have been frantic and panicked, and tried to find a way to cool his core chip down rapidly ... but, goddammit, he just didn’t want to. He even felt that the existence of this heat was truly wondrous — he loved this feeling so much he could die.

Ling Lan saw Little Four’s slack and unresponsive face and was afraid he hadn’t understood what she had been trying to say. So, with emphasis, she repeated again, “Little Four, listen, I forbid you from going off on your own from now on to investigate the spiritual selves of anyone strong or dangerous. As long as the other leaves us alone, we’ll leave them alone too. Remember, you must protect yourself. Didn’t you want to be my number one follower? If you don’t listen to me, I’ll take away your precious number one follower position.” Ling Lan decided that a threat was necessary along with the warning to show just how serious she was about this.

At this point, Little Four had already lost all ability to think, but that grand goal of being the number one follower had always been a top priority in his heart, so when he heard Ling Lan’s warning threat, he hurriedly nodded obediently, giving up any thought of checking out that man.

He could lose anything else, but that number one follower position must not be lost! This was Little Four’s only major ambition ever since he had become aware.

In that case, he would let that man go this time. Still ... Little Four finally returned to normal. His CPU was no longer running on overdrive, and his chip was no longer in danger of shorting. He looked towards the direction where the man had vanished and fiercely swung his fist into the air. He was determined to not let that man hurt his boss, otherwise, even if he had to go against his boss’s words, he would still give that man a piece of his mind.

After obtaining Little Four’s promise, Ling Lan could finally relax. She waited for a few minutes, then slowly made her way to the designated eating area at the front to look for her seat.

It should be said that looking for a seat in the virtual world was extremely easy — the moment she entered the seating area, a chart of the seating layout automatically appeared before her eyes. A red light was blinking on one of the seats on the chart, while a green dot was gradually moving forwards. Yup, that green dot was herself.

Very quickly, Ling Lan had followed the chart to find her seat. Once she sat down, the chart before her eyes disappeared, and she regained her usual vision.

Ling Lan looked around curiously at the audience around her. A familiar outfit caught her eye, rendering her speechless instantly, curse words pouring out in a torrent inside her mind ... Why was she so unlucky? Actually meeting up once again with this dangerous fellow.

It turned out that Ling Lan's neighbouring seat was occupied by that dangerous man with a mutating mentality who was evolving into a spectre. However, the man's attitude was not bad — when he saw Ling Lan approaching, he nodded slightly in greeting.

“Uh ... hello!” Ling Lan squeezed out a weak smile before turning away moodily.

Even so, Ling Lan wasn't really all that scared inside. Although the other was very dangerous, the two of them were just passing strangers with no bad blood between them; it was unlikely that the other would harm her for no reason.

Furthermore, although Ling Lan had forbidden Little Four from exploring, she knew that if the other tried to do something bad to her, Little Four would definitely counterattack and protect her from getting injured. In addition, Ling Lan was very confident in her own abilities. As long as she could hold off the other's sneak attack at the start, it wouldn't be that easy to harm her afterwards. She was mostly unrivalled within the Central Scout Academy — although she was a little weaker within the virtual world, she wasn't so weak that she would be completely helpless against attack. In short, Ling Lan felt prepared no matter what happened.

Just like that, Ling Lan regained her equilibrium once more and turned to coolly survey the battle stadium.

The battle stadium was large, so large that it was rather frightening. It was a lot like an enlarged version of the basketball stadiums of her previous world, just that the rectangular court in the middle had been changed into a huge circular ring. On all sides were audience stands, packed tightly one level after another. Ling Lan carefully counted and found that there were actually as many as 12 levels from top to bottom. By her estimations, this stadium could hold up to 500,000 audience members — if compared to her previous world, this venue would definitely be considered one of the more massive stadiums. If this building existed in reality, what an enormous structure it would be.

Ling Lan sighed; the architecture of the future was heading more and more towards massive sizes, it seemed. Currently, Ling Lan didn't know that this mecha battle stadium that she found so massive was actually just a small venue in this world. Planet Azure was a third-rate planet, so its capital was also considered a third-rate city — it could only have this sort of small mecha battle stadium.

The capital of a second-rate planet would be able to possess a medium-sized stadium, which could hold 800,000 people. Meanwhile, a first-rate planet could have a large stadium, which could hold 10,000,000 people. As for the capitals of capital planets like Doha, they could have giant stadiums. These stadiums could hold up to 20,000,000 people — now that's what you would really call an enormous structure. All we can say is that the current Ling Lan was really a country bumpkin, having seen very little of the real world thus far.

It wasn't long before the entire stadium was filled with people, a crowd of heads all packed together. Soon, the sound of a bell rang out beside their ears — the sound of this bell was very melodious, sounding more like the tinkling of water than a metal bell.

Following this sound, warm applause broke out across the whole stadium. At the same time, two mecha slowly descended from the skies, making their way down slowly to land on the ground.

One of the mecha was entirely red while the other was a sheet of silver. When Ling Lan focused on any one of the mecha, the image before her eyes would reveal that mecha's basic information. From this, Ling Lan found out that the red mecha was the J6 challenger, while the silver mecha was the J8 recipient of the challenge.

The two mecha belonged to two different categories of mecha. The red mecha was a winged transformer type mecha — its advantage was optimum flexibility in the air, and it could switch freely between a humanoid shape and a pure aviation model — considered a mecha suited for both land and air. Its right arm was equipped with a beam gun, while its left hand was left empty for general use. The sides of its two legs each held one high-alloy dagger, and below its wings were several high-efficiency guided missiles. Of course, this was just standard regulation equipment; as for whether there were any hidden secret weapons, no one could tell.

Concealed weaponry was also a type of strategy in these mecha combat fights, so all mecha would typically have something up their sleeves.

Meanwhile, the silver mecha was a land-based humanoid mecha, extremely agile on land. On its back was a radiation gun, which was a specialised anti-aircraft weapon. In the mecha's right hand was a beam saber and its left hand was similarly empty on standby. All its other equipment were just like the red mecha's, standard regulation weapons.

The two mecha faced each other from a distance, both moving their limbs as they liked; they seemed to be warming up.

Right then, a strange scene suddenly occurred on the match grounds, causing Ling Lan to yell out in surprise.

On the field, the scenery suddenly changed — the normal floorboards swiftly turned into an endless desert. The audience was also whisked away from the stadium into the middle of this desert ... Ling Lan could even feel the scorching heat of the sun on her body, as well as the limitless heat reflected by the sand beneath her feet.

Ling Lan quickly understood that this must be a type of simulation method, creating a realistic desert environment in an instant. Ling Lan still hadn't shaken herself out of the shock of finding herself in a desert when she was blindsided again. Apparently, the red winged transformer mecha had switched into aviation mode while the background was changing into this desert. Now, it was zooming off into the distance, directly becoming a small black dot before disappearing from sight completely. The silver mecha was equally fast — with a few great bounds, it had also disappeared into the dunes in the distance ...

How was she supposed to watch the match if she couldn't see the mecha?

She asked Little Four, but Little Four was just as clueless. He quickly rushed to search for a solution, but just then, a cold voice abruptly rang out from beside her, almost scaring Ling Lan witless. "First time watching a match?"

Ling Lan turned her head. Sure enough, it was the mysterious man with his hidden eyes, ears, and nose who had spoken. Ling Lan was a little startled. She had obviously sensed that the other was very cold, so why would he take the initiative to speak to her?

Still, Ling Lan wasn't so foolish as to refuse someone who was willing to help. "Yes, it's my first time watching this kind of match."

"Focus and say 'selection' in your mind, a menu will appear," the man instructed Ling Lan.

Ling Lan did as he said, and a line of text appeared before her eyes: Please choose the viewing angle you want. 1: God View. 2: Challenger View. 3: Defender View.

Ling Lan didn't know which viewing angle was better, and so decided it would be wiser to ask an old hand at this. Thus, she unreservedly asked the man beside her, "Which viewing angle should I choose?"

"If you want to see an exciting match, choose God view. If you want to know how to operate a mecha or ways to counter, you can choose the other two options." The man was not as aloof and hard to get along with as Ling Lan had feared; he patiently responded to Ling Lan's question.

Ling Lan thought for a moment. She did not know how to operate mecha at all, so it would be a waste to watch from the other two perspectives. She might as well watch the two mechas fight — perhaps it would spark some inspiration for her own combat skills. Thus, she decisively chose God view.

"Thanks." Before making her selection, Ling Lan politely thanked the man beside her.

### **Chapter 110: Hide and Seek?**

After giving her thanks, Ling Lan no longer paid any attention to the man or his response; all her focus was now on the mecha combat match about to begin. This caused the man beside her to throw a speechless glance at her — well, that was rather perfunctory. Shouldn't she be more sincere when thanking someone?!

Ling Lan was oblivious to the internal grumbles of the man beside her. After choosing God view, the image before her eyes shifted instantly, revealing two very different images. One image was focused on the red mecha, while the other showed that the silver mecha had already hidden itself underneath one of the sand dunes. The colour of the mecha was gradually changing to match the colour of the dune.

Ling Lan found this rather interesting, and put her attention on the silver mecha's image, silently saying in her mind to zoom out ... Unthinkingly, she had stumbled upon the correct controls. The image zoomed out, showing that the hiding place of the silver mecha was completely invisible from a high bird's eye view.

Using the same method again, Ling Lan zoomed out the image of the red mecha as well. Only then did she find out that the red mecha was actually not that far away from the silver mecha — it was just that the red mecha had been circling around without getting close to the other's hiding spot. Now, the whereabouts of both mecha had been observed.

On the lower left corner of the image, there was a number counting down. Ling Lan guessed that this was probably the official start time of the match. The number was now already at 73, so the match would probably start about a minute or so later.

Moreover, Ling Lan also noticed that after she chose a viewing angle, it was as if she had entered a separate space. She couldn't feel the presence of anyone around her — it was as if she was the only one watching this battle, all disturbances screened away. Ling Lan was comfortable with this — at least that man with the dangerous presence would not be able to disrupt her from enjoying the mecha fight.

Meanwhile, on Little Four's end, not only did he search out all kinds of control systems for mecha fighting games, he also looted all the information about other control systems that could be found within the virtual world. After he returned from his pillaging, Little Four told Ling Lan that this kind of low-level mistake would never happen ever again.

Little Four's mood was actually terrible right then. He had never expected that the virtual world would have a game directly implanted inside it, and that every game would have different control systems. This threw him, a virtual god, for a loop, causing him to lose face greatly in front of his boss this time. He still remembered how he had proudly proclaimed himself as the god of the virtual world to his boss once ...

Who could have expected that there were things a god didn't know ... it was such a slap in the face!

Ling Lan had no idea Little Four was tying himself up in knots over this; right now, she was patiently waiting for the countdown to reach zero. Finally, when the clock displayed a string of zeroes, the initially circling red mecha abruptly changed directions and flew straight towards the silver mecha's hiding spot. Ling Lan supposed that it was very likely that, to avoid wasting time with hide-and-seek, the system had directly informed the red mecha of its opponent's general position.

Ling Lan believed that, for fairness' sake, the system wouldn't give specific coordinates on the other's location to either side. Sure enough, the red mecha's subsequent actions proved this point. In the air, while still about 5 km away from the silver mecha's position, the red mecha suddenly launched a guided missile.

The moment the missile was fired, Ling Lan felt ripples pass through the image. Little Four jumped in with an immediate explanation, "This is a NNEMP<sup>1</sup> missile. It can disrupt the radar scanning of a mecha."

It looked like in order to make the audience feel the scene better, the system had added in these visual effects to represent these originally invisible interactions.

"What is the furthest distance that a mecha's radar scanning can reach?" asked Ling Lan thoughtfully.

"Depends on the mecha's radar model. A common mecha will typically be able to scan up to 2000 metres, an intermediate mecha up to 2500 metres, and an advanced mecha up to 3000 metres. Of course, there's still special-class mecha which can scan up to 4000 metres."

"Could the silver mecha be a special-class mecha?"

"At J8 level, it's very likely to possess a special-class mecha. But for a special-class mecha, not only must the mecha operator's operational skill be up to level, the operator must also have gathered a certain

amount of meritorious exploits,” explained Little Four to Ling Lan as he browsed through the information he had found.

Ling Lan nodded. Now she understood why the red mecha had fired the NNEMP missile from 5 km away. It was probably afraid the opponent was a special-class mecha, whose radar was capable of sensing 1000 metres further than his own mecha.

It was a reality that the red mecha couldn't afford to lose, so he couldn't gamble on this possibility.

The red mecha had just fired the NNEMP missile when it transformed into humanoid shape in mid-air and slowly descended to land on the ground. Next, the red mecha's colour slowly faded to match the colour of the desert.

“This is the ‘chameleon system’ only equipped on advanced mecha and beyond. It allows a mecha's external colour to change according to its environment.” Little Four continued to clarify things for Ling Lan. Originally, all this information would be taught to Ling Lan in the scout academy before she turned 13; however, since Little Four had let Ling Lan come into contact with the virtual world and mecha fights prematurely, Little Four had no choice but to become the transmitter of knowledge.

A ring-shaped object slowly emerged from the shoulder area of the red mecha which had turned into the colour of the desert. Then, the object slowly and carefully snuck towards the position of the silver mecha.

“The ring-shaped object is an IE-type<sup>2</sup> heat detector, the newest model on the market. It's considered a type of retrofit, not an original component of mecha. This model of heat detector can sense heat up to a distance of 1500 metres.” Little Four was quick to react, introducing this new item that had appeared to Ling Lan immediately.

Ling Lan nodded silently. Even if the K8 mecha also had an IE-type heat detector equipped, the red mecha would not be disadvantaged. The two mechas had initially been set apart greatly by their long-range sensing capabilities, but with this move by the red mecha, the playing field had been levelled. Of course, if the other side didn't have the newest heat detector equipped, this move would have given the red mecha the upper hand.

A well-timed and well-used NNEMP missile — it looked like the red mecha had come fully prepared for this cross-level challenge. It hadn't issued the challenge recklessly, and had come armed with meticulous strategy and tactics to handle the J8. It seemed like this match wouldn't be a quick one-sided battle; if the J8 wasn't careful, an upset might really be possible ... Ling Lan felt her enthusiasm surge.

Ling Lan wanted to know how the silver mecha would react after facing the loss of its radar. She turned her attention to the silver mecha's side and was promptly shocked still by the other's decision. Apparently, when the silver mecha had seen its radar fizzle out, it had stopped to think. After about one minute, the operator chose to submerge the mecha's entire body into the sand dune and shut down the mecha. The scene truly became deathly silent.

This action naturally stunned Ling Lan. Even though Ling Lan didn't know much about mecha, she still knew that shutting down a mecha would also remove the defensive shield originally shielding the outside of the mecha. In other words, the defensive ability of the mecha currently would depend solely

on the strength of the metal it was made of. If it was coincidentally shot by the opponent's laser gun, it would definitely take heavy damage.

Ling Lan knew very well that doing this on the battlefield was pretty much a suicidal act. However, in this one-on-one fight, it worked wonders. This move by the J8 mecha made the J6 mecha's heat detector become utterly useless. In other words, the J8's choice levelled the playing field once again. To discover the other, they could rely on nothing else but their eyes; no external force or gadget could be borrowed.

At this point, Ling Lan thought of another question. "The mecha is inactivated, losing its defences. Our human bodies naturally produce heat — won't that be picked up by the heat detector?"

Little Four answered, "Because the protective clothing that mecha operators wear have heat-shielding properties, so the heat detector won't be able to pick up their body heat."

Ling Lan understood now. No wonder the J8 mecha had chosen to shut down without any hesitation. He had this to fall back on.

The J6 mecha which had already changed colour to merge with the desert sand began to walk across the desert. Ling Lan thought that the weight of the mecha itself would make it very difficult for the mecha to move, but unexpectedly, the mecha walked on the sand as if it were normal flat ground, as if it took no extra effort whatsoever. She took a closer look at the mecha's feet, and found that only its sole would sink into the sand, as if its big and heavy body did not exist.

Could it be that this virtual world wasn't able to simulate realistic effects? Ling Lan was doubtful.

Little Four sensed Ling Lan's puzzlement, and hurried to clear it up. "It's not like that. These mecha come with their own levitation system, which can decrease the mecha's body weight. Here, the J6 mecha is still not being operated to its maximum capabilities. If a top-notch mecha operator were controlling it, its feet wouldn't sink at all into the yellow sand. Now that would truly be a display of walking on firm ground."

So that's how it was! Ling Lan felt as if she had become more knowledgeable. She found that things related to mecha couldn't be viewed through the lens of normal logic. Right now, her interest towards mecha was rising in a vertical line — the long-slumbering mecha dream of hers began to stir and flare up once more.

Goddammit, she really wished she owned a mecha right now! Ling Lan's heart throbbed with excitement and impatience.

"Boss, if you want mecha, please get over your fear of heights first!" whined Little Four with a pout. The main reason he still hadn't given Ling Lan any sort of mecha training till now was that Ling Lan was still afraid of heights.

Little Four's words caused even Ling Lan's thick-skinned face to turn red. Although her fear of heights had indeed gotten better under forceful training over this duration of time, she wasn't sure if she was really over it yet ... and so, Ling Lan pretended not to have heard anything, looking away from Little Four's accusative stare. She turned her attention back to the images before her.

The red mecha carefully approached the silver mecha's position. However, all he knew was the other's general position and not the actual position, so when he found that the heat detector wasn't picking

anything up, he stopped moving and began to consider what to do next. By now, the J6 mecha must have probably figured out that the heat detector was useless.

The J6 mecha seemed to become a little nervous now. Ling Lan saw that, with every step he took, he would look around warily. After many close brushes, he finally got closer and closer to the sand dune that the J8 was hiding in.

Who would discover the other first? The J8 was hidden within the sand dune, making it very difficult for the J6 to discover it. On the other hand, the J8 had shut down his mecha, and was in a blinded state. Both sides were not able to see the other — was this match destined to be a game of hide-and-seek from beginning to end?