

## Crossing 131

### Chapter 131: Planet Azure

Qi Long was the spokesperson for Ling Lan's group — since Qi Long did not ask, that meant Ling Lan's group had no interest in the proceedings. But just because Ling Lan's group had no interest did not mean that Wu Jiong himself was not interested.

"I heard that the seventh grade virtual world barrier-crossing award was taken away by the academy of another planet. When the dean found out, he was really, really angry, so he called an emergency meeting now with all the teachers." The student informant had a dejected expression on his face; he too had been eagerly anticipating the extracurricular activity this time. "Now it looks like there won't be time for them to take us hunting outdoors."

The student informant had answered so readily and in so much detail, because the one who asked had been Wu Jiong. He was the team leader of one of the three major teams in Class-A, after all. If the student could gain Wu Jiong's favour and thus get the opportunity to join his team, then he would be set.

Although there were quite a few other established teams in Class-A, there were only three teams which the currently still teamless students really wanted to join. As Li Yingjie's team was now full, his was out — but the few remaining slots on the other two teams were being eyed closely by those students.

Ling Lan's team was very strict in their requirements, due to having only one final slot left. Everyone knew that, to enter Ling Lan's team, the difficulty level was scarily high — not only did one's talent have to be exceptional, one also had to be some sort of an all-rounder. Those who knew their own limitations decisively put their sights on Wu Jiong's team. At the very least, Wu Jiong's requirement for joining was not as high as Ling Lan's team's. And furthermore, his team had two slots remaining, so no matter what, the chances for success were naturally much higher. This caused Wu Jiong's team to receive much more attention than Ling Lan's team in Class-A.

"Which planet's scout academy managed to pull that off?" asked Ye Xu, extremely curious.

"It was planet Azure!" The student informant's answer stunned all the students in the class. Planet Azure was a third-rate planet — the resources they had there were N-levels worse than theirs here ... could it be that an unparalleled prodigy had appeared there?

When Li Yingjie, who had initially been unconcerned by the discussion, heard the term 'planet Azure', his face paled drastically, as if thinking of something. He hurriedly asked, "Do you know who the people who crossed the barrier were?" A team was necessary to pass the barrier mission, which was why Li Yingjie asked this question.

The student informant shook his head regretfully, "I only overheard these few things when I passed by two teachers discussing the issue on the way here. I heard that the planet Azure students pushed through the barrier before 5am this morning, successfully becoming the first team to pass the barrier mission this year. After that, I didn't dare to stay back and listen anymore, so I'm not clear on who those people are."

“For the details, the teachers would probably know.” The other students also began noisily discussing the matter.

Right then, a clear voice rang out from the classroom door, “That’s right, I indeed do know ...” It turned out that their Special Class-A homeroom teacher Cheng Yuanhang had arrived.

“Good day, Teacher Cheng!” Seeing Cheng Yuanhang enter the classroom, all the students obediently returned to their seats. They then stood primly at attention and greeted their teacher.

Cheng Yuanhang indicated for the students to sit down, and then he announced, “I have two things to tell you all. Firstly, do not worry, the original plans for outdoor hunting will not change. We will be leaving today as planned!” Cheng Yuanhang’s words caused the entire class to cheer in unison; mind you, they had been waiting a really long time for this day.

“However, this time round, your hunting quota and difficulty level will be much harder compared to that of the previous years. All of this will depend on your performance on the field, even the smallest quota must be more than half times more than the previous years’ quota.” Cheng Yuanhang’s following words raised a furore among the Class-A students — what was the meaning of this?

“In other words, your class’s outdoor hunting duration will be extended to 5 or 6 months ...” added Cheng Yuanhang. This drew a new wave of indignant objections from the students — yes, they had wanted to experience the thrill of some bloody sport, but they had never wanted to remain butchers for so long on a primitive planet!

“Teacher, why did you all decide to make things this way?” asked Ye Xu angrily. This way of doing things was obviously a little unfair by academy standards. In the academy, it was permitted to raise objections, as long as you backed it up with logic and, of course, strength.

“Why?” Cheng Yuanhang’s expression darkened. He slammed his palm onto his desk, the loud noise instantly silencing the clamouring students in the class. The classroom became dead silent.

“Ever since our Central Scout Academy was established, we have never once lost the seventh grade virtual world barrier-crossing award, but this year, we lost it. Before we could pass the barrier mission, the scout academy of the distant third-rate planet Azure broke through it ... This is a disgrace for our Central Scout Academy, and also a disgrace upon you all ...”

At this point, Cheng Yuanhang’s tone eased slightly, “Have you all considered the reason? Why we failed? Is it because we have been blinded by the glories of our past, so we did not see the relentless pursuit of the other scout academies? Today, at the group meeting of the academy teachers, what the dean said was right — we thrive by strife and die by leisure! If we do not wake up, our Central Scout Academy will lose its former glory, and become eliminated by the changing of the times.”

“So, we’ve decided to take this experience to heart and no longer take it easy ... So, congratulations, from now onwards, you all shall receive the full force of our education. We won’t let you all have time to think of any nonsense ... we will make sure to squeeze out every bit of latent potential you have in you.” Cheng Yuanhang’s words caused a chill to settle deep in the bones of the students; it felt as if a great calamity was upon them.

Ling Lan propped up her chin with one hand, a trace of a smile on her lips. She had long felt that the academy was setting their overall standards too low for the students. This was also one of the reasons why her strength just kept getting further and further from that of these children. Luckily, Qi Long and the others had been hanging around her, and so had not been held back by the academy's education standards.

Still, Ling Lan also understood the academy's caution. After all, at this age, the children were still growing — if they went overboard with training, it may cause long-term damage to their bodies. The academy did not dare gamble with that.

“So that's why we will be getting additional training on all fronts.” Wu Jiong understood now. He threw a glance at the pleased look on Ling Lan's face, and somehow understood a bit better why the other was so exceptional. His training load was probably much much more than theirs ... if that was really the case, then he too would not lose to the other.

“Yes, from now on, the Central Scout Academy shall increase the mission load of every grade by two times or more. If the seventh grade of next year loses again, then we'll continue increasing the load,” declared Cheng Yuanhang with a cold smile. This was the academy's decision. If they wanted to have better days, then they would have to hope that next year's seventh grade would do better.

“Teacher Cheng, do you know exactly which people were on that team which passed the barrier mission?” Li Yingjie could hold back no longer, speaking up to ask what he was most concerned about.

Cheng Yuanhang stared at him with a half-smile. Li Yingjie felt as if his thoughts had been read by the teacher, but he really wanted to know the answer. If his elder cousin brother was among those people, that would mean that his hopes of replacing his cousin as the first inheritor in line was almost impossible.

“You don't have to concern yourself over this. All you need to do is work hard to complete the assignments given by the academy.” Cheng Yuanhang did not give a straight answer, instead advising Li Yingjie to focus on his own issues.

“I only want to know whether there is someone called Li Mulan <sup>1</sup> among them,” asked Li Yingjie doggedly.

Cheng Yuanhang's brows furrowed. He glanced at the somewhat emotional Li Yingjie, and thought for a moment before saying, “There was indeed one person with the surname Li.” Li Yingjie's face drained of colour in an instant, but then Cheng Yuanhang continued to say, “But I remember that that person was called Li Lanfeng <sup>2</sup> !”

“Li Lanfeng?! It's fine if it's not him.” Li Yingjie's face regained its usual complexion. If it wasn't the name that he feared it would be, then it didn't matter who broke past the barrier.

“Alright, if there are no questions, everyone follow me to the plaza to assemble,” said Cheng Yuanhang, seeing that the students were mostly settled. With that, he brought the grade four Class-A students to the central plaza of the Central Scout Academy.

Along the way, jet-rollers filled the skies — everyone was riding their jet-rollers to follow their homeroom teachers to the central plaza. Ling Lan thought to herself, perhaps this was why jet-rollers

were prized so highly in the academy — when it came to this sort of mass movement, it would have been rather inefficient without the help of jet-rollers.

At this moment, there were already quite a lot of people at the plaza. All the grade four students would be going out to hunt today; only the areas they were assigned to were different.

Ling Lan abruptly noticed that the quiet skies directly above the plaza were filled with countless small shuttle-like spaceships. This scene made Ling Lan feel once again as if she were inside a science fiction world ... well, fine, her whole existence right now was totally a science fiction.

Ling Lan saw something that wasn't usually here around the plaza — there were several large hovering platforms. Right then, on some of the platforms, there were already some students who had arrived earlier. From the platforms, the students were boarding those little spaceships one by one.

Once everyone was inside, the doors of the spaceship would close, turning it into an airtight elliptical shuttle. Then, with a whoosh, the spaceship would zoom off. That instantaneous burst of speed was definitely as high as 0.5 mach.

Cheng Yuanhang brought them to a platform relatively taller and wider than the rest. The moment all the students were on the platform, a large red-painted spaceship flew over and stopped before them.

On the body of the spaceship, the words 'Central Scout Academy Special Class-A' were actually painted on it. Ling Lan sweatdropped — did Class-A even have its own exclusive spaceship? Looks like the academy had really invested a lot in making sure the students felt the distinction of being strong.

The interior of the spaceship was very large. There were three round tables in the centre, and positioned angularly around each of the tables were six padded armchairs. The other seats were all scattered haphazardly around the three large round tables. Clearly, the academy also wanted to emphasize the elevated status of the strong even within the class itself, pushing the concept of survival of the fittest to the very max.

The students lined up and boarded the ship in an organised fashion. Those students who entered first but were not from the three major teams all consciously left the seats around the three tables open.

Ling Lan was the first member of the three major teams to enter. With one look, she gleaned what this arrangement was all about. Without any reservations, she sat in one of the armchairs around one of the tables; Qi Long and the others of her team followed her lead and sat around the same table.

This was their position. Within the scout academy, there was no such thing as giving way out of modesty; to do so would just invite contempt.

### **Chapter 132: Thoroughly Convinced!**

Wu Jiong, who entered soon after, looked at Ling Lan seated on the right, and with a smile, he moved to sit at the round table to the left of Ling Lan's. Ye Xu and the other members of his team followed him.

It had to be said that the positions Ling Lan and Wu Jiong had chosen were the best of the three tables. Their tables were positioned closest to the big screen, while the position of the other table was obviously not as good as theirs, its line of sight being partially blocked by them.

The spaceship's screen displayed the scenery outside. The passengers could enjoy drinks while viewing the scenery outside; Ling Lan, who was extremely curious about everything, would naturally be unwilling to get a lesser seat.

Han Jijyun seemed to be very familiar with spaceships. He tugged on the arm of Lin Zhong-qing, who was also staring around in awe like a country bumpkin, indicating for him to follow him. From who knows where, they found some iced canned drinks, and together they brought the drinks over to the rest of Ling Lan's group.

This caused the other children to look on in envy, but they did not dare to follow suit. Having never set foot on a spaceship before, they really were unsure where they could get those drinks, and there were no service staff or customer service etcetera on hand to help them. If they messed up and caused some trouble by any chance ... that would be troublesome.

Ling Lan used her the pad of her index finger to rub gently in a circle around the top of her can, luxuriating in the chill given off by the body of the can. Although the weather now wasn't extremely hot, being able to enjoy a cool refreshing drink like this was still a true pleasure.

Ling Lan glanced at Han Jijyun, who was currently talking with Qi Long. Sensing her stare, Han Jijyun turned to look and saw Ling Lan looking at him. So, he raised the drink in his hand and gave it a slight shake in her direction. Moreover, his expression was somewhat teasing in nature.

Ling Lan's lips quirked. "Your family's intelligence is very accurate, eh?"

A light flashed through Han Jijyun's eyes, and his lips split into a quick grin. Shamelessly, he said, "Boss, isn't this all just to serve you better?"

Ling Lan couldn't help but laugh. She held onto the can in her hand, and raised it to knock lightly against the other's canned drink, signalling her acceptance. The two of them lifted their heads in unison and took a drink. Their eyes met — everything that needed to be said was conveyed in silence.

Ling Lan knew very well that, with these actions, Han Jijyun was telling her which stratum he came from ... the Intelligence Agency? What a scheming brat. If Little Four had not gathered detailed information on all of them early on and passed it to her, Han Jijyun's subtle hint this time might have really just flown over her head.

Is it because some things just can't be said out loud? Especially with his special family background, Han Jijyun was clearly much more 'black-bellied' <sup>1</sup> than before. Looks like cultivating him into the team's brain would not be a problem.

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Han Jijyun was satisfied; the smile on his lips deepened. This once again proved that Boss Ling Lan was an intelligent person that only needed a small hint to understand everything. This time, by bringing out the drinks — firstly, he wanted to tell Ling Lan about his family situation; and secondly, it was out of a small selfish wish to test Ling Lan.

Originally, Han Jijyun had acknowledged Ling Lan as boss largely because of his childhood friend Qi Long. Because Qi Long was determined to follow Ling Lan with all his heart, as his best mate, Han Jijyun could only bite the bullet and follow him.

As they grew up year by year, Han Jijyun asked himself more than once — could he really follow Ling Lan with all his heart like Qi Long, acknowledging him as his boss? Han Jijyun knew very well that if he could not be truly sincere in his loyalty, forcing it would eventually lead to a split one day due to a conflict of interest. If that happened, both sides would be hurt, so he might as well make things clear now and rebuild their relationship. Perhaps then, their relationship could be more permanent.

Han Jijyun did not deny that Ling Lan's strength was extraordinary — in terms of combat, he had never seen anyone else as talented as Ling Lan — it was like he was a peerless prodigy born for the sole purpose of fighting. This was also the reason why Qi Long was so deathly loyal to Ling Lan; as a battle maniac, of course he would idolize this unparalleled combat genius.

But Han Jijyun knew that he wasn't like Qi Long; he wasn't that obsessed with combat. Compared to fighting, he much preferred studying all kinds of space campaigns. The various unusual space strategies drew him in completely, and he was also deeply interested in starship command. Thus, Ling Lan would not be able to receive his submission with just combat ability alone. Han Jijyun liked to use his head, so he hoped to find someone who could out-think him to submit to.

However, in these past few years, Ling Lan's cool attitude towards Lin Zhong-qing made Han Jijyun feel that Ling Lan was not a simple person. Han Jijyun understood that Ling Lan must know that Lin Zhong-qing was not simply what he appeared to be, which was why she was treating him so coldly. Han Jijyun had sensed Lin Zhong-qing's duplicity because of his experience from staying by his father all those years before he came to school. Still, as long as Lin Zhong-qing did not do anything to harm them, he also would not be mean and expose him.

In any case, the matter of Lin Zhong-qing proved that Ling Lan was definitely not a simple-minded person. This made Han Jijyun extremely happy, even starting to feel that following Ling Lan just like this wasn't too bad after all. However, it still wasn't enough to secure his full loyalty. In order to resolve this matter as soon as possible, he intentionally arranged this hint-laden scene. If Ling Lan did not catch the hint, of course Han Jijyun would not give up so easily — he would give Ling Lan three chances. If Ling Lan did not sense anything for all three times, then he could only regretfully tell Ling Lan about his position.

Unexpectedly, Ling Lan's response was so rapid that he was rather shocked — this truly proved that he and Qi Long had not chosen the wrong boss. At the very first hint, Ling Lan had got it, even using doublespeak to point out his background. He was thoroughly convinced now. This proved that Ling Lan was very likely much more astute than he had thought ...

The final clinking of cans was his promise to Ling Lan that he, Han Jijyun, would only recognise Ling Lan as boss in this life from now on, with no more reservations.

Ling Lan had not known that Han Jijyun had been struggling over this issue. Frankly, she had never taken Qi Long's and Han Jijyun's acknowledgements as boss too seriously, thinking that these were just the playful words of children. What she didn't know was that the children of this world all matured way too early; they took their promises extremely seriously, and would never break them easily.

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Ling Lan's and Wu Jiong's teams each took one round table; when Li Yingjie finally showed up near the end, he saw that the two best spots had been taken by Ling Lan and Wu Jiong, and glared angrily at

them. But in the end, he could do nothing but sit down sulkily at the round table behind them. Who asked him to arrive so late? There was really nothing he could say about not getting a good spot.

Cheng Yuanhang swiftly did a head count, confirming that all the students of his class had boarded the ship. Only then did he inform the spaceship pilot to depart for the spaceport.

This leg of the journey took about one hour. Ling Lan was slightly disappointed in the scenery along the way. It was okay at the beginning, when they could look down at the entire Central Scout Academy campus — Ling Lan was once again awed at just how vast the academy was. It was so unbelievably amazing, almost as large as a special-class city. But once they were high up in the air, other than white clouds there were just more white clouds. In the end, Ling Lan lost all interest in looking at the scenery, instead half reclining in her armchair with her eyes closed to rest for a bit.

They arrived at the spaceport not a second over their estimated arrival time. All of the students got off the spaceship in an organised fashion, and saw that they were now in an endlessly large spaceport. Standing at its centre looking out, one would feel as if this spaceport was vast beyond imagining. There were over ten thousand starships stopped by the gates of the port. From one gate to another, walking would require around one hour — if one goes to the wrong gate by mistake, it would be difficult to change to the right gate in time. Of course, the federal government was smart, so they made sure that countless transit trains dedicated to the various gates would appear here.

Their teacher led them to board the hover train dedicated to gate 117. The transit was quick; Ling Lan and the others arrived at their destination within 5 minutes.

When they got off this time, Ling Lan saw that a colossal and fearsome-looking cone-shaped starship was parked at gate 117. The missile heads bared to the outside proved that this was a weaponised starship, definitely not a leisure cruiser for citizen usage. The scars left on its body by missiles just drove the point home that this was no simple starship.

Ling Lan cast a curious look at the teacher Cheng Yuanhang at the front, wondering how he had found such a fearsome starship. Mind you, this kind of battle-experienced starship couldn't possibly belong to the scout academy.

Cheng Yuanhang led the students into the starship. At the main door, a strong man stood ramrod straight. Although he wasn't dressed in military uniform, Ling Lan could still clearly sense the stamp of the military on him. It was as if the unsatisfied bloody killing intent freshly back from the battlefield still lingered around him.

"Old Lian, I didn't think it'd be you. We'll be troubling you this time." Cheng Yuanhang was extremely warm towards the other, and his tone had a clear thread of respect.

"Haha ... Little Cheng, what are you saying? As long as I'm free, I just love accepting assignments from your academy. Many of my brother subordinates are from your place, you cultivated them well!" said Old Lian with a boisterous laugh, clapping a hand on Cheng Yuanhang's shoulders.

That said, he pulled Cheng Yuanhang aside subtly, and asked quietly, "Give me some hint. Of the students you've brought this time, how many are you satisfied with?"

Speechless, Cheng Yuanhang glared at him, "Don't even think about it. They're still kids."

As if having been caught harbouring some ulterior motives, Old Lian chuckled awkwardly. He did not dare to say anything further, hurriedly turning to order his subordinates in a loud voice to bring Cheng Yuanhang and his students to their waiting room.

Seeing the students disperse, Cheng Yuanhang surreptitiously pulled Old Lian aside, and indicated for the other to look in Wu Jiong's direction. "That Wu Jiong comes from a military elite family. You should know his grandfather, that support pillar of the military Wu family."

Old Lian stuck his tongue out, gasping in surprise, "Who'd have guessed that is his grandson? He should probably be the most talented one of your bunch then."

"He's not!" said Cheng Yuanhang curtly. He pointed out Qi Long and Ling Lan, and said quietly, "That boy with the silly grin, the one that's speaking so brashly ... his talent is definitely no less than Wu Jiong, perhaps even better. He's called Qi Long. In fact, his father isn't a simple character either. Qi Yaoyang, you should know him, right?"

"Of course I know! That's the strongest ace operator of our Third Division mecha operators. I heard that he's about to advance to become an imperial operator this time, but who knows if that's true ..." Old Lian was rather tongue-tied in his shock; the backgrounds of these kids were frankly quite frightening.

"Well, it's about time for him to ascend. At the beginning, he purposely held back and delayed his advancement just so he could be deployed successfully. After these past few years, he probably won't be able to hold back any longer." As Cheng Yuanhang had a direct line to the academy dean, his information was generally quite reliable.

### **Chapter 133: Sparring!**

"Although we'll lose a great warrior on the battlefield, the Federation will gain an extra measure of deterrent power. I wouldn't want to see something like what happened to Major General Ling Xiao happen again." As Old Lian said this, his expression was overcast with shadows. Till now, he just could not understand — for that inconsequential battle, why had they sent out an IN mecha, the Federation's ultimate weapon, so randomly? Even more hilarious was the fact that a god-class operator, so prized by the Federation, had actually been killed so easily by the enemy nation's trap ... Had the personnel of the Federal Intelligence Agency all gone to eat sh\*t?

Every time he thought of the matter, rage would burn hotly in his heart. He really wanted to f\*ck up those idiots who had come up with this strategy ... if the Premier Head of State hadn't immediately apprehended those people for questioning, the Federation soldiers would very likely have stormed into the military to drag out all those involved and put a bullet into their brains before being appeased.

"Stop bringing up sad history. What happened with Major General Ling Xiao is a thorn in all the hearts of us people in the Federation." Cheng Yuanhang's expression dimmed. Even though ten years had passed since that incident, the citizens of the Federation still could not accept this cruel reality.

Cheng Yuanhang looked towards Ling Lan in the distance, and his complexion improved. Rallying his spirits, he said, "Those two kids I mentioned, though their talent is great, and their strength is also



sufficient, still, they aren't the strongest in my class ..." This one in a million prodigy could perhaps remedy their pain one day.

These words of Cheng Yuanhang's flustered Old Lian. "Ah ... they still aren't the best?" He clapped a hand onto Cheng Yuanhang's shoulder roughly, and said with envy, "You little punk, how are you so lucky? The first time taking a class, and you get such exceptional young prodigies."

Cheng Yuanhang said proudly, "Don't you see what class I'm leading? ... It's Special Class-A which has gathered all the top talent within the Federation!" There was a radiant light in his eyes — thinking back, when the dean had first told him the news, he had almost been overwhelmed with joy and surprise.

"Already said you have the devil's own luck," huffed Old Lian.

Cheng Yuanhang pretended he heard nothing, turning to point at Ling Lan, who was currently motionlessly observing the layout of the starship, and said, "There, that's the one. He's who I'm referring to. His name is Ling Lan. What do you think? Not bad, right?"

Old Lian peered intently at Ling Lan for a moment, and then could not help but rub his chin excitedly. He nodded and said, "Hn, not bad. I like that alert gaze of his. A very level-headed little fellow, isn't he? No matter how curious and excited he is, he's still putting his own safety first — it's obvious that he's trying to memorize our military formations."

"It's not just that. This kid's combat ability is also a level beyond the others. Putting it bluntly, this kid, other than lacking some physical strength, on all other fronts, the men below you ... will most likely be no match for him." Cheng Yuanhang had full confidence in Ling Lan's capabilities — his tone was sure when he said this.

"How could this be?" Old Lian could believe that Ling Lan's talent was exceptional, but he definitely could not believe this claim of Cheng Yuanhang's. He felt that Cheng Yuanhang was just praising his own wares ... think about it. A little brat of not even 10 years of age, no matter how insanely talented he was or how quickly he picked up combat, should still be unable to beat the battle-experienced veterans under him.

"Don't believe me? If there's a chance, just let your subordinates try him," suggested Cheng Yuanhang with a half-smile. He was obviously telling Old Lian that they were the real deal — real gold did not fear the test of fire.

Old Lian descended into a thoughtful silence. He pulled at his jaw, looking at Ling Lan with a contemplative gaze ...

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On the starship, six people were assigned to one room. So, Ling Lan's team directly applied to stay together. Besides Ling Lan's team, all the other teams also chose to do the same.

It wasn't long before the starship disengaged from the navigation frame, and officially departed. Very quickly, they left the spaceport behind for the endless starry skies. This time, their space journey would take seven days for them to arrive at their destination. At the beginning, the students were still in an excited state. Eagerly watching the starry skies go by, time seemed to pass rather quickly. But after two consecutive days of the same thing, their excitement slowly waned and they calmed down. The

monotonous scenery could no longer hold the children's attention; the students, who were used to the hustle and bustle of campus life, began to feel bored and restless.

As if sensing the children's boredom, the starship captain suddenly announced that a sparring match would be held between the students and the starship's crew. This reignited the students' excitement — besides sparring with other students and sometimes the teachers in the academy, the students had really never fought any other adults before.

Every child had their dreams of becoming strong. They too wanted to know how wide the gap was between them and grown adults in terms of combat ability.

Qi Long was a pure battle maniac — hearing this news, he immediately dragged Ling Lan and the others to the combat room to watch the fights. Of course, he also intended to go fight a match for himself.

There was an extremely spacious combat room inside the starship. Ling Lan noticed that the walls of the combat room were made of highly resistant metal-composite steel plates. Anything below 1 tonne<sup>1</sup> of strength would not leave a mark on them; this was definitely a room which could let fighters fight as hard as they liked ...

Cold sweat beaded on Ling Lan's forehead. It looked like the crew members of this starship were all battle maniacs, otherwise they would not have specially used such an expensive and precious metal just to make a combat room.

By the time Ling Lan and the others got there, in the combat room, there had already been quite a few students who had sparred with the starship's crew members. Although the Class-A children were considered exceptional among the students of the same grade at school, compared to these crewmen, they were really all too green. It only took a few moves for the students to lose; even the one who performed the best was not able to last more than 10 moves.

This kind of one-sided fighting was not at all exciting in the crewmen's eyes, causing the spectating crewmen to yawn non-stop. "The captain must be really bored to monkey around like this, actually getting us to fool around with these little brats. Just watching Lil' Jin and the others fighting like this is really uncomfortable." As they were afraid to hurt the children by accident, every crewman that went up to fight had to be exceedingly careful with their strength. These people observing were depressed just watching this.

Being used to battles with real knives and guns, these fights were truly just like child's play to the crewmen. They had no interest at all in playing along, which was why they were rather put out at being forced to do this by their captain's command.

These words drew the indignation of the surrounding Central Scout Academy students. However, after these few rounds of sparring, they too knew that the gap in strength between them and the crewmen was just too large. Even if they rushed forwards, they would just be delivering themselves up for bullying.

The students of Special Class-A had always been a privileged lot in the academy. The academy had instilled the notion in their minds that they were the best of the bunch, so their pride was naturally stronger than the other students by far. Against this sort of terrible defeat, they were of course unwilling to just admit defeat — they wanted to get some dignity back!

“The ones you have beaten aren’t even the strongest in our class. Wait till you’ve defeated those strongest few before saying anything more,” said one of the students huffily.

These words were soundly approved by all the students in attendance. “That’s right, the strongest person in our class isn’t here yet. Don’t look down on us.”

“Defeat him first before talking big ...”

The angry words of the children made the crew members burst out into laughter. One of the crewmen even moved to point at one of the skinnier crew members and said, “Quan, later, why don’t you be the one to meet their strongest fighter?”

“Me? But I’m a JMC, combat isn’t my specialty,” said Quan softly, scratching his head. It was general knowledge that JMCs were the crew members with the weakest combat ability on board the starship.

“That’s why you’re perfect! At least then we’ll be able to see them hold out for about 50 moves, giving them some face<sup>2</sup>.” These crewmen were all old shipmates who followed no restrictions or taboos — their unfiltered words were definitely not polite, immediately causing many of the scout academy students to almost combust from anger.

Ling Lan had just been quietly watching the proceedings, when suddenly, a voice rang out by her ear, “Even now, you’re still holding back?”

It turned out that Wu Jiong and his team had arrived, just in time to hear these words. Right now, veins were popping out on his forehead, and his eyes were lit with the flames of rage — it looked like he was pretty angry.

“You could go up and give it a try,” suggested Ling Lan. She was not so impulsive that she would rush forward just because of some words. It’s not like being insulted would cause any additional hairs on her head to fall off.

Wu Jiong said darkly, “Aren’t you the one who’s the strongest of us all?” Ling Lan could tolerate to this extent? Didn’t he have any pride of being strong at all? Wu Jiong just could not figure it out.

“If they could be defeated by someone who’s not the strongest, wouldn’t that be even more exciting?” said Ling Lan lightly with a quirk of a brow.

Wu Jiong cast a searching look at Ling Lan, and then a mocking smile appeared on his lips. “True!” That said, he readied himself to move forward when a hand suddenly reached for him.

Wu Jiong reflexively tried to dodge, but found that he had no chance — that hand had sealed off all the room he had to dodge ...

“It’s not yet time for you to go out.” Ling Lan was the one who had stopped Wu Jiong.

“Lin Zhong-qing,” Ling Lan suddenly turned to yell out.

Startled, Lin Zhong-qing blinked for a moment before replying in a hurry, “Boss, what’s up?”

“You go and test that person,” ordered Ling Lan. “Use only the scout academy’s foundational combat arts.”

“Alright ...” Although Lin Zhong-qing did not know why Ling Lan refused to let him use any secret arts, since the Boss had said so, he would follow through even though he did not understand.

“To fight with our strongest top-rank, a JMC is unqualified.” Lin Zhong-qing’s voice cut through the crowd, causing the Class-A students to cheer after they got over their surprise. They had seen that Ling Lan, Qi Long, Wu Jiong and the others of their team had all come. Moreover, Lin Zhong-qing was part of Ling Lan’s team. His coming forward must have undoubtedly been approved by Ling Lan.

Wu Jiong watched as Lin Zhong-qing walked onto the combat area, and asked Ling Lan worriedly, “Will he be fine?”

“Facing a JMC who isn’t specialised in combat, as long as Lin Zhong-qing keeps his head, he won’t lose.” Ling Lan could tell at a glance that that crewman Quan was not a real combat expert. Although Lin Zhong-qing’s skills and techniques were very common, his foundational combat arts were very solid. Against this kind of person with weak combat basics, he shouldn’t have much difficulty.

“I’ll take your word for it.” Wu Jiong had faith in Ling Lan’s judgement. After all, in terms of combat, within their class, if Ling Lan claimed to be second place, then no one would dare to claim first place.

“Oh oh oh oh ... Go, Quan, go!” The crew of the starship began to make a ruckus.

Under the egging of his companions, Quan finally walked onto the combat area. In his mind, he thought that even though he couldn’t beat his comrades-in-arms, dealing with these bunch of brats would still be no problem.

### **Chapter 134: Top 5 of the Class**

The two of them bowed to each other, and then the fight started. After several moves had been exchanged, the initially loud voices of the crewmen became softer and softer, until their attention was fully absorbed by the fight.

“That rotten brat’s basic combat arts are pretty good, very solid.”

“He’s also quite calm and careful, not using any so-called secret techniques or ultimate moves to break up the integrity of his basic combat arts. Quan just can’t find any openings.”

“Quan’s attacks have all been resolved.” The offence and defence of the basic combat arts were very balanced, so unless the opponent was someone whose combat realm greatly exceeded Lin Zhong-qing’s, it would otherwise be very difficult for them to crack these basic physical skills built through solid training.

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“Your student ... this counterattack is perfect, eh? Hmph, these little bastards will now have to tuck away their proud peacock tails.” In the captain’s room, Old Lian was staring intently at the screen. Seeing his own crew performing so disgracefully, he was extremely angry.

Old Lian had naturally seen the interaction between Ling Lan and Wu Jiong, and was very satisfied at their fighting spirit. However, when he saw Ling Lan send Lin Zhong-qing out to fight, knowing that Lin

Zhong-qing was not part of the top tier of Class-A, he had begun to wonder whether that little fellow was being overly confident.

Although that Quan was indeed the JMC of his ship, and his skills were the bottom of the heap among his crew ... But still, any member of his crew was no ordinary crew member! Every single one of them had been baptised in the flames of countless merciless battles, all of them seasoned warriors who had clambered up from beneath a mountain of corpses and a sea of blood ...

Old Lian believed that even the weakest among them, Quan, should be an impossible opponent to defeat for the students from Class-A. Unexpectedly, he was being harshly slapped in the face by the reality before him ...

Sitting at one side, Cheng Yuanhang pretended not to see Old Lian's complexion which was rapidly changing colours. Instead, he calmly took a sip of the tea he held in his hands without saying a word. However, the subtle smile on the corner of his lips showed how pleased he was at the moment.

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"Lin Zhong-qing, fighting!" "Lin Zhong-qing, go, go!"

The students of Class-A were all pumped up, cheering enthusiastically for their fighting classmate. Even Li Yingjie, who had never gotten along with Lin Zhong-qing, also kept a stern face throughout, hoping that Lin Zhong-qing would put up a good fight and take back some face for Class-A.

Right then, Quan was beginning to feel somewhat anxious for being unable to take his opponent down; a very small opening appeared in his thus far steady combat arts ...

Is this a chance or a trap? Lin Zhong-qing's mind jolted, at this moment, he felt as if he could hear Ling Lan bark out by his ear, "Attack his right flank!" That spot was precisely where the opening was.

Lin Zhong-qing had no time to think — his body just obeyed that command, sending out a powerful punch with all the strength it possessed.

"Bam!" The sound of a fist meeting flesh. This move of Lin Zhong-qing's came swiftly — the opponent was flustered, and unable to dodge, he was hit directly!

Quan was seen staggering several steps back. Subconsciously, his right hand was pressed onto his right flank. His face was white as a sheet, and there was a pained expression on his face. It looked like Lin Zhong-qing's punch had landed soundly, and he had taken the full brunt of it.

Expression changing, a crew member with a red cross stitched on the right arm of his uniform jumped out from the crowd. Lifting the emergency healing apparatus on his waist, he quickly scanned the other's body and then said anxiously, "There's internal bleeding. Quick, send Quan into the recovery pod." This guy should be the ship's doctor.

The ship's doctor's words spurred several muscled crew members into action; they hurriedly carried Quan to the recovery pods. The initially flippant crewmen's expressions had turned serious. They found that this group of little brats before them were not as simple as they had thought.

The combat room lapsed into a short silence. Seeing that the starship's crew were finally taking them seriously, Ling Lan sent a pointed look at Lin Zhong-qing.

Lin Zhong-qing received Ling Lan's cue, and spoke up once more, "I'm not fully proficient in combat arts yet. If I injured that big brother, please forgive me!"

"However, if all the crew members on this grand ship are all of this level, then there would be no need to continue the spars any further." Lin Zhong-qing's words caused the crewmen's faces to pale and flush erratically — this was obviously a comeback targeted at their previous cocky remarks!

"So what you're saying is, the other students in your class are even stronger than you?" An icy voice rang out from behind the crew.

The crew anxiously moved aside to give way, all of them calling out, "Sir <sup>1</sup>!"

Ling Lan's eyes narrowed. A man dressed in Federation military uniform appeared, his entire demeanour emitting a piercing cold air. He looked to be around 35 to 36 years old, one of the youngest among the crewmen, but the other much older crewmen all seemed to treat him with extreme respect, perhaps even some fear.

From the pressure exerted by the other, Ling Lan could just tell that this person was probably the strongest one among all these crew members.

The other's aura also affected Lin Zhong-qing. Lin Zhong-qing felt as if he was being pressed down by an invisible force, so heavy that his knees wanted to buckle, but the pride in his bones would not allow him to disgrace the academy, disgrace his class, and disgrace Ling Lan's team. A flash of white teeth, and he borrowed the pain from biting his own cheek to recover the prideful look on his face. Then, he replied, "With my strength, I can only squeeze into the top 10. As for the top 5, I don't even have the right to touch them with a finger ..."

"Is that so? Now I really want to see how strong this top 5 of your class whom you can't even touch really are." The military instructor cast his gaze over the surrounding crewmen, searching. This made the crew members stand up straight reflexively and throw out their chests.

"Team Golden Scales." The instructor's gaze finally landed on one of the teams. "This time, your team is up!"

"Yes, Sir!" The six men of Team Golden Scales could not conceal their surprise; they had not expected the instructor to send them out.

This nomination also flabbergasted the other crew members. They would never have expected the instructor to go so far, actually sending out the team members of their ace mecha team. Were these little brats really that strong?

"Can you call out your class's top 5 now?" After arranging the roster for the starship's crew, the instructor turned his head to ask Lin Zhong-qing, tone indifferent.

Lin Zhong-qing reflexively turned to look at Ling Lan. One of the fingers of Ling Lan's low-hanging right hand gave a light flick.

Standing beside Ling Lan, Han Jijyun suddenly felt himself being pushed out gently by a surge of energy. His body took two strides forward involuntarily, coming to stand in front of Ling Lan and the others. It was as if he had seen Lin Zhong-qing's question, and stepped out by himself to explain.

Han Jijyun was a smart child; he instantly understood who the one who had pushed him forward was. Steadying himself, he immediately introduced the top 5 of their class to the instructor: Qi Long, Wu Jiong, Li Yingjie, Luo Lang, and Ling Lan.

Wu Jiong looked at Lin Zhong-qing and Han Jijyun standing in front of them, and quietly asked Ling Lan, “How shall we arrange this?”

“To win, or purely for sparring?” Ling Lan threw back this question.

“What do you mean?” Wu Jiong frowned.

“If we want to win, then we should follow the methods of Tian Ji’s horse-racing<sup>2</sup>; if we just want to spar to learn something, then it’s best to have roughly equal match-ups.” It was now up to Wu Jiong and the others to choose. Ling Lan was frankly unconcerned whether they won or lost — her gaze met that of the instructor’s. She had no interest in the Golden Scales Team. It would probably be more meaningful if she could fight against that instructor.

Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie discussed the matter for a moment, then decided that they wanted to win. Having a strong thirst for victory, they were unwilling to accept defeat.

Qi Long and Luo Lang did not have an opinion; they were willing to just follow whatever Ling Lan decided.

Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie’s choice made Ling Lan’s brows furrow gently. This fear of losing a fight was not a good thing. Still, Ling Lan did not say anything, only nodding to show that she understood. There was a total of six members in the Golden Scales Team. With a glance, Ling Lan could already tell which few were weaker and which few were stronger. Her eyes flickered in thought, and then she called Qi Long to call Han Jijyun back for a discussion.

In the end, the few of them decided to request for the scout academy to have the right to freely choose their opponent. After all, they were the weaker side — it was very normal for them to have some conditions.

Han Jijyun conveyed Ling Lan and the others’ request to the instructor, and he agreed to it without any hesitation.

Li Yingjie was the first to go up. The opponent Ling Lan selected for him was the weakest one among the Golden Scales Team. The instructor’s brows lifted slightly, watching Li Yingjie’s fight intently even in his surprise. As expected, Li Yingjie’s ability wasn’t bad, actually able to fight on even ground with that crew member, not at all disadvantaged.

“The principles of Tian Ji horse-racing, is it? Interesting.” A hint of a smile appeared on the instructor’s lips. These kids really had a strong desire for victory, it seemed. Still, this wasn’t a bad thing — if they didn’t have these kinds of intense feelings, then they wouldn’t be passionate youths, would they?

Li Yingjie’s basic combat arts were obviously weaker than Lin Zhong-qing’s, and the opponent was someone N-times stronger than Lin Zhong-qing’s opponent. Several times, he was almost defeated because the opponent had caught hold of the openings in his movements. Fortunately, Li Yingjie’s inherited family martial arts and secret techniques were all high-grade material. Every time he felt that

something was not right, he would use a Li family life-saving technique. This helped him to avoid many sure-hit attacks.

Just like that, the two fighters exchanged over a hundred moves. The member of the Golden Scales Team felt that this was a great loss of face, being unable to take down such a small brat like this ... He lifted his head to look at the instructor, a plea in his eyes.

The instructor's brows were locked deeply, and he shook his head without even having to think about it. Of course he knew what the other was asking for, but that movement was the last resort of mecha. Moreover, beating a mere student with that would be meaningless.

Unable to get approval from the instructor, the team member seemed to lose all fighting spirit. Li Yingjie grasped an opening he revealed in his negligence and sent the other stumbling back three steps.

Catching his balance, the team member was enraged. To reclaim his lost face, the stance of his two hands shifted abruptly, his five fingers clenched lightly as he faced Li Yingjie from a distance.

The instructor's countenance changed, and he yelled, "Stop!" The team member was jerked back to awareness by this loud yell. Cold sweat poured from his forehead, and he immediately pulled back his hands to stand to one side.

"This match, we forfeit," said the instructor coldly, "L19, return immediately and go into isolation for 3 days."

"Yes!" L19 replied, head bowed. Due to the height difference, Ling Lan could see the complicated expression on his face, which also held a trace of thankfulness.

### **Chapter 135: As the Fights Progress!**

L19 very quickly left the combat room — it looked like he was going to shut himself up in isolation immediately. Ling Lan saw that no one accompanied him, looks like the discipline of the crew was extremely strict and clear-cut. This was not something any ordinary contracted starship could do.

A trace of understanding appeared on the curve of Ling Lan's lips; she pretty much knew what kind of existence this starship was now.

Their initial plan was for Luo Lang to be the second to fight, but after some calculation, Ling Lan decided to switch the positions and let Wu Jiong fight first. Of course, Ling Lan also told Wu Jiong who the second weakest opponent in the line-up was.

With regards to the change in fighting order, though Wu Jiong was a little confused, he did not have any objections. Before he entered the combat area, Ling Lan said lowly, "Hold up first for about ten moves, wait till the opponent's charge wanes before fighting back."

Li Yingjie's victory had been very random, and could be considered a concession by the other side. But nevertheless, it was still a loss for their opponents. This would naturally stoke the indignation of the remaining members and cause them to yearn even more for victory — they desperately needed a victory to reclaim their face.



Ling Lan speculated that this time, the opponent would no longer give them the opportunity to initiate attack. The opponent would most certainly attack fiercely so that they could take this match cleanly and quickly. If the students could not hold up against this starting wave of attacks, then there would be no shot at victory.

Thus, Luo Lang, who wasn't good at handling this sort of berserk attack mode, was not suitable to come out now. It was likely that he would become flustered just after a few moves from the opponent, and would quickly be defeated and sent off the field. Ling Lan was unconcerned with the outcome of this sparring competition, but she also did not want Luo Lang to just lose without learning anything. Therefore, she needed to first crack this rush attack strategy of the opponents, to make them believe that snatching the attack initiative was useless.

But Wu Jiong was different — he specialised in handling this kind of rush attack. Ling Lan believed that he would definitely be able to withstand the initial rush, and this was why Ling Lan wanted him to fight second. Wu Jiong wanted to win, while Ling Lan did not want her followers to learn nothing from the experience; this way would cover both bases.

Of course, in order to make sure Wu Jiong would be able to win the match, Ling Lan still gave Wu Jiong a reminder, making sure he was prepared.

Wu Jiong nodded to indicate that he understood. Although the two of them were considered competing rivals within the class, this did not mean that he didn't trust Ling Lan's judgement.

The two fighters got into position and bowed to one another. Wu Jiong's opponent was a big man of about 30 years of age. One look at the other's hulking body and the thick strong muscles on his arms, and it was obvious that the opponent was definitely a power-type fighter. Wu Jiong mentally raised his guard, Ling Lan's reminder resurfacing in his mind. At first, he had been planning to observe a bit more, but he now immediately made the decision to defend first before attacking.

Sure enough, as Ling Lan predicted, the opponent this time was no longer as careless and casual as the opponent who had fought Li Yingjie. The other was approaching this fight very seriously, with no thought of giving a handicap. The moment the fight began, he charged forwards like a thunderstorm, bringing forth a flurry of punches and kicks, each movement fierce and powerful.

Because Wu Jiong was mentally prepared, this ferocious whirlwind attack mode did not faze him much. He kept calm and dodged each attack carefully. He was like a leaf floating on the surface of a raging sea, riding the waves without fear — no matter how fierce the other's attacks were, he could always find some way to hold on without losing any ground.

He weathered a round of the other's attacks with much difficulty, and then — perhaps the other had pushed himself too far in order to keep the momentum of his attacks going, for the force behind them suddenly slowed obviously — Wu Jiong, who had long been ready to counterattack, leapt forward without having to think twice. A set of advanced military-use combat arts belonging to the Wu family was unleashed from his hands, and he stole the attack initiative from his opponent. This sudden change caused the team member of the Golden Scales to scramble to switch gears, and the course of the battle turned.

Seeing this, the instructor's brows furrowed lightly. He was now almost certain that the other side was using the strategy of Tian Ji's horse-racing — who'd have guessed that they would be able to accurately pick out the two weakest members of Team Golden Scales? Furthermore, the student who had fought in the first match as well as the one fighting now was most likely part of the top 3 of the 5-student line-up.

The instructor had yet to finish this line of thinking when the scene on the field changed. Charging in close, Wu Jiong struck both of his fists out at the same time — this short and swift attack was too fast for the opponent's defence, and he was hit full on by Wu Jiong's attack.

Wu Jiong's attack this time used two One-Inch Punches, so though it looked like two light hits, it really wasn't. The opponent was obviously misled, and the force of the One-Inch Punches caused him to stumble back quite a few steps.

Gaining an advantage, Wu Jiong did not show any mercy. He stayed close to the opponent and his fists pummelled the other's abdomen in a frenzied rain of attacks. (This was a height issue; Wu Jiong could only attack that spot.) The opponent had no choice but to move to block these attacks — the abdomen was one of the weakest spots on the human body. Though Wu Jiong's frame was small, his strength was not insignificant, so the opponent had to be careful. He could only keep retreating to dispel the force of Wu Jiong's attacks.

Then, suddenly, Wu Jiong's frenzied attacks stopped. He pulled back his strength and leapt backwards to return to his starting position, putting some distance between him and his opponent. He then bowed to the other and said, "Thank you for the concession, Uncle!"

The man abruptly realised — he looked down at his feet, and sure enough, without knowing it, he had retreated till he had stepped out of the defined boundaries of the combat area. In other words, he had been forced out of the ring by Wu Jiong; according to the rules, he had indeed lost the match.

The man could not help but chuckle wryly. "What an impressive scout, it is truly my loss."

The man then marched over to stand in front of the instructor, lowered his head and said, "I'm sorry, Sir, I've lost."

"L18, return and enter isolation for three days!" The instructor sighed softly and assigned punishment again. Losing to a scout was an embarrassment for an adult — by giving out some punishment, it may help to ease the shame.

The man saluted the instructor gratefully, and then turned to leave. It looked like he was also going off on his own to isolate himself immediately. Isolation was not necessarily a bad thing — sometimes, cooling off for a bit may perhaps reap great benefits. Many people had earned their advancements and improved their abilities through isolating themselves and reflecting.

Still, after two consecutive men going off to isolate themselves without objection, Ling Lan's line-up of five shared a knowing glance. There was only one message in their eyes — this starship was most likely a military vessel in active service that was currently disguised as a mercenary vessel. Consequently, the planet they were headed to this time was most likely not the publicly known primitive planet as stated in their communicator notifications, but instead a secret planet sealed by the military.

After gaining two victories, the scout academy students were on cloud nine and were getting a little carried away — they actually began shouting out to win all the following matches. In contrast, there were still some students who kept their head, who felt that the following matches would not be as simple anymore.

In particular, Qi Long and Luo Lang's expressions were currently extremely grim. This was because their boss had told them personally that he had already chosen the strongest two fighters from the Golden Scales Team for them. In Ling Lan's words, they were being served up to be tormented.

Luo Lang was the third to go up. The opponent he chose was a young man of about 22 to 23 years of age. He had a refined look about him with a bashful smile on his face, making others feel as if he was very harmless.

However, Ling Lan told Luo Lang with absolute certainty that this man was not as harmless as he seemed. He was the second strongest among the six people of the Golden Scales Team, and was a vicious character who wasn't beneath using underhanded tactics to win. As Ling Lan was saying this, his face clearly expressed a hint of pity, as if declaring that Luo Lang wouldn't have a good time of it in this fight.

The instructor really thought that the other side would follow the flow of Tian Ji's horse-racing all the way, and so choose their third weakest team member. Unexpectedly, the other chose the second strongest of the Golden Scales Team this time, and it was the one with the belly full of plots and schemes to boot.

The instructor couldn't help but shake his head, thinking to himself that Ling Lan and the others were most likely going to be disappointed this time. This was because this young man ... even the instructor himself found him hard to deal with. He just laid too many traps in his fights, setting out too many lures — even he could not help but fall for some of them a few times. That man was truly the most difficult person to handle within the Golden Scales Team ...

Could it be that they thought that this team member appeared weaker? The instructor took a closer look at that black-bellied punk of the Golden Scales Team, and found that he really did give off that kind of vibe. Had the children really fallen for this trap? Or did they have some other motive for choosing him?

The instructor's gaze once again honed in on Ling Lan's side, trying to glean some hint from their bodies. When he noticed that these scouts were only as tall as their chests, he was abruptly taken aback, and then he couldn't help but chuckle lowly to himself. Unknowingly, he had begun to consider the students on an even playing field as himself. The other side was clearly just some kids of about 10 years old — how could they figure out who was stronger or weaker in the Golden Scales Team from appearance alone? Perhaps the first two matches they won were just a coincidence ...

"Luo Lang, once you go up, don't think too much. Don't worry about whether the other has any openings or not. Just focus on using your basic physical skills properly, and deal with any blows as they come." Not having the heart to see Luo Lang lose terribly, Ling Lan chose to give him a small suggestion.

Luo Lang nodded, and said gratefully, "Got it, Boss." Even knowing he was going out to be tormented, it would still be nice to not lose too badly.

Luo Lang understood deep down that he was definitely no match for his opponent. Although the other did not look that old, he must have already been through countless battles and must have struggled through many life-or-death scenarios. In reality, his battle experience must exceed Luo Lang's by several multiples, being a battle-seasoned veteran soldier. Luo Lang considered it great luck that he would be able to spar with someone like this before going on the hunting assignment.

Perhaps seeing how L18's rush attack was ineffective, combined with Luo Lang's serious face, which had no sign of arrogance from the previous two wins, the opponent chose to give up on the rush attack strategy. He began to circle around Luo Lang, testing him. As he circled, he would intentionally reveal some defence holes, small openings etcetera, trying to entice Luo Lang into attacking first.

However, due to Ling Lan's warning, Luo Lang just ignored all these openings. He too was extremely careful — before figuring out the opponent's true strength, he would not move recklessly.

They faced-off just like this for several circles, and then, as if feeling that it would be useless to continue on like this, the opponent attacked.

The scout academy's basic combat arts, though said to be equally balanced in terms of offence and defence, at its heart, each of its attacks was built on the foundation of defence. In other words, the defensive strength of the scout academy's basic combat arts was extremely solid — it could perhaps even be said to be perfect.

### **Chapter 136: Ling Lan's Wrath!**

Because Luo Lang took Ling Lan's warning to heart, no matter how the opponent tried to rush him, lure him, mislead him, or pull him in with faked openings, he remained steady. He resolutely ignored all temptation, using only the basic combat arts he was well-versed in to counter each move the opponent made. He held fast to defence, and never launched any attacks of his own.

However, this situation was soon broken. When Luo Lang was faced with the exact same opening for the n-th time, his heart wavered. He began considering whether this opening was a true opening or not ... Luo Lang could not be blamed for wavering, because this opening was somewhat different than the other openings he had seen previously. Many times before, he had almost missed it completely; it was that well-concealed.

In contrast to the other openings which had disappeared after he ignored them once or twice, this opening had appeared again and again countless times despite his ignoring it. And whenever it appeared, it would be extremely subtle and easy to miss ... but regardless of how insignificant it was, an opening was an opening — it had still been noticed by Luo Lang.

Of course, Luo Lang did not choose to attack impulsively straightaway; instead, he carefully observed to try and find the reason why that opening would appear. He had not forgotten Boss Ling Lan's words, so he decided to watch for a bit longer. The moment he confirmed that this was a true opening, he definitely would not go easy on his opponent ...

Luo Lang carefully observed the opponent's movements and assessed the strength behind the other's blows as he blocked them. Finally, he gained some insight.

The opponent was left-handed! So his left hand could exert much more strength than his right hand. Yet, everyone knew that combat arts typically favoured right-handed attacks, while the left hand was mostly used for blocking techniques. Perhaps for this reason, the opponent had modified the combat arts he had learned into right-handed blocks and left-handed attacks. Of course, this modification had its pros and cons — the advantage was that it was easier for right-handed opponents to mess up their blocks and face his attack directly, and the disadvantage was similar, in that he may also end up making an error in defense.

To resolve this problem, the opponent had come up with a plan. He was a smart man, and did not want something he modified to be unusable, so he chose an extremely challenging route of development. He made it so that he would be able to shift between blocking and attacking seamlessly — in other words, both his left and right hand could be used to attack and defend. If he became proficient in this, although it could not be said that he would be unrivalled, fighters on the same level would find this move of his extremely hard to crack.

But fortunately, it seemed like the opponent still had not merged his set of moves completely. Because of this, there was a momentary lapse whenever he shifted between offence and defence, and this gap would be the best moment for Luo Lang to attack.

After coming to this conclusion, to avoid any accidents, Luo Lang continued to exchange several more moves with the opponent to confirm. Finding everything as he expected, he decided not to wait any longer and attacked. Since this was an opportunity, he definitely would not miss it.

When Luo Lang moved to strike at the opponent's opening during that lapse, the observing Ling Lan sighed in her heart. This opening was really just too perfect — Luo Lang still was not able to resist its temptation in the end. It was a trap!

Sure enough, as Luo Lang threw his punch at what was obviously a flaw, the flaw suddenly disappeared. It was as if that weak point was just something he had imagined, having never existed to begin with.

Luo Lang only felt his attacking right arm be grabbed by a powerful large hand, and then he was dragged forward by the other before he could pull back.

Luo Lang found himself falling forwards as he lost his balance, and at the same time, he felt a heavy strike to his abdomen. And then, he was flying backwards, a mouthful of blood spewing from his mouth ...

Not only that, in Luo Lang's vision, the opponent had once again raised his fist and was hurtling towards him to attack.

At that moment, Luo Lang's heart was filled with helplessness and regret — he had not held fast to Boss's warning, and fell for the opponent's trap. The result would be a tragic one; it looked like the other was going to give him a good beating now. His only hope was that he wouldn't be too badly injured — he still had to attend the hunting course after all.

Right then, a figure suddenly appeared in the combat area, catching the opponent's follow-up punch in one hand.

Ice in her tone, Ling Lan said, "This match, we admit defeat! However ..." Blood-red killing intent surged from her body. Only for an instant, but it was enough to send chills down the backs of everyone present.

Ling Lan's gaze shot like cold lasers into the opponent's eyes, and cold fear rose in his heart. "This follow-up fist, I'll be taking it!"

That said, Ling Lan's right hand, which was gripping the other's wrist, twisted, and with a crisp "crack!", the other's hand was cleanly broken.

"Stop!" A cry rang out at the same time as the sound of this break, and then, fuming, the instructor could only say, "You go too far."

Ling Lan looked at him coldly, and said, "Too far? That last attack had already caused serious damage to my companion. And this additional punch wasn't going too far?"

The instructor flushed to his ears. "How would you know if that extra punch of his would further injure your companion? The Golden Scales Team have absolute control over the level of their strength."

"Absolute control? What great absolute control ..." Ling Lan let loose a few dry laughs.

Yes, indeed, Ling Lan was thoroughly enraged. Luo Lang had already been injured by the opponent, but the other still chose to follow through with another punch — this obviously had some malicious intent behind it. And when Ling Lan stopped the attack by gripping the other's wrist, she could sense the power behind the attack. Although it would not kill Luo Lang, it was certainly enough to force Luo Lang to stay in a recovery pod for 3 to 5 months. In that case, Luo Lang would have no choice but to be absent for the hunting course this time. Mind you, the first hunting course was extremely important, and may even affect the distribution of cultivation resources — these were all things Luo Lang could not afford to miss.

And this was also one of the reasons why Ling Lan could not forgive the opponent. Therefore, in her wrath, she had broken the other's wrist in warning.

Ling Lan's connotation-laden words and her mocking laughter put the instructor in an awkward position. Although this soldier under him was both talented and strong, he was rather petty — the two consecutive losses for their team irked him, making him feel that they, the Golden Scales, had lost face. So, even when he had won, he had not stopped, wanting to teach these scout brats a good lesson, but he unexpectedly kicked a steel plate instead.

"L15, after your injuries are healed, go into isolation for three days as well. Reflect on your actions!" Extremely embarrassed, the instructor bellowed at L15.

Although L15's wrist had been broken by Ling Lan, his expression remained calm, as if it was not his wrist that had been broken. Only the thin trails of sweat running from his forehead proved that he was actually holding back the pain. Upon hearing the instructor's verdict, he used his other working hand to salute and responded, "Yes, Sir!"

As he left, he swept a dark look at Ling Lan who was still standing in the combat area. A trace of lethal animosity flashed through his eyes, but it only lasted for an instant. He swiftly returned to normal, as if that dark emotion had just been a hallucination.

*“Boss, he actually dares to think of harming you? I’ll destroy him!”* Catching sight of this, Little Four was sent jumping in anger. He pulled up his sleeves in preparation to go fight for his boss.

Ling Lan huffed exasperatedly, *“You want to destroy him? How?”*

Little Four abruptly realised that he had no real hands and feet, and so had no way of helping his boss to destroy that fellow. He was so shocked that he went off to crouch in a corner to draw circles in gloomy silence.

But he quickly recovered when inspiration flashed through his mind. He jumped up and said to his boss excitedly, *“Boss, quickly go and get a mecha of your own in real life! Then I’ll be able to help you!”* He could totally replace the mecha’s A.I. and command the mecha to go PK<sup>1</sup> that fellow ...

Ling Lan could not bear to see Little Four disappointed, so she nodded and said, *“Okay, I’ll hurry, and then you can help me to handle those bad eggs that want to harm me.”* Only with this was Little Four pacified.

No one noticed the cold and sinister look L15 directed at Ling Lan; everyone was filled with admiration for L15’s stoicism under such intense pain. Of course, most of the attention was on Ling Lan standing in the middle, and those gazes were filled with shock and disbelief.

On the other hand, the scout academy students all had a matter-of-fact look on their faces, proving that Ling Lan’s ability was indeed typically at this level. This made the crew members no longer dare to look down on the students.

By this time, the instructor had regained his composure. He looked at Ling Lan and said coldly, *“You should be the strongest one among them, right? Judging by your strength, none of the Golden Scales team members will be a match for you. There’s no need for the remaining matches then.”* He looked at strongest member of the Golden Scales Team — the team leader, a 25 to 26 year old stern-faced youth — and his face revealed a trace of regret. Since the other had managed to break L15’s wrist in one move, then L13 would most likely be unable to hold out for more than a few moves.

*“Of course the matches should continue. The one to fight next isn’t me. It’ll be the other top 5 candidate from our class, Qi Long!”* declared Ling Lan loudly.

Qi Long rushed forward to stand by her side. *“Boss, I’m here.”*

Ling Lan patted Qi Long’s shoulder, and then turned to say earnestly to the team leader of the Golden Scales, *“Big Brother, please guide this companion of mine well.”*

The team leader looked to the instructor for instruction, and the instructor nodded helplessly. Since they had already agreed to this sparring competition from the start, he couldn’t very well refuse now, could he?

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In the captain’s room, Cheng Yuanhang, whose expression had changed slightly when Luo Lang was injured, saw Ling Lan’s forceful retaliation and promptly returned to normal. In contrast, Old Lian’s face was dark and grim, feeling that he had greatly lost face from this. Who would have guessed that the young man he had placed so much hope on would turn out to be such a sore loser?

“Old Lian, that one must be a top talent among your ranks here, right? It’s normal for him to be a little arrogant,” counselled Cheng Yuanhang kindly.

“Hmph! Compared to your class’s Ling Lan, he’s just a pile of crap,” huffed Old Lian. His heart was itching — if he could get this unparalleled genius for his ship, then he would have hit a jackpot.

“I’ve already said not to even think about it. The First Division Special Ops Team already have their eyes on him.” Cheng Yuanhang told this information to the other bluntly, in hopes that the other would not waste his time and back off. Some talents ... could really only be appreciated from afar and not obtained.

Old Lian let out a regretful sigh. This starship of theirs was still too low-level to think of obtaining this kind of peerless prodigy. This was also why L15, despite his pettiness, was still the bearer of their hopes here.

Meanwhile, on the field, Qi Long and the Golden Scales team leader, L13, were already locked together in an intense battle. L13’s combat style was also the forthright and supremely aggressive type, very similar to Qi Long’s combat style. Early on, Ling Lan had sensed this in their presences, and hence paired them up to fight.

### **Chapter 137: Qi-Jin Stage?**

However, in the end, Qi Long still lost to L13, the team leader of the Golden Scales. Yet, Qi Long wasn’t too disappointed. From the very start of the match, he had already known that no matter how talented he was, or how solid his combat foundations were, he wouldn’t be able to match up to these battle-seasoned veteran soldiers in terms of combat experience.

Both fighters had honest and hearty dispositions — after clashing in battle, the Golden Scales’ team leader had a really good impression of Qi Long. Therefore he extended an invitation to Qi Long — while they were travelling together, as long as he was free, Qi Long could come seek him out for a spar any time.

It had to be said that human relations really depended a lot on chance encounters. Qi Long and L13 were undoubtedly destined to meet; this was a great surprise that pleased Ling Lan.

Ling Lan knew very well that Qi Long’s combat arts had reached its first bottleneck stage. To break through it, there were two ways. One of them was to wait for the right timing, for that opportunity of sudden insight — this way, the bottleneck would naturally be resolved on its own. The other method was to increase battle experience by throwing oneself into countless fights, especially against experienced combat experts. In those fights, one could seek inspiration bit by bit to spur a breakthrough.

Of course, these two methods all needed a certain degree of luck. Still, compared to the vagueness and uncertainty of the first option, the success rate of the latter method was clearly higher. Ling Lan naturally hoped that Qi Long could walk the second path to seek his breakthrough.

Unfortunately, although Ling Lan’s strength was high among Ling Lan’s party, because everything she mastered were ultimate killing moves, she was not a suitable candidate for this sort of energy-draining,



drawn out spars in search of inspiration. On the other hand, the others in the group were weaker than Qi Long, and so had no way to place the intense pressure needed on Qi Long to spur his breakthrough.

On this, Ling Lan was extremely helpless. The lack of suitable candidates around had caused Qi Long to stagnate indefinitely at his bottleneck, just waiting for the fluke of sudden insight. As for those combat instructors in the academy, due to the sheer number of students they had to instruct, they just didn't have the time to provide these guidance spars for Qi Long.

Of course, there was still one more good candidate, and that was Qi Long's initiate instructor. The more Qi Long learned, the more he could sense how strong his initiate instructor was. But unfortunately, after mentoring him for over a year, his initiate instructor had become very elusive — they did not even know where to begin looking for him. Thus, they could only patiently wait for the instructors to come to them.

Moreover, Qi Long's bottleneck had only appeared recently, so his initiate instructor would have no idea that his student had already encountered his very first bottleneck.

Ling Lan's mood was exceedingly great! She had not expected to help Qi Long resolve this issue with just one unintended spar on this starship. L13's combat level was clearly higher than Qi Long's, and even more perfect was the fact that his combat style was extremely close to Qi Long's. The success rate for breaking through a bottleneck was undoubtedly higher with the help of an opponent with a similar combat style.

At this moment, Ling Lan's lingering resentment towards L15 was naturally lessened by her good mood. In her mind, she decided that as long as the other did not cross her in future, she would definitely leave him alone.

Just when everyone thought the sparring matches were over, something unexpected happened! Ling Lan actually spoke up to ask the instructor, "Sir, why don't we have a match?"

At these words, the instructor turned to stare intently at Ling Lan, and then said, "It would be my pleasure!" Ling Lan's clean and efficient interception of L15's attack had shaken the instructor, and he was actually a little chilled by the ruthless way Ling Lan had broken L15's wrist. A tendril of fear had even risen in his heart when a little of Ling Lan's bloodlust had leaked.

The instructor knew well that Ling Lan's strength was considerable — perhaps not much weaker than his. Thus, he too wanted to fight a match with Ling Lan personally so that he would be able to properly gauge this child's true strength. The Central Scout Academy was known as the focus grounds for aberrant prodigies ... this child, who was clearly the strongest of this batch of prodigies — how strong was he exactly?

Ling Lan's words made all the students bubble over with excitement. Who would have guessed that Ling Lan would challenge the starship's instructor? Everyone knew that the starship's instructor would certainly be one of the strongest few on the ship.

All the spectators self-consciously went silent, eyes trained on the two in the combat area.

Ling Lan and the instructor faced one another from a distance, each at their respective corners. It was as if the fight hadn't begun yet, but all the spectators knew that wasn't true. This was because the demeanours of both combatants were extremely serious, and there was a vague sense of a formless

pressure slowly gathering between them. Even the spectators could feel the pressure pressing down on them mentally, making them back away involuntarily.

Very quickly, the audience in the combat room had stepped back about ten or so metres from the combat area. At that point, only the stronger people on the starship managed to stand their ground; meanwhile, of the academy students, the only ones who could stand in this area were Qi Long and Wu Jiong. Li Yingjie and Luo Lang were one step behind them, while Ye Xu and Lin Zhong-qing were behind Luo Lang and Li Yingjie by a half-step. This, was a reflection of their true strength.

The outermost circle was mostly scout academy students. This made the students grit their teeth, silently determined to train even harder — they definitely could not disgrace their Special Class-A. All of them looked with faces full of hope at Qi Long and the others standing right at the front, and told themselves that one day they would also stand beside them ...

As for Ling Lan standing in the ring ... uh, that wasn't human anymore — they wouldn't try to match an anomaly.

The forces of Ling Lan and the instructor's presences clashed, both trying to suppress the other. The instructor put in all his strength from the start, but found that Ling Lan was standing there like a mountain buffeted by winds <sup>1</sup>, impossible to budge.

The instructor took a deep breath, and knowing that his strength had accumulated till its highest point, it was time for him to strike ...

The spectators were still patiently waiting when suddenly both combatants rushed at each other at the same time, each throwing a punch.

Both punches did not look that heavy, almost seeming somewhat casual. They did not have any of the flourishes of combat stances, but were merely simple punches. One might say they were fast, but they were not that fast either — all the spectators saw were two fists travelling on the same straight line, getting closer and closer to one another, to finally connect.

A loud "BAM"! What seemed like two very casual punches actually created such a deafening sound upon contact. On top of that, the formless energy caused by the backlash from the crashing of fists pushed the spectators back once more. Qi Long, Wu Jiong, and the others were forced to move back another 3 to 4 steps, a heavy weight on their chests, as if they had been struck.

Wu Jiong and Ye Xu exchanged a shocked and doubtful glance, while Li Yingjie's complexion paled. Qi Long and Luo Lang both remained unperturbed, while Lin Zhong-qing's eyes flashed with a fierce light.

Meanwhile, some of the more average starship crew members had even been sent tumbling by this force. This punch of Ling Lan's shocked all the crewmen, and they completely lost any last bit of disdain they had for the students.

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In the captain's room, seeing this scene, Old Lian's expression changed drastically and he choked out, "How can this be, he has actually attained the Qi-Jin stage ..."

The development of physical skills was expressed by six major stages — Foundational, Manifestation, Refinement, Qi-Jin <sup>2</sup>, Domain, and God-Realm. Except for the Foundational and Manifestation stages which had 10 levels, the other 4 stages were a kind of plane. How strong the embodiment of each plane was depended on how well an individual understood the plane.

Meanwhile, the differentiation between the 10 levels of the Foundational and Manifestation stages were in terms of punching power, speed, and reflexes. Once all those attained particular numbers, a bottleneck would form naturally — and if one broke through that bottleneck, one would enter the Refinement stage of physical skills, which was the proof of joining the ranks of the physical skills masters.

So, there was a saying in this world: *Of physical skills, those below Refinement, are all mediocre.*

Generally, in the scout academies, students below the age of 13 would all be in the ranges of the Foundational physical skills stage, while those above 13 were basically all at Manifestation stage.

Of course, very few talented children might be able to enter the Manifestation stage before 13 years old. Qi Long's talent was truly astounding, to already touch the fringes of the Refinement stage. All he needed was to break through his bottleneck to enter it officially.

Thus, the fact that Ling Lan had managed to enter the Qi-Jin stage at this age caused even the steady and experienced Old Lian to be gobsmacked, his expression filled with disbelief ...

In truth, Cheng Yuanhang had also been shocked by Ling Lan's display of strength. He had known that Ling Lan was very strong, but he had never imagined he was *this* strong.

Of course, this was also Ling Lan's fault for not displaying her strength before this. Every time she was matched up against Qi Long or Luo Lang, she would just forfeit and end the match. And then, her previous matches were all one-move events, which did not really allow anyone to figure out her real strength. But today's match finally let him know why Ling Lan refused to fight during regular combat practice. Within the Central Scout Academy, other than those last few aberrants in the upper grades that may be able to put up a fight against him, if Ling Lan fought with any other student, it would definitely just be one-sided bullying.

Shaken from his thoughts by Old Lian's words, Cheng Yuanhang put a confident look on his face and said stubbornly, "Why can't it be? In our Central Scout Academy, prodigies are everywhere."

Old Lian glared at him angrily, "If you have that many prodigies, why don't you send some our way?" The new soldiers dispatched to them every time were all the extremely mediocre type.

Cheng Yuanhang shrugged and said helplessly, "You know as well that I'm just responsible for cultivating them. The ones in charge of dispatching them are your upper ranks of the military ... Besides, those crazily talented prodigies would first be taken away by the military schools ... and once they come out from there, they're all junior officers. Can your starship hold them?" In the end, Old Lian's starship was really too low in level ...

At these words, Old Lian sighed heavily. Indeed, covert teams like theirs which existed in the grey areas ... really didn't have any way to possess those prodigies with their endlessly bright futures before them.

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In the combat area, Ling Lan could sense from where their fists met that the opponent's strength was waning, and knew that the other was at the end of his rope. A thought flashed through her mind, and she started to pull back her strength, matching the other's as it decreased. In the end, the two of them were pushed back by the rebound of their respective strengths, falling a few steps back.

The two of them separated once more, and once again faced one another from a distance of several metres, as if waiting for the next move to begin.

Unexpectedly, the instructor actually closed his eyes, as if reflecting on the feelings he had received from the previous move. But very quickly, he opened his eyes again, and holding back his emotions, he said, "What is your name?"

"Ling Lan!" Although Ling Lan's expression was blank, perpetuating her image of a slackface, her brows could be seen to lift slightly, showing that she was in a great mood.

"Thank you, I'll remember this kindness. Also, this match is my loss," said the instructor loudly, and he nodded to Ling Lan. Winning or losing wasn't the point here — the main point was that he had learned something from this encounter.

### **Chapter 138: The Mysterious Planet!**

Ling Lan gave an exemplary scout's salute and then turned to walk back to rejoin the other students. To their confused faces, she said, "The spars are over. Let's go back."

The Class-A students glanced at one another, uncertain whether Ling Lan had won or lost this match. Although the starship's instructor had said it was his loss, it wasn't obvious at all from the scene before them. Furthermore, Ling Lan also wasn't displaying any signs of happiness or excitement. Could it be that this was just the instructor being modest to leave some face for the students?

"What are you thinking? We still have far to go. We need to work hard once we get back." Ling Lan's words enlightened the Class-A students — looks like the opponent had really left some face for them.

Under Ling Lan's lead, the Class-A scouts gradually trickled out of the combat room, while the crew members began to gather around the instructor.

Some of the stronger crew members still had shocked expressions on their faces, still unable to believe that a child was able to match up to their instructor in terms of strength. Of course, there were also some weaker crew members who were indignant, and they broke the cold atmosphere to ask, "Sir, why didn't you teach the other a proper lesson? Why still give him face? He injured our L15!"

"Give face? Yes, face was given ... but it was he who gave me face." The instructor's expression was dark, and he laughed coldly and said, "What a bunch of blind idiots. All of you — go into isolation for a day!" Even though he did not mind losing, it still did not feel great to have it constantly brought up by others.

The instructor's punishment caused all the present crew members to wail in misery. In particular, those crewmen who had not said anything at all felt like they had been caught in the backlash for no good reason — they could only send fierce dagger-glances at those few idiots who had spoken, but did not dare

to object. This was because they understood the instructor well; he was a man that meant exactly what he said. If anyone dared to beg for mercy, the punishment would just be doubled.

The crew members automatically headed towards the designated isolation rooms of the starship. Seeing the instructor following closely behind them, one of the crew members said fawningly, "Sir, you don't have to monitor us. We will go to the isolation rooms on our own."

"I'm not monitoring you all. Rather, I'm also going into isolation for seven days," replied the instructor coldly.

"Whatever for?" exclaimed the crewman, shocked.

"If one does something wrong, one must accept the punishment. The same goes for myself." Leaving this statement behind, the instructor entered an isolation room. The crew members looked at one another in confusion, unsure what exactly the instructor had done wrong ...

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When the instructor reappeared once more, the calm indifference on his face let everyone know that the instructor's strength had increased again. The initially exposed sharp edges of his power had now been sheathed, becoming almost undetectable. If he did not move to attack, it would be very easy to overlook his existence.

That's right, after isolating himself for seven days, the instructor finally progressed from the middle stage of Qi-Jin to the late stage of Qi-Jin. As for whether he would be able to enter the peak stage of Qi-Jin, or even complete the entire Qi-Jin stage, well, that depended on fate and chance, on whether there was the possibility of obtaining sudden insight.

Old Lian had once asked the instructor how he had attained a breakthrough this time. It should be known that after entering the Refinement stage, every increase in ability required a certain degree of chance and lucky coincidence. The instructor replied that this was due to that sparring match between him and Ling Lan. The force of the other's presence had let his initially stabilized plane to once again sense the possibility of a breakthrough. This was an opportunity for him, and luckily, he caught it.

There was one thing the instructor did not say, however, and that was that he suspected that, in this fight, Ling Lan had given him this helpful push on purpose. If that were true, Ling Lan's strength was very likely already at the later stages of Qi-Jin. The instructor did not dare to dwell on the idea, otherwise he would start to think that them adults were all idiotic, actually unable to match up to a 10 year old child. Thus, he buried this notion deep within his inner mind.

Still, regardless of whether Ling Lan had done it on purpose or if it was an accident, he would inscribe this kind favour onto his heart.

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The sparring matches this time broke the ice between the scouts and the crew of the starship. At times, when either party had some grievance to air, they might argue verbally, and if one side found themselves losing and wanted to settle the matter with a fist fight, naturally no one would object. In this manner, by and by, the relationship between the two sides actually got better and better. Among the

crew, aside from the small few who were especially petty, the majority of the men now viewed the scouts with affection and care.

Qi Long, in particular, often sought out the team leader of the Golden Scales Team, L13, for a fight. Every one of their fights was loud and vigorous — at first, some of the crew and the scouts would still cheer for their own companion, but they soon learned to ignore them. This was because these two people were the type to seek torment in their fights. They were never concerned with winning or losing, but only wanted to fight till their muscles were sore and their strength was depleted, only crawling out of the combat room with difficulty after their bodies were covered in bruises and other injuries.

Both sides quickly got used to the self-tormenting fighting style of the two, and so in the end, no one was interested in cheering them on anymore.

Still, self-destructive though the two may be, the effects of their fights were pretty good. Ling Lan could clearly sense that Qi Long's combat ability was gaining more and more of the presence of the Refinement stage — his breakthrough was within reach, all that was needed now was a catalyst.

Meanwhile, the time L13 spent sparring with Qi Long wasn't just fruitless work on his end — in contrast to Qi Long who was still looking for a catalyst to break through, L13, who had just entered the Refinement stage, used these spars to settle fully into the plane of Refinement, no longer stuck in a 'fake' Refinement stage as he had been before the spars.

Ling Lan naturally knew that there was one person on the starship who hated her deeply, and that was the one who had had his wrist broken by her, L15. Ling Lan was a cautious person, so she made Little Four monitor the other around-the-clock. Through this, Little Four unexpectedly found that L15 did not really trust L13 very much. When he found out that L13's strength had increased, the flashes of envy-jealousy-hate in his eyes when no one was looking revealed his true feelings. Although these flashes were mostly just present for an instant — L15 quickly reverting to his default bashful and harmless appearance, face filled with well-wishes — how could they escape the being known as Little Four? An ultimate cheating device capable of comprehensive 360 degrees monitoring with no blind spots — no one would be able to evade his eyes unless Little Four himself chose to neglect this person.

When Little Four told Ling Lan about his discovery, Ling Lan sighed deeply once more. As expected, those who liked to smile were all nothing good — their bellies full of 'bad water' <sup>1</sup>, they were truly detestable. This further cemented Ling Lan's distrust of those who smiled all the time, those who were courteous in all respects with great popularity, who gave others an impression of being a good guy. Ling Lan felt that these types of people were definitely hiding something behind their smiles, so she needed to be extremely careful when dealing with them.

In this way, a week of raucous bickering and fighting passed. Although L15's heart still held all kinds of jealousy and hate, seeing that he now had no way to target Ling Lan and the others, he could only behave, not doing anything stupid to try and harm them.

This week, after going through several spatial leaps, the starship arrived safely at their destination, a primitive planet they told outsiders was a wild and untamed planet.

After the final spatial leap, the communicators of Ling Lan and the other's had lost their locative functions. According to the starship's notification, this was because this area was one with magnetic

interference, so all the locative systems on the communicators would be affected and lose their functionality. However, there was a much more advanced navigation system on board the starship, so they did not have to worry about completely losing their way.

Of course, Ling Lan knew very well that the starship's crew were lying, because Little Four told her that they had already entered an unknown planetary sector, an unlabelled location on the Federation star maps.

"As expected, a secret location. The planet we're going to is probably not as simple as we imagine it to be." Ling Lan quietly raised her guard.

The starship entered the atmospheric layer of the primitive planet. Due to the starship's alert, Ling Lan and the others were already seated with their seatbelts buckled.

The starship shuddered violently for about 10 minutes or so before finally stabilizing. Ling Lan knew then that they had successfully penetrated the planet's atmosphere, and would soon land. Sure enough, after just a short while, the starship notified them to gather their things and disembark.

Ling Lan and the others put on their backpacks and grabbed their luggage. The moment they stepped out of the ship's doors, they were stunned by the scenery before them. This was because they found that right under their feet was a small city. It turned out that the starship had parked directly on a mountain peak right in the middle of a small city. The Federation had used some advanced technological method to cut this mountain at its waist, creating a large platform of several hundred thousand square units<sup>2</sup>, which provided plenty of space for the starship to land securely.

On the platform, many soldiers dressed in military uniform were directing the scouts off the ship and getting them into lines to ride the mountain top's cable car down to the city at the foot of the mountain.

When they arrived at the foot of the mountain, Ling Lan could finally see what the city looked like. The small city was extremely crude and simple. The houses were short and squat, appearing very much like the military barracks of Ling Lan's previous world. The strangest thing was that the outermost circle was not a thick and sturdy wall, but was instead an extremely tall railing made out of vertically erect posts. Was it because there was no danger here? Was that why they decided to put up a circle of posts just as a show of defense?

At the foot of the mountain, there were also soldiers to welcome them, who then brought the 50 students to an emptied camping ground. Right then, several thundering cracks sounded from not too far off, and when Ling Lan and the others turned to look, they saw a savage beast the size of an elephant stampeding towards them.

Ling Lan swiftly put down her backpack and pushed her hand into one of the bag's outer pockets to grab hold of her superior alloy short blades. The moment danger was upon them, she would be able to kill the beast immediately with the sharp blades. Meanwhile, Qi Long, Wu Jiong, Li Yingjie, Luo Lang, and Ye Xu were only a step behind Ling Lan in reacting. Almost simultaneously, they all got ready for battle. Perhaps due to Ling Lan and the others calm handling of the situation, the other students also did not panic even though their reactions were slower. Several seconds later, they were all ready to fight.

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The senior officer of the military camp was observing them silently. Seeing their response he nodded in satisfaction. "The scouts this time round are much better than those from last year. Their mental fortitude are all not bad! Especially those who reacted the fastest. They aren't much worse than the soldiers under us here."

The civil officer that looked like an advisor standing beside him said smilingly, "According to the captain of the *Fei Qiong*<sup>3</sup>, these scouts are all pretty good, with some even being abnormal prodigies."

"Don't listen to that fellow's bullshit. In his eyes, anyone with a little bit of talent are all abnormal prodigies. His judgement is really quite terrible," sneered the senior officer.

When the advisor heard what his superior said, he just smiled and stopped commenting. In truth, he had felt that the captain of the *Fei Qiong* seemed different than usual when he was saying this. Something had been off about him, and his eyes had contained a kind of envy-jealousy-hate within them ...

Still, since his superior didn't like this topic, then he wouldn't speak anymore on it to avoid displeasing his superior. Who asked his superior to be at odds with the captain of the *Fei Qiong* ?

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Meanwhile, at this time, on the *Fei Qiong* which had already departed, Old Lian cackled evilly to himself. "Shi Yunfei, this old man just won't tell you how great these kids truly are. Whether or not you find that abnormal prodigy will all depend on your luck." He had no interest in helping an old foe increase his sect's strength.

### **Chapter 139: To Withdraw or to Remain?**

The savage beast slammed into the railing, and just when everyone thought the railing was certain to break, what actually happened stunned them. Unexpectedly, the seemingly flimsy railing was actually very sturdy, and was even equipped with terrifying electrical power. When the beast crashed into the railing, the railing emitted a piercing zapping sound, sparking off arcs of electricity. Very quickly, the wild beast had been electrocuted into a pile of ash, falling onto the ground right outside the railing.

Only then did Ling Lan notice that there were many similar piles of ashes right outside the railing — looks like there were quite a number of wild beasts besides this one before them which committed suicide in this manner.

Han Jiyun couldn't help but exclaim, "An electric barrier fence!"

This cry caused expressions of realisation to dawn on the scouts' faces; only electric barrier fences would have such power.

It looked like the wild beasts on this planet were really not that simple, otherwise there would be no need to use the Federation's strongest protective measure. Ling Lan was not the only one to realise this. Many of the other students also thought of this, and their faces started to reveal traces of anxiety. They could already sense that the hunting course this time would not be as straightforward as they had imagined it to be.



“All students of the Central Scout Academy ...” At this moment, a clarion voice was transmitted into the ears of all the students. “Welcome, everyone, to ‘planet Wild and Savage’<sup>1</sup>. This time, you 50 students will be having your hunting course here. I sincerely hope that all of you will be able to complete this course ... but even before completing the course, my biggest hope is that every one of you will be able to survive the hunt!”

This speech made the students anxious and doubtful. They did not know why a simple hunting course would involve their lives.

“You did not hear wrongly. This course may very well cost you your lives, because the wild beasts you will be facing won’t be those tame animals you are used to. Instead, you will be facing beasts of a minimum level of H-class.”

When the students heard that the lowest level they would be hunting would be H-class beasts, there was an instant uproar, and disbelief was written all over their faces.

The Federation had once announced to the public that there were all kinds of fierce beasts in the universe. Beasts below J-class were still within controllable range — in other words, the damage they could cause was not significant. But from J-class onwards, the beasts left the category of wild beasts and went straight into savage beast level. Of course, J-class beasts were still the weakest of the savage beasts — their strength was roughly at the level of Foundational combat stage level 2 to 3. Anyone with combat talent who had learned combat arts for three to four years would be able to handle them.

However, starting from I-class, it was different. The strength of the savage beasts then approached the Foundational combat stage levels 5 and 6. H-class monsters were even at Foundational combat stage levels 8 to 9; in other words, they were already half a step in the Manifestation stage.

Meanwhile, the students were mostly all at Foundational stage level 8 to 9, with only a few at the Manifestation stage. Against these H-class monsters, they would have no advantage whatsoever.

The students were bewildered by this — could this kind of situation still be considered a hunting class? This was basically asking them to gamble with their lives! Moreover, this was still only talking about the lowest class of monster here. If they were unlucky, they might even bump into a G-class, or perhaps even one of a higher level ... wouldn’t it be over for them then?

Right then, that clarion voice once again rang out by the students’ ears, “Whether or not to continue with the course, the choice is up to you. There’s still time for you to quit now. On your right hand side is the place to register to drop out. Now, you all have 3 minutes to choose ...”

At that moment, to the right of Ling Lan and the other students, a soldier with an A.I. in one arm waved a hand at them, signalling for those who wanted to drop out to come find him.

This sudden choice caused the scouts to fall into indecision and uncertainty, unsure what they should do.

At this time, Wu Jiong pulled Ye Xu over to go towards Ling Lan to discuss the matter. To one side, Li Yingjie’s gaze wavered for a moment, but then, with a clench of his teeth, he followed them.

“Ling Lan, what do you think?” asked Wu Jiong.

Ling Lan was rather surprised. She had never thought that Wu Jiong would come and ask for her opinion. Still, despite her surprise, she told Wu Jiong her decision honestly, "Continue with the course."

"Are you not afraid of the danger?" asked Wu Jiong. Then, feeling as if his words were not enough to convey what he meant, he added, "I'm talking about your team members." That day, Ling Lan's spar with the instructor had let Wu Jiong know that Ling Lan's strength was just too far beyond them — perhaps this hunt would be no danger at all for him, but the same could not be said for Han Jijun, Lin Zhong-qing and the others on his team ...

"Indeed, the hunt this time is very dangerous. It's very likely that what they said may happen. But this danger brings opportunity with it, as well as an increase of strength ..." Ling Lan stopped here, turning to look at Qi Long and the others beside her, before continuing, "I also believe that Qi Long and the others will protect themselves well, and then become even stronger, finding the opportunities that belong to them."

That said, Ling Lan nodded solemnly and said, "They are just that strong!"

This last statement was said forcefully, with conviction, showing that Ling Lan's confidence in Qi Long and the others was absolute.

This statement also drew the brilliant smiles of Qi Long and the others, a sign of how touched they were by it. In that instant, their hearts pulsed with the intense emotions of being understood and accepted ... Ling Lan's trust caused their initially unsteady hearts to settle immediately.

Wu Jiong cast a long look at Ling Lan, and then nodded and said, "That's true. Although the hunt this time is very dangerous, it is also a chance for us. Of course we can't give up this course."

Ling Lan nodded at Wu Jiong's words, saying nothing more. After hearing what Ling Lan and Wu Jiong had to say, Li Yingjie's initial doubts also disappeared. He told himself that he definitely could not lose to Ling Lan, Wu Jiong, and the others. What they could do, he could do too.

No one knew that Wu Jiong was actually a little disappointed at this point. He had questioned Ling Lan with an ulterior motive — he had hoped that Ling Lan would respond in an uncaring manner so that Qi Long and the others would begin to harbour a grudge in their hearts against him. He had not expected Ling Lan's response to make Qi Long and the others even more loyal to Ling Lan instead.

At this point, he knew that trying to get Qi Long and the others to leave Ling Lan and work with him instead was no longer a possibility. This also meant that his chances of overcoming Ling Lan were almost nil.

Yes, ever since the first year, Wu Jiong had never thought of admitting defeat. He had always wanted to beat Ling Lan. When he saw that beating Ling Lan on his own was not a feasible path, he had then chosen to challenge him with a team. He shifted his goal to the seventh grade, when they turned 13 and would challenge the virtual network barrier.

However, Ling Lan's team was also very strong, possessing the two combat talents Qi Long and Luo Lang. Still, Wu Jiong was not discouraged. He did not think that Qi Long and the others were really completely loyal to Ling Lan. Qi Long, especially, had always been the top rank of their class — was he really content to just be a puppet in Ling Lan's hands?

Thus, this time, he had specially asked a trick question. If Ling Lan had expressed blithe unconcern for his team members, he would be able to leverage this to spark Qi Long's dissatisfaction and cause the dissolution of Ling Lan's team. (When necessary, a team's member may choose to build their own team, and then the other members may choose once again whether to follow this member or the original leader, prompting a reorganization of the team. This was a failsafe to handle unresolvable conflicts within a team.)

But the final outcome disappointed him. The friendship among Ling Lan's team was truly like steel. Everyone knew their positions well, and there was no sign of the dissatisfaction he had thought there would be.

Frankly, Wu Jiong would think this way because he did not understand the position Ling Lan held in Qi Long and the others' hearts. The one who admired Ling Lan the most in Ling Lan's team was no other than Qi Long himself. It should be said that Ling Lan counted as half an instructor to Qi Long. Many times, when Qi Long encountered any difficulties in his combat skills, Ling Lan was the one who would enlighten him. Thus, Qi Long might not submit to others, but he would definitely submit to Ling Lan.

Meanwhile, Luo Lang had always been nipping at Qi Long's heels. He and Qi Long could actually be considered rivals. Whenever Qi Long was stuck, he was also stuck, and when Qi Long improved, he would also improve accordingly. If Ling Lan was half an instructor to Qi Long, then she was also half an instructor to Luo Lang. Therefore, Luo Lang had never considered leaving Ling Lan. His only hope was to one day step over Qi Long to become Ling Lan's number one follower. (Little Four jumped out indignantly here. Dammit, Boss's number one follower is meeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee ... (the subsequent several hundred thousand 'e's have been removed) ← unidentified entity found to have trespassed, please ignore.)

The one who had always harboured doubts towards Ling Lan was instead the inconspicuous Han Jijyun. Having just average combat ability in the class, he really liked using his brain to solve problems. Thus, he would not be convinced by those who were all brawn and no brain — no matter how strong they became, under certain creative strategies, he could still cause them to lose terribly. Later on, only after finding out that Ling Lan was actually very black-bellied himself (a large part of the credit here goes to Little Four; Ling Lan really wasn't as complicated as Han Jijyun thought her to be), did Han Jijyun become truly convinced and recognized Ling Lan as his boss.

As for Lin Zhong-qing, who entered the team last, he had pretty much sold himself to the team to become a member. Before gaining Ling Lan's full acknowledgement, all he was thinking about now was how to obtain Boss's sincere acceptance, so the notion of leaving Ling Lan had never even crossed his mind ...

The three teams of Class-A simultaneously decided to continue with the course. Seeing this, the other students who had still been hesitating all said they would remain as well.

In fact, Ling Lan was the one who gave them the courage to remain. On the starship, Ling Lan's even fight with the instructor made them believe that as long as it wasn't a monster above G-class, Ling Lan should be able to defeat the beasts with no problem.

Although Ling Lan treated others coldly and his icy slackface did not seem very friendly, they believed that at critical moments, Ling Lan would definitely offer assistance.

The three minutes were soon up, and seeing that none of the students had chosen to leave, the senior officer was very pleased. "This group of brats are pretty good. Their wills are strong, unlike those from the last few years, which always had a few who chose to leave ... in that case, we need to avoid any carelessness and stay alert. We really can't let anything bad happen to them <sup>2</sup>."

"Don't worry, Sir! Our ace mecha squad is already fully prepared. Whenever the scouts are out hunting, they will be secretly protecting them from the skies. They'll definitely not let anything go wrong with the children," said the advisor with a smile.

#### **Chapter 140: Hunting Preparations!**

"That's good then. They are the best batch of this year's talents at the Central Scout Academy. Although it's too early to tell whether there are any aberrant prodigies among them right now, no matter what, they are the treasures of our Federation. We mustn't lose any of them." The senior officer's expression was serious. Every time these children came here, the pressure on him was unbelievably heavy — if any one of them died in an accident while hunting, it wouldn't end well for him.

After some thought, he still felt insecure, so the senior officer added this command, "Let the special-ops team on the ground follow them as well, to ensure protection from both the air and land."

"Roger that, Sir, I'll arrange it immediately!" responded the adviser. He then hurried to pass down this newest command so that the special-ops team could prepare to set out immediately.

Meanwhile, in the camping grounds, that clarion voice rang out once more, "Next, the students who hear their names, please come up to retrieve your chip, as well as your combat uniform and firearm."

With that, a troop of soldiers brought out a whole bunch of things in front of them, and began calling out their names one by one. Everyone went up to the registration point to collect the items mentioned, Ling Lan and the others included.

The chips would be their identity cards in this military camp. Credits that could only be used inside the camp could be saved within them, and could be used to buy things in the camp. Other than free accommodation, everything else in the military camp needed to be purchased using these credits. In other words, to live more comfortably, they would need to find a way to earn these credits — and hunting was just one of the ways. This was just another way of telling the students that only the strong had the right to live a better life — the principle of survival of the fittest being emphasized here once again.

Ling Lan followed the usage methods of the chip and inserted it into the communicator on her wrist. Then, she saw the previous system of the communicator being shut down, and the new system was activated. On the chip, there was no name, just a number. Ling Lan's number was 017717. She peeked at Qi Long beside her, and saw that his number was 017709. It looked like these numbers were just randomly assigned by the computer to each of their 50 classmates, with no underlying pattern to be found.

The chips were preloaded with 1000 credits. This surprised Ling Lan, who had thought that there would be nothing inside. Unexpectedly, the camp was giving them some time to adjust, not being as merciless

as she had assumed they would be. As long as they found a way to earn credits before these 1000 credits were used up, then they would be able to survive within this camp successfully.

Considering the fact that they were here for a hunting course, then it was likely that the beasts they hunted could be exchanged for credits. The only question was how much. Of course, Ling Lan was sure there were other exchange methods as well; she just didn't know them yet. Still, Ling Lan wasn't anxious. After all, they would be staying here for no less than 3 months, perhaps even longer, so there would be plenty of time for her to slowly figure everything out.

Ling Lan put on her combat uniform. The clothes fit her almost perfectly — the academy had probably sent their data over to the military beforehand so they would be able to get the correct sizes for the children.

After obtaining these items, the originally anxious students felt a little more secure. The combat uniforms had a certain degree of defensive ability, able to withstand two or three attacks from an H-class savage beast, which would give the students a little more to bank on when protecting themselves. Meanwhile, the firearms provided were all beam handguns, only meant for defence. The firearms were there just in case the students found themselves surrounded by savage beasts and needed the firepower to blast a bloody trail through the beasts to escape ...

The hunting course required them to use cold weapons with their own hands to kill the savage beasts. This was also why Ling Lan had brought two high-efficiency alloy blades. Ling Lan could handle the short blade type of cold weapons well with both hands; in particular, her right hand was so proficient with them that it could be said that it was godlike. However, Ling Lan's left hand was actually most proficient with the tri-edge trench knife. But since almost no one in this era knew how to use the tri-edge trench knife, Ling Lan had no choice but to shelve it for now, otherwise she would not be able to explain how she had learned how to use it.

Ling Lan placed one of the high-efficiency alloy short blades into the outer pocket of her combat uniform by her hip. The other she stuffed into the back of her belt. The one on her belt was prepared for her left hand. In a critical moment, she would be able to draw out the blade in time to hack at a savage beast.

From the start, Ling Lan had been a dual-wielding combatant — she had just projected the appearance of being a right-handed fighter to the outside world to hide her true strength.

After finishing her preparations, Ling Lan took a look around. She saw that the expressions on the students' faces were casual and relaxed after changing into their combat uniforms, and could not help but frown.

It was true that the combat uniforms could withstand two or three attacks from an H-class savage beast — however, this just meant that the other's attack would not break the combat uniform, the force behind the attack would still not be completely negated. 3 to 4 layers of the power behind the attack would still be conveyed to the body, so if the body was not strong enough, the victim would still have their bones broken or incur some internal damage from the force of the attack. Therefore, they could not relax just because they had the uniforms.

In Ling Lan's opinion, they should avoid being hit if they could help it. Otherwise, each hit would bring either death or injury.

Ling Lan gave a serious warning to Qi Long and the others, dousing their excitement from obtaining the combat uniforms. Their expressions turned grim instantly, knowing that they had relaxed too soon. It was just as Ling Lan cautioned — even though the combat uniforms would increase their chances of survival, that did not mean it was foolproof. Everything still depended on their own capability to work hard and survive this cruel hunting exercise.

Once everyone was ready, Ling Lan raised her head to glance at the sun. Even after half a day, it had not shifted in position, still hanging high up in the sky.

Ling Lan found a soldier on duty in the camp and asked him about the planet, and found out that the switch between day and night here was different from that of the star system they lived in. A day here consisted of 120 hours, and the nights were just as long. The watch soldier also told Ling Lan that the mass of this primitive planet was just too large, which was why one self-rotation required that much time.

As for how they decided when to eat or sleep, the decision was up to them. After all, every person had different adaptability, and the rest time they needed varied as well.

Ling Lan then asked about the departure time for the hunt, and was told that a car would bring them to the hunting grounds from the campsite in an hour. As such, Ling Lan decided to first go and fill up her belly, lest she have no strength to hunt later due to hunger.

She also asked about the food matters of the students, and learned that there was a special large canteen set up to provide meals for the campground staff. There, one could eat whenever they wanted, though the food needed to be purchased with credits.

Ling Lan did not continue to inquire further after that. Instead, she led Qi Long and the others straight to the canteen. Wu Jiong's team, which had been keeping an eye out on her movements, knew what she was planning, and decided to follow her lead.

The two teams ate a meal of the simplest and cheapest fast food, which costed them 50 credits each. Ling Lan noticed then that the camp really was not giving them much time to prepare at all — if they could not find a way to earn money after three days, they would not be able to afford any more food ...

While they ate, Han Jijun suggested that they first head to the credit exchange area to learn how they could earn more credits. He felt that they needed to learn the trading methods here before they went hunting, especially with regards to the exchange rates for the beasts. They wouldn't want to kill a savage beast after much difficulty just to find out that it wasn't worth much credits ... that would be such a waste.

Ling Lan agreed that that was wise. So, everyone sped up to finish their meal, cleaning their bowls out within a few minutes. Then, they hurried to the credit exchange point to inquire about the various ways to trade for credits. There, they found that only the path of hunting had been left for the students.

It looked like the camp was worried that the students might put too much priority on surviving that they would forget the main purpose of their trip. Thus, they might as well fix the credit exchange method of the students from the start. Fortunately, the items they would be able to get from most of the savage beasts were all worth quite a lot — as long as they caught something every day, they definitely would not starve.

Ling Lan then spent another hundred credits to buy a copy of this planet's catalogue of savage beasts, saving it into her communicator.

Although Ling Lan's heart ached a little at the loss of this 100 credits, she felt that it was money well spent, because the data on the savage beasts on the catalogue was very comprehensive. Their physical characteristics, attack methods, strengths and weaknesses, and even their skills were detailed very clearly. Besides that, the catalogue also contained a detailed listing of the exchange prices of all the different parts of the various savage beasts. This way, they would be able to target the more valuable savage beasts when hunting, gaining much more for the same amount of effort.

After preparing all this, Ling Lan then brought her team back to the assembly point for the students. As Wu Jiong's followers had not known what Ling Lan's group was planning, they had eaten at a slower pace. By the time they finished their meal and got out, they had already lost sight of Ling Lan's team, and so could only slink back sullenly to the assembly point. Thus, they were already there before Ling Lan's team.

Not long after, a stout officer led a squad over to them. Looking at the little bean sprouts in front of him, he chuckled and said, "Hi, darling brats! I'm your leader for the activity this time. Please call me 'leader'."

Seeing the scouts' attention all on him, he continued, "Later, I will be taking you all to the hunting grounds. Remember, listen to my commands. Don't act on your own, or else don't blame me for not warning you when you die."

The officer's words caused the students' hearts to leap up into their throats once again.

"Also, do you all have any teams? Team leaders, raise your hands," asked the officer.

Among the students, six hands, including Ling Lan's, were raised. The officer's brows creased. He had not expected there to be so few teams in this term's batch of students. Initially, he had thought that in teams, the students would be able to coordinate and work together better, increasing the safety of the hunt. However, the current situation was not as good as he had hoped.

Helplessly, he raised his right hand and shouted, "Those with teams, leaders, bring your team members over here to my right hand side. Team leaders stand first in line, all teams in a row."

Very quickly, Ling Lan and the others had lined up by the officer's side. Qi Long stood in for Ling Lan as the leader at the front. Just like that, the six teams made six lines, and it became clear that Ling Lan's team was the one with the most members, five people. Meanwhile, the other teams had either four or three people, with one team even having only two.