

Crossing 251

Chapter 251: The 4th Form of One-Inch Punch!

Qi Long sensed the shift in Ling Lan's aura, and could not help but worry for Luo Lang — could it be that Boss had truly become furious because of Luo Lang's disobedience?

Right then, Ling Lan asked Qi Long in a low voice, "Can you tell what personality he managed to activate?"

Ling Lan hoped the personality Luo Lang activated was not one which was brutal, bloodthirsty, and uncontrollable. Otherwise, she would have to forfeit to protect Luo Lang — the military academy would never permit an uncontrollable loose cannon who could not differentiate friend from foe to continue studying at the school and eventually enter an army division.

Qi Long peered closely at Luo Lang and then shook his head, puzzled. "Strange. This personality has never appeared before. I cannot sense any intense malicious intent, but my innate talent is warning me that I must be careful."

Ling Lan frowned at his words. She carefully studied Luo Lang's expression — there was no sign of bloodthirst, nor was there any sort of extreme ruthlessness. The current Luo Lang just seemed endlessly cold, but this coldness did not encompass everyone, merely directed solely at his opponent.

Weighing things in her mind, Ling Lan decided and said, "Let's continue watching."

Ling Lan too wanted to know what personality this was that Luo Lang had activated. As long as Luo Lang did not lose control, Ling Lan did not want to cut the match short. This was because she knew that, since Luo Lang had thrown caution to the wind to activate his innate talent, he must really not want to lose to this opponent who had insulted him. As their boss, Ling Lan wanted to help Luo Lang achieve what he wanted to do.

Seated beside them, Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie did not know the struggles of Qi Long and Ling Lan. Right now, their attention was fully absorbed by the stage. They had even stood up in their excitement, as Luo Lang had currently taken full control of the scene.

With one hand, Luo Lang gripped Qi Ya's ankle. All the spectators knew that the power behind that kick was extremely formidable — handling it with one hand must definitely be challenging. However, Luo Lang seemed to do so easily — he did not even take a single step back due to the opponent's strength, appearing cool and unruffled.

Luo Lang could be seen to slowly lift his head. The red flush on his face from before was gone and his complexion had already regained its usual fairness, becoming unbelievably cool. Both his irises were a deep black, like pools of dead water, so deep and unfathomable that Qi Ya, being pinned by them in close range, felt a chill permeate his heart.

"I've told you before, to shut up," said Luo Lang calmly, "What a shame you would not listen ..." As he spoke, Luo Lang raised his right hand and swept it in a fierce chop down at the

opponent's shank¹ gripped in his other hand. Based off the speed and force that he was applying, if the strike connected, the bones of the shank would certainly break.

Qi Ya's pupils shrunk in fear, the warning bells in his mind ringing — he shook his right leg desperately, trying to regain the freedom of his leg. But Luo Lang's left hand was like a vise; he could not struggle free anytime soon.

Qi Ya naturally would not just do nothing and resign himself to his fate — he sprang up from the ground with his other foot, and executing a half-flip in the air, he swung his left leg, which had initially been supporting his weight, out in a fierce kick towards the side of Luo Lang's neck.

In order to protect his right shank, Qi Ya was revealing the brutal side of his nature. He no longer held back, beginning to target Luo Lang's vital points.

Everyone exclaimed in shock at the sight, sucking in a cold breath. Quite a few freshmen even stood up in horror, concerned for Luo Lang on the stage. If the opponent's kick landed, Luo Lang's fragile neck area would certainly be snapped, killing him instantly. There would be no chance at all for rescue and recovery. In an arena battle within the military academy, these vital points were off-limits. Without question, Qi Ya had broken the academy rules.

Seeing this, a cold gleam flashed through Tang Yu's eyes. He was just about to take action, when he saw Luo Lang calmly change the attack trajectory of his right hand, to directly meet the other's kick. Thus, Tang Yu paused, but he still made preparations to act. However, right then, Colonel Tang Yu had drawn a huge 'X' in his heart over Qi Ya — this kind of person who would be so ruthless against a comrade, he would never give him a chance to go to those elite ace military troops ...

With an audible 'pow', Luo Lang's palm struck the opponent's other ankle, and Qi Ya felt a snap. Following that, an intense pain radiated from Qi Ya's foot to his heart, and he could not help but yell, "Argh!"

The collision of the two forces naturally produced a tremendous rebound force. Qi Ya was thrown back forcefully, and due to the intense pain he was in, he actually did not manage to land soundly. His entire body was flung out to crash heavily onto the stage, where he then slid across the ground, leaving a faint mark in his trail.

Meanwhile, Luo Lang had to take several steps back before finding his footing. However, his right hand hung limply by his side. From the swinging motion it was making, it was clear to see that Luo Lang's right hand had most likely been broken by the rebound force in meeting the other's kick earlier.

Looking at Qi Ya cradling his ankle on the ground, his expression a rictus of pain, and contrasting it with Luo Lang on the other side, who also had a broken bone, but sported a cold and unfeeling expression ... it was clear to see which was superior. The freshmen were naturally unconditionally on Luo Lang's side, while some of the seniors could not help but frown as well at this time. They looked down on Qi Ya for losing the face of the seniors, and silent admiration for Luo Lang began to grow in their minds. This delicate looking youth was actually a tough character.

Colonel Tang Yu walked over to Qi Ya's side expressionlessly and asked, "Cadet Qi Ya, can you still fight? If you cannot, I will announce the victor for this match."

Both sides were similarly injured, but it never even crossed Colonel Tang Yu's mind to ask this question of Luo Lang. This was because he believed that, as long as that fellow Luo Lang had breath left in his lungs, he would definitely continue fighting. This was how a qualified military man should behave. Compared to Luo Lang, this 5th year Qi Ya was just too much of a wimp.

Qi Ya felt as if there was a drill boring into his right ankle — the pain was truly unbearable. Without saying a word, Qi Ya knew the other must have applied some hidden move on his ankle, and the hate for Luo Lang in his heart just grew even more. Right then, hearing the referee Tang Yu ask this, how could he voluntarily admit defeat? Holding back the pain, he replied, "I can fight!"

That said, Qi Ya slowly climbed off the ground. This scene was greeted by the applause of the spectating students. Even though Qi Ya had truly performed terribly before this, at this very moment, he was undoubtedly acting as a qualified cadet should; this gained him the acknowledgement of a portion of the students.

At this scene, Qi Long could not help but snicker softly. He said quietly to Ling Lan, "Boss, looks like that punk Luo Lang has secretly used a mean move." He stroked his jaw and wondered, "Which move did he use? The 3rd form of One-Inch Punch?"

Ling Lan instantly responded, "No, it's the 4th form."

"Huh? When has there been such a move?" Qi Long was stupefied. How did he not know about this?

"The One-Inch Punch is the Luo family's ultimate arts. Of course it'll have some ace in the holes," answered Ling Lan.

The instructors within the learning space had already developed the One-Inch Punch up till the 9th form. Ling Lan's team had already mastered all the forms up to the 3rd form, but since the One-Inch Punch series had originated from the inherited ultimate arts of Luo Lang's family, Ling Lan had specially taught the 4th form to Luo Lang. This was to prove that the One-Inch Punch was still the Luo family's ultimate arts, so Luo Lang would forever have an extra ace in the hole than the others.

After listening to Ling Lan's explanation, Qi Long found it made sense, and so no longer concerned himself about the issue. This was Qi Long's strength — always knowing where to draw the line, never demanding things that did not belong to him.

On the stage, Qi Ya, who was back on his feet, glared hatefully at Luo Lang. He knew that his performance had disgraced him in front of everyone here, and all of this had been caused by this hateful youth before him. He was raging internally, wishing that he could kill Luo Lang to release the pent up anger and hate in his heart.

Luo Lang's eyes met Qi Ya's, and the remote disinterest in Luo Lang's gaze sent a chill through Qi Ya. His mind, which had been consumed with rage, was suddenly shocked into wakefulness — because he had sensed a kind of danger. In fact, he could even sense a slight trace of killing intent from the other ... could it be the other also wanted to kill him?

How could this be? Qi Ya shook his head emphatically, casting this thought aside. He hadn't done anything, so how could the other have killing intent against him? Right then, Qi Ya had forgotten those words he had said earlier. He did not know that — some things, some people, just could not be sullied.

Seeing the two face off once more, Tang Yu announced, “The match continues!”

No sooner had he finished speaking when Luo Lang moved. He dashed out like a ferocious tiger, flying over to Qi Ya’s side. Since the other could not move properly, when should he attack if not now?

Just as Luo Lang expected, one foot short, Qi Ya could not dodge; he could only meet Luo Lang’s attack head on. Of course, Qi Ya was not afraid — in fact, he was rather gleeful. He had wanted to fight Luo Lang head on from the start. With regards to internal energy ², his was undoubtedly more substantial than Luo Lang’s. Fighting on that front, he had full confidence to injure Luo Lang and obtain the final victory.

However, were things really going to turn out as he expected?

When the two of them exchanged the first blow, Qi Ya’s expression changed dramatically. He found that the other’s attack power was no weaker than his — his original anticipated plan of using internal energy to injure the other had no way of being realised.

The second move, the third move, the fourth move ... slowly, Qi Ya realised that every time his arms blocked the other’s attack, the spot he blocked with would ache in pain. This pain was extremely similar to that of where his ankle was broken, just not as intense. For the first and second move, he had not sensed much of it, but after the third and fourth moves, the pain began to intensify, and by the time they reached the seventh and eighth move, he was actually unable to raise his arms properly ...

A ‘bam’ rang out. Luo Lang had grasped the opening and struck Qi Ya’s cheek forcefully, and Qi Ya was sent flying. Luo Lang had held back on this strike, not using the forms of One-Inch Punch, but even so, Qi Ya was knocked unconscious instantly by Luo Lang’s base strength. He crashed onto the ground and did not get up again.

Colonel Tang Yu quickly rushed forwards to check on Qi Ya’s condition. Seeing that the youth had no life-threatening injuries, and was indeed out for the count, he indicated for the staff in the combat hall to send Qi Ya to the treatment centre. With the present technology, as long as it was not a fatal injury, any patient who was still breathing could basically be saved.

Qi Ya was seen to be lifted off the stage, and Tang Yu then smiled and announced loudly, “The first match, 1st year Luo Lang of the New Cadet Regiment wins!”

The faces of the people from Leiting were currently a sheet of darkness. It was unexpected that Qi Ya, who they had had high hopes for, would actually be defeated in an upset by a frail-looking 1st year. The opponent had taken a match right from the start, and more frighteningly, the one they had defeated was their third strongest. Quite a few members of Leiting began to reconsider — could they really win this fight against the New Cadet Regiment? For the first time, they began to harbour doubts.

Lin Zhidong gritted his teeth and said, “It’s no matter. I suppose the other side had sent one of their strongest. As long as we win the rest of the matches, losing one match won’t affect the final outcome.”

A man beside him said evenly, “The key is the fight order. If the opponent just happens to use their strongest few against our weakest ...”

This was not like a transparent private fight, where fights were arranged according to personal strength — a blind fight not only tested a fighter’s true strength, but also tested the psychological tactics and

strategy of each side. Perhaps it could be called luck, but this was the mode the official challenges used, all in hopes of seeing more diverse matchups. Compared to an open fight, a blind fight was undoubtedly much fairer — if one applied the correct strategy, and had a great burst of luck, even the weak had hopes of winning.

These words made Lin Zhidong fall into silent contemplation. His gaze wavered slightly, but quickly settled. He did not believe that their luck would be so horrible that the opponent would manage to grab hold of those two opportunities so precisely.

Luo Lang slowly walked off the stage, and he was welcomed back by the respectful gazes of the members of the New Cadet Regiment. As there were quite a few non-Central Academy freshmen within their ranks, those students had indeed been somewhat doubtful at Luo Lang's inclusion as one of the five representatives. However, this fight had proven that Luo Lang truly had the skill to be one of the five top fighters of the New Cadet Regiment. There was no longer anyone within the New Cadet Regiment who doubted his strength now.

Seeing Luo Lang's impressive performance, the man in the box who had already become interested in Luo Lang licked his lips excitedly, chuckling deeply as he said, "What a prideful and spirited little fellow. If I break those proud bones of his bit by bit, wouldn't his expression be very interesting? ³Muahahaha ... ⁴" Gruesome laughter rang out to fill the entire box, involuntarily causing one's skin to crawl.

Luo Lang slowly walked to stand before Ling Lan, where he then stared coldly at her. Facing this strange situation, Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie, who had initially planned to step forward and congratulate Luo Lang, stopped moving instantly. They stared uncertainly at the two people in front of them.

Ling Lan remained seated, unmoved, as she stared back evenly at Luo Lang. The cold air around her body became much denser.

Luo Lang opened and shut his mouth, but emitted no sound. Ling Lan coldly rebuked, "Still not letting go?" That said, Ling Lan's eyes gleamed with a cold light, piercing Luo Lang with its intensity — as if receiving some heavy blow, Luo Lang's body swayed, and then his eyes closed and he began falling towards the ground.

Qi Long reacted quickly, catching Luo Lang and pulling him into his arms. At first chance, he examined Luo Lang's arms, and then, face paling, he shouted, "Boss, there are multiple breaks on the bones of Luo Lang's arms!"

"I know. Let the staff arrange for Luo Lang to go to the treatment centre, accompanied by Lin Zhongqing," Ling Lan swiftly ordered.

This punk — using the 4th form of One-Inch Punch multiple times when he had yet to master it, forcefully increasing the level of his internal energy ... unable to fully control the form's power, of course his own arms would have been broken by the rebound force of the One-Inch Punch. Still, the tolerance level of that alter ego of his was truly off the charts, and he was tough towards himself as well, actually tolerating the pain of both broken arms until he could finally defeat Qi Ya ...

When Tang Yu found out that Luo Lang had been fighting while tolerating the pain of broken arms, waiting till he won and returned to his teammates' side before allowing himself to collapse, he was even more delighted with this strong and determined youth. He had already made up his mind that, even if Luo Lang's body did not meet expectations in the end, he would still use his own special rights to take in the other as his disciple.

Once Luo Lang had been sent off to the treatment centre, Ling Lan, noticing the confusion in Wu Jiong's and Li Yingjie's eyes, spoke up to explain, "Just now, the opponent had insulted Luo Lang, saying that he had only been chosen as a representative because he belongs to me."

The two stared blankly back, not understanding the meaning behind the words right away. Qi Long understood however, because Ling Lan had already mentioned it to him previously when she had explained why Luo Lang had become enraged enough to activate his innate talent. Thus, he pulled the two aside and quietly spelled things out for them

Chapter 252: Fatal Weakness!

Wu Jiong's and Li Yingjie's facial expressions soured and they turned to spit fiercely at the ground, glaring furiously at the area where the Leiting representatives were. Those words of Qi Ya's not only insulted Luo Lang and Ling Lan, they also insulted every single person in the New Cadet Regiment at the same time. This made the boys livid.

As classmates who had grown up alongside Ling Lan, Luo Lang, and the others of their team, Wu Jiong and Li Yingjie naturally knew the nature of the close relationship among the members of Ling Lan's team. It was absolutely the purest of brotherly bonds. From the 1st grade at the scout academy, Ling Lan, who had already been more mature than any of them, had watched over and cared for his team members like an elder brother, treating them like his own younger brothers. In fact, they were very envious of the rapport between Ling Lan and the other members of his team, which was so good that, at times, they could understand each other with just one look. They just could not imagine how someone could sully the pure relationship between the two by casting such aspersions.

Li Yingjie had always been a straightforward person who spoke without filtering his words. He grumbled discontentedly, "Saying Boss Lan and Luo Lang have this kind of relationship, he might as well say it's Qi Long and Luo Lang. Those two have always hung around each other since young, sparring and fighting with one another. Haven't they spent even more time together?"

These words made Qi Long hook his arm around Li Yingjie's neck in indignation, where he then pressed his fist forcefully against the other's head. This made Li Yingjie squawk in pain, but with his fighting strength being no match for Qi Long's, he had no way of escaping Qi Long's violent hands. He could only apologise repeatedly until Qi Long finally let him go. Of course Qi Long would be annoyed! How could such a big stalwart man like him like guys¹ ... In comparison, Qi Long still preferred those curvaceous bodies of pretty younger sisters².

Right at that moment, Little Four once more informed Ling Lan of the submission of the opponent's candidate name. This time, they had chosen their 4th strongest fighter, Song Lianlu.

Ling Lan very quickly realised the reasoning behind this arrangement of the opponent. Qi Ya, who they had had high hopes for, had been defeated; this made Leiting have no choice but to be cautious. They were afraid that if they sent out the weakest among their line-up, and he met a strong opponent, they would lose one more match. However, they also did not want to send their two strongest out, as that would leave them with no one to hold the fort. Thus, after some deliberation, they had sent out the safest option, the 4th strongest, to attempt to take this match.

Ling Lan turned her head to look at Qi Long and the others. Just as she was about to tell Qi Long to get ready, Li Yingjie stepped forward and volunteered, "Boss Lan, I'll go up for this match."

Ling Lan felt her gums ache as she held back the words she had been about to say. Like Luo Lang, Li Yingjie was also at first level early stage Qi-Jin. Against an opponent of top-level early stage Qi-Jin, he had almost no chance of winning, unless Li Yingjie also had that kind of inexplicable, mysterious, and unpredictable innate talent like Luo Lang's. Then, there might still have been the possibility of an upset.

Seeing Boss Lan staring at him with a frigid expression, Li Yingjie clenched his fists nervously. Although he knew volunteering on his own to fight was rather reckless of him, very likely to affect Boss Lan's strategic arrangements, he just did not want to lose to Luo Lang. At the same time, he also wanted to prove that he was not a coward. Earlier on the stage, his involuntary shudder had caused Luo Lang to mistake him for one, and he was still stewing over it. Thus, having seen Luo Lang win the first match after great difficulty, Li Yingjie did not want to fall behind Luo Lang by too much.

The fighting spirit in Li Yingjie's eyes made Ling Lan change her mind instantly. She nodded and said, "Alright. Don't disgrace our New Cadet Regiment."

The reason why Ling Lan had changed her mind at the last moment was that Luo Lang had unexpectedly won his match. Therefore, even if Li Yingjie lost this next match, it would not affect the bigger picture. After all, there was still the weakest fighter in the opponent's line-up who, barring any unexpected incidents, should lose whether Wu Jiong or Qi Long went up against him. And so, Ling Lan agreed to Li Yingjie's plea to fight now.

As long as it would not affect the final outcome, Ling Lan was willing to go along with these little fellows' wishes.

Obtaining Ling Lan's approval, Li Yingjie's eyes shone with a trace of pleasant surprise. He had originally thought Boss Lan did not like him very much — after all, he had indeed been rather annoying in the past. But just now, there was no dislike or apathy in Ling Lan's eyes; his demeanour had been extremely serious. In that moment, Li Yingjie fully felt the trust that Ling Lan had in him.

For some reason, he suddenly recalled his second eldest cousin brother Li Shiyu's words to him, "*When you finally learn what brotherly bonds mean, then you will understand that power is not something irreplaceable.*"

At this moment, Li Yingjie seemed to vaguely understand what his second cousin brother had been saying. He looked towards Ling Lan — if it were Ling Lan, Li Yingjie probably would not fight with him over the position of regiment commander ...

On the stage, Colonel Tang Yu had already received the name list from both sides. The moment time was up, he announced, "The New Cadet Regiment vs Leiting Mecha Clan, 2nd round. 1st year Li Yingjie against 4th year Song Lianlu!"

Inside the box, Yun Xiu heard this announcement and his spirits rallied. He quickly turned to yell, "Shiyu, your younger cousin brother is up now. His opponent is Song Lianlu from our year."

Li Shiyu, who was resting with his eyes closed on the sofa, abruptly opened his eyes. Seeing Li Yingjie strut confidently onto the stage, his brow furrowed. "Song Lianlu is already a Qi-Jin master, Li Yingjie is most probably no match for him." No matter how much he said he looked down on Li Yingjie, Li Shiyu could not help but worry for him right then.

Yun Xiu had an opposing opinion. "Not necessarily. That weak-looking youth earlier managed to defeat the Qi-Jin stage Qi Ya after all. I think this year of freshmen aren't as weak as we think them to be ... perhaps your cousin is also already in Qi-Jin."

Li Shiyu was silent for a moment, and then said faintly, "I hope it turns out that way ... still, if he loses, I will let him understand the consequences of losing." Since he and his eldest cousin brother could not become the family head of the Li family, he hoped that Li Yingjie, who would become the family head in the end, would be even stronger. Even if he could not get used to the Li family's heartlessness, having been taught all this time to take pride in the Li family, Li Shiyu still did not want to see the Li family decline.

Seeing that both sides were ready to fight, Colonel Tang Yu waved his right hand and shouted, "Begin!"

Following this sound, the two fighters faced each other from a distance, not attacking right off the bat. Qi Ya's loss had made Song Lianlu become exceedingly cautious. He did not know whether his opponent was strong or weak, so, he was prepared to observe the situation for a bit before making a decision.

Meanwhile, Li Yingjie had received instruction from Ling Lan as well before getting onto the stage. Like with Luo Lang, because he had just entered Qi-Jin stage and his Qi-Jin had yet to settle, it was not wise for him to fight head-on with his opponent. Thus, his strategy would still focus on drawing things out. Of course, the situation on the stage would be constantly shifting, so everything would still depend on Li Yingjie's judgment.

Although Li Yingjie was an arrogant punk, he was not an impulsive one. His combat intelligence was still pretty good, otherwise he would not have remained securely within the top 5 for ten years. Therefore, he chose the same path as Song Lianlu. The two of them faced each other from a distance, circling the stage as they looked for a chance to attack.

This was distinctly different from Luo Lang and Qi Ya's direct confrontation — the two fighters in this fight circled the stage for a whole 3 minutes without acting. This dull scenario made the spectating students lose their patience, some of them even outright beginning to yawn. Quite a few people began discussing among themselves, wondering how many minutes more they would spend dancing around each other ...

Right then, the initially still circling Song Lianlu suddenly rocked on the balls of his feet, and then his entire body shot forward like an arrow. In the blink of an eye, he was in front of Li Yingjie, his right fist striking out fiercely at Li Yingjie's left side. Just before, a weakness had suddenly appeared in Li Yingjie's defence.

Song Lianlu knew that this could also be a lure, but he also knew that if he did not try and attack now, even if they continued to weave around one another for half a day, he still might not find a better chance to attack. Thus, Song Lianlu decided to make his move.

However, as Song Lianlu attacked, he found that the weakness had disappeared. In its place, was Li Yingjie's long ready clawed hands. This was the Li family's ultimate arts — the strongest offensive defensive measure to handle an opponent's attacks.

Seeing this, Ling Lan's brow furrowed, knowing that Li Yingjie was likely to come to grief. This lure-and-counterattack tactic of Li Yingjie's was actually not wrong — his mistake was in underestimating his opponent's capabilities. If he had used this move against an opponent of equal level, Li Yingjie would absolutely have had the upper hand, but now, things were not so certain.

Sure enough, Li Yingjie's grasping hands locked onto the opponent's right fist, but the moment they connected, Li Yingjie felt a strong surge of energy coming from the opponent's fist, almost repelling his grab off in its intensity.

Li Yingjie knew that if the other repelled his grab, he would certainly take a heavy blow from the other in return. He would definitely be injured, and may have to declare his loss in advance ... he did not want Luo Lang to taunt him. So, gritting his teeth, he tolerated the intense pain radiating up his arm, tenaciously keeping his hold on the other's right fist ...

Song Lianlu felt that he was about to shake his opponent's palm off, but just as he was about to succeed, the other retained the hold on his right fist and then he felt a pull. He felt the strength of his entire body being pulled to an empty spot, and he careened uncontrollably to crash into the shielded area on the edges of the arena ...

The shielded area emitted a blinding light — a pattern like the shattering of glass appearing within the light. In the meantime, after drawing the opponent's strength to one side, Li Yingjie's readied right fist struck out immediately towards Song Lianlu's chest.

Defence was just a prelude to attacking — the final objective of Li Yingjie's move was here ...

However, Song Lianlu reacted equally swiftly. His left palm moved to block his chest at the critical moment, forcibly receiving this unexpected attack by Li Yingjie!

With a 'pow', fist met palm, and then, with a loud crack, the two were sent flying backwards. Song Lianlu had to take a whole 3 steps back after landing to find his footing, while Li Yingjie also had to take 3 steps back before standing firmly. From the spectating students' perspective, the two fighters had battled to a draw.

Only those with a keen eye had noticed that Li Yingjie's low-hanging left hand was trembling minutely beyond his control. That powerful attack of the opponent he had grabbed hold of previously had clearly damaged Li Yingjie's left hand severely.

Wu Jiong and Qi Long could tell, and their expressions paled. Wu Jiong said worriedly, “Li Yingjie’s left hand is injured. It’ll be tough from this point on.”

Ling Lan said calmly, “This match, Li Yingjie was at a disadvantage from the start. That’s why winning or losing isn’t so important. I just wanted to see how far he could go.”

Li Yingjie had a fatal weakness — when he knew he was at a disadvantage, that he was no match for his opponent, he would very easily give up on himself. His character lacked some tenacity. This was also why he had lost to Luo Lang so many times all this while, ending up in 5th place, slightly behind Luo Lang in the rankings.

This was what Ling Lan was thinking. Since Li Yingjie had sincerely acknowledged her as boss, she was inclined to help Li Yingjie solve this problem. Today was a good opportunity — it was rare for Li Yingjie to have such an intense desire to fight ...

Chapter 253: Stand Up!

Suppressing the intense pain coming from his left hand, Li Yingjie looked at the confident Song Lianlu across from him, and his heart sank. That last move had let him know just how wide the gap was between his strength and the opponent’s. Under these circumstances, how could he beat the other? Li Yingjie’s gaze began to waver with uncertainty ...

Song Lianlu had similarly sensed the power behind Li Yingjie’s attack. Despite his hastiness in blocking it, he had still managed to take it. It looked like the strength of this cocky punk in front of him was indeed weaker than him by a strand. With this, he had some basis for confidence now. His initial caution and tentative approach vanished, to be replaced by a raging barrage of attacks.

Facing this sudden attack, Li Yingjie naturally did not choose to take it forcefully. He instantly retreated to evade — it should be said that though Li Yingjie’s evasion ability was not as elegant as Luo Lang’s, it was still extremely remarkable, nimbly dodging all of Song Lianlu’s fierce attacks. Still, even so, Li Yingjie was already disadvantaged, clearly being a passive receptor of Song Lianlu’s attacks.

Just like that, one attacked fiercely without any reservations, while the other dodged narrowly again and again. Everyone could tell that the loss of the New Cadet Regiment’s representative was just a matter of time. Unless this freshman managed to pull out some ultimate move and have a sudden explosion of strength like the previous freshman, the outcome of this match would not change.

Of course, they would not jump to a conclusion so quickly ... after all, before the final results were out, anything was possible. Thus, everyone watched the stage intently, waiting for the results to emerge. Either this freshman would be on the defensive right until he gets defeated, or, like in the previous round, he would suddenly explode and launch a counterattack from dire straits.

Below the stage, the spectating Wu Jiong and Qi Long’s faces were growing darker and darker. They knew that, if things continued like this, Li Yingjie would definitely lose! It was not that they could not accept failure, but they did not want to see Li Yingjie being pummelled continuously in such a frustrating manner. In their minds, even if they lost, they must lose gloriously!

Ling Lan frowned. Li Yingjie's old problem had appeared again. The moment he met an opponent he could not beat, he would become unmotivated and defend passively, having no courage at all to risk everything in a last-ditch struggle.

Ling Lan began to think back — when had Li Yingjie begun to have this issue? As Ling Lan had not paid much attention to Li Yingjie in the past, by the time she had noticed, this fellow had already had this problem. Of course, Ling Lan was not a saintly matron. She would not go and help this irritating punk the way he was back then even when she noticed. Therefore, this problem had lasted all this while until today.

Sensing his boss's confusion, Little Four could not help but roll his eyes. Without saying a word, he pulled out several video clips he had recorded in the early days, projecting them within Ling Lan's mindscape ...

The first video was of Ling Lan's first fight against Li Yingjie. Without even sparing the other a glance, Ling Lan had sent Li Yingjie flying with one punch ... At the end of the video, Li Yingjie's disgruntled and resentful gaze was clearly captured within the frame.

The second video was Ling Lan's second fight against Li Yingjie. Again, she had not even looked at him, sending him flying with one kick ... Li Yingjie's expression at this time was one of dejection, with even a touch of self-doubt.

The third video was similarly a fight between Ling Lan and Li Yingjie. Ling Lan once again casually sent Li Yingjie flying with one punch ... Li Yingjie's expression here now was somewhat wooden, and a light trace of self-contempt could be read from his lips.

The fourth video was still a fight between Ling Lan and Li Yingjie. This time, Ling Lan just happened to be in the period when her killing intent had been the densest. Regardless of how Little Four tried to cover it up, some had still leaked when she had fought, instantly smashing through Li Yingjie's mental defences. That time, Li Yingjie did not even manage to do anything before being sent flying off the stage by a punch from Ling Lan ... back then, his gaze was filled with terror ...

From then onwards, whenever Li Yingjie encountered someone stronger than him, he no longer had the courage to try and fight it out ...

Ling Lan rubbed her forehead wearily. *"Little Four, you mean that, Li Yingjie's current condition is completely because of me?"*

Little Four nodded firmly. *"Of course. The first few defeats had already made that fellow's heart become unbelievably weak. That fourth time, was coincidentally when your killing intent was at its worst. His spirit received a terrible blow by that killing intent you leaked, leaving him with an inner demon."*

*"Tsk, why is this fellow's heart so d*mn weak? Isn't he very arrogant and proud?"* Ling Lan was somewhat baffled by this. Qi Long had been constantly losing to her as well, and she did not see any openings open up in that brat's mental state to produce an inner demon. He still fought as roughly as before.

"How could it be the same? Qi Long respects you, Boss. In his heart, Boss is not only Boss, but also a Master. Losing to you is very normal for him. But it's different for Li Yingjie. He has always considered you, Boss, as a rival, desiring to beat you so much that he was almost crazed by it. But Boss just

happened to be too strong and overwhelming. Losing again and again, losing until he had no more confidence, and then his already fragile heart was coincidentally invaded by Boss's killing intent, hence leading to this problem"

Little Four's explanation made Ling Lan somewhat depressed. She had never thought that Li Yingjie would end up following her in the end, making this problem an issue she had to handle. If she had only known earlier, she would have been more merciful back then ¹. However, it was too late for all that now — she might as well put her energy into thinking about how she could resolve the psychological problem this brat had now.

Right then, a powerful sound of fist meeting flesh rang out, "Pow!"

On the stage, Song Lianlu had finally grasped a chance to land a heavy punch onto Li Yingjie's left shoulder. Li Yingjie was sent flying to crash heavily onto the stage. He slid several metres, leaving an extremely obvious line on the stage; it was clear to see how powerful the opponent's blow had been.

Li Yingjie could not stop himself from throwing up a mouthful of blood. Although his vital points had not been hit directly, the opponent's strength had still been strong enough to cause blast injury to his internal organs. He felt a profound ache in his chest cavity, and even worse, his entire left arm had lost all sensation. Who knew if that last punch had shattered the bones of his shoulder, or if it had damaged his nervous system ...

Song Lianlu saw the opponent struck down and pleasant surprise flashed through his eyes. Just as he wanted to follow through to determine the outcome, Colonel Tang Yu suddenly stopped him and indicated for him to stand to one side. Then, Colonel Tang Yu walked up to Li Yingjie's side and asked, "Do you choose to admit defeat or continue to fight?"

When Li Yingjie heard Colonel Tang Yu's question, a voice rang out in his heart, *'Li Yingjie, admit defeat quickly! The opponent's strength is so much higher than yours. You have no way of beating him. There's no point in persisting. You might as well admit defeat and suffer less.'*

Yes, why did he have to hold on so hard and fight? He was weaker than the opponent to begin with ... wasn't it normal to lose?

Li Yingjie slowly raised his hand, prepared to say the words 'I admit defeat', when a cold voice rang out from behind him, "Li Yingjie, stand up!"

Li Yingjie turned his head in bewilderment and saw Ling Lan, who had initially been seated below the stage, now standing right by the edge of the arena stage, looking at him with an icy expression.

"Li Yingjie, where have the guts you had when you were younger gone to? Godd*mmit, stand up! It's time to let them see what the real cocky Li Yingjie is like." Ling Lan's gaze was clearly frigid, but for some reason Li Yingjie could see the same firm faith in him as before in his gaze ...

'He understands me, and is also willing to believe in me, which was why he had agreed to my request ...' Li Yingjie did not forget that, before the round, Ling Lan's gaze had been on Qi Long, but he had still agreed to his volunteering in the end. Not perfunctorily, but with full faith in him, believing that he would put up a good fight.

'No, I cannot let him look down on me!' Li Yingjie was shaken. A voice in his heart was raging — yes, I'm cocky and arrogant. I was not afraid of anything at the beginning. Even if someone was stronger than me, I would dare to challenge them ... admit defeat? When had this phrase appeared in my mouth? That's definitely not me.

Li Yingjie abruptly turned his head around. His initially slightly raised right hand changed directions to slam onto the ground and support him as he slowly pushed himself off the ground. In spite of the agony, there was no change in Li Yingjie's face at this moment, as if the wounds on his body did not exist.

Seeing Li Yingjie's movements, Ling Lan turned around with satisfaction, returning to her seat. She believed that, this time, Li Yingjie was different now.

Li Yingjie stood up straight, and turning to the waiting Colonel Tang Yu, he said, "I want to continue fighting!"

A trace of approval flashed through Colonel Tang Yu's eyes, and he nodded and said, "Alright, the match continues!"

Song Lianlu silently tsked. If Colonel Tang Yu had not stopped him, he could have taken the chance to beat the other until he had no more fight in him. At the heart of it, this punk had been saved by the referee.

However, this would be the only time! A subtle smile appeared on the corners of Song Lianlu's lips. This half-crippled punk before him was completely no match for him.

"Who was the one who yelled earlier?" In the Leiting area below the stage, Lin Zhidong frowned as he looked at Ling Lan walking back to her seat, and asked the people around him.

"I don't know. This person is very unfamiliar." The person beside him looked closely at Ling Lan, and found her face unfamiliar, and so shook his head. As Ling Lan had always stayed within the villa without going out, other than those people from the Doha academies, most of the major factions outside really did not know about her.

"This person needs to be watched." Lin Zhidong was extremely alert. Being able to rekindle a comrade's fighting spirit with just a few words, this person could not be simple.

"Yes, Vice Regiment Commander Lin, I will arrange it," answered the person beside him respectfully, silently memorising Ling Lan's name.

"Qi Long, Li Yingjie's aura seems to have changed," said Wu Jiong to Qi Long excitedly. Li Yingjie's transformation on the stage had also been sensed by Wu Jiong.

Qi Long let out a sigh of relief as well and replied, "Yes, we don't have to worry about him anymore." He then sighed and added, "Boss Lan is truly Boss Lan, able to change Li Yingjie with just one sentence."

These words received Wu Jiong's agreement. He glanced admiringly at the calm and cold-faced Ling Lan by their sides. Only a talent such as Ling Lan, who could discern a person's nature with one look, would be able to unearth the latent talents of everyone in their team, better leading them as they advanced further. On this point, Wu Jiong was really too far away from Ling Lan's level.

Once again, Wu Jiong felt the distance between he and Ling Lan keenly. This sort of respect and admiration accumulated bit by bit in Wu Jiong's heart, until it was so substantial that it could not be overturned. He could only continue to willingly chase after the other, until the end of time!

Chapter 254: I'm Proud of You!

The sudden shift in Li Yingjie's aura startled Song Lianlu. His attacking speed slowed reflexively, giving Li Yingjie time to swiftly pull away to face Song Lianlu from a distance once more.

Seeing this, a slight smile appeared on Colonel Tang Yu's face. This representative of the New Cadet Regiment was still not too bad. Although he did not perform well at the start, he had still adapted in the end — only a child like this was worthy of being Luo Lang's teammate ... Colonel Tang Yu's heart had unknowingly begun to lean towards the New Cadet Regiment.

Li Yingjie glared at Song Lianlu. At this moment, he only wanted to rip off a chunk of flesh from the opponent's body somehow, exactly like a savage wolf cub, prepared for its final struggle.

Li Yingjie's fierce gaze made Song Lianlu's heart clench. His expression became grim — even if he was confident in his victory, he did not dare to move recklessly right then.

Seeing the opponent suddenly become hesitant and cautious, Li Yingjie's lips curled into a self-mocking smirk. It turned out that when he himself was resolute, the opponent's aura would also shift in response. Many of his previous inexplicable defeats had truly been his own fault.

Li Yingjie self-mocking smile lasted only for a brief moment before he once again reverted to his typical arrogant and haughty demeanour. The appearance of this expression actually made his initially handsome face rather irritating to look at — apparently changes in mental state would affect one's external appearance. This was also why Li Yingjie had not been very popular in the Central Scout Academy despite being a handsome little fellow.

Still, the attention of the spectating students was not on Li Yingjie's annoying face. Instead, their gazes were drawn to an extremely unique motion he made.

Li Yingjie's remaining mobile right hand was raised slightly forwards, his fingers molded into a strange form ... like a hook but not a hook, like a fist but not a fist. But for some reason, the moment this form appeared, everyone found their attention involuntarily drawn to it.

"Ah, what move is this?" Seeing this atypical stance, inside the box, Yun Xiu could not help but turn to ask his good friend Li Shiyu in surprise.

"This brat is actually using this move now." Li Shiyu's expression instantly gentled. Earlier, when Li Yingjie was being beaten like a stray dog, his face had been thunderous and unsightly.

"You know?" Yun Xiu stared with starry eyes at Li Shiyu, his face filled with anticipation to hear his best friend's explanation.

This cute moe puppy-dog look made a small smile appear on Li Shiyu's lips, his mood turning for the better instantly. He said, "This is my family's exclusive killing art. Choosing to use it here, it looks like this fellow is prepared for a final plunge."

At this explanation, Yun Xiu turned to look wide-eyed at the screen, excited to see what would happen next.

Seeing the opponent's strange actions, without even thinking about it, Song Lianlu knew the other was about to do something major. However, he was not like that moron Qi Ya, only wanting to save face and reacting with brute force. As long as the final victory was his, he did not mind if the process was unsightly, or if it was dull and uninteresting.

Thus, Song Lianlu was extremely patient. He chose to continue waiting, waiting for this surging aura of Li Yingjie's to pass. He believed that, having been heavily injured, Li Yingjie would not be able to hold out for too long. This rallied strength of his would certainly pass, and that moment would be Song Lianlu's time to attack.

The scene once more descended into the ennui of the start. On the stage, the two fighters each staked out a separate corner, where they stood unmoving. Time passed bit by bit — one minute, three minutes, five minutes ... the two fighters who seemed content to face off like this forever made the spectating students restless and they began to chat among themselves. The initially quiet and austere combat hall began to rustle with the noise of discussion ...

"How long are they planning to face off like that? This is too boring."

"Isn't that freshman already half-crippled? Why does that Leiting person have to be so careful? Is it necessary?" All these were complaints by the bored people.

"That new cadet's stance is a little cryptic. It's necessary for the Leiting candidate to be cautious."

"Looks like, Leiting's representative can't figure out the depth of the other's move either. But waiting is more advantageous for the Leiting candidate. Even though the fight is more boring this way, this is undeniably the correct way ..." These were the viewpoints of those who supported the prolonged impasse.

The views of the people below the stage were varied. Some scorned Leiting, some supported them, but no one believed that the New Cadet Regiment had any chance of making a comeback in this match. This was because Li Yingjie was already heavily injured, while Song Lianlu of Leiting was completely unharmed. Furthermore, Song Lianlu was obviously the stronger of the two fighters, so unless there was a major accident, the outcome would not change anymore. Right now, all the audience was waiting for was when Song Lianlu would officially defeat Li Yingjie and clinch the victory.

Just when everyone thought that this impasse would continue, Li Yingjie seemed to have run out of stamina and could not hold on any longer. His body swayed slightly ...

Song Lianlu's gaze brightened, and long prepared, he dashed in, leaping at Li Yingjie.

At the moment Li Yingjie had swayed, that immense pressure from that move pressing down on Song Lianlu had collapsed, the threatening sense of danger hanging over his head disappearing completely. Song Lianlu believed that Li Yingjie's broken body could not support the move any longer, so this was definitely the best opportunity for him to attack.

Just when Song Lianlu was about to hit the other's body, he saw the pale-faced Li Yingjie suddenly smile at him. This unexpected smile made Song Lianlu's heart clench, but victory was right in front of him — his fist would strike the opponent in the very next second. Based on his strength, he believed that Li Yingjie was no longer able to muster the energy to fight on ...

Watching from below the stage, when Ling Lan saw this scene, her expression changed abruptly and she stood up quickly. The corners of her lips twitched, but in the end, she only pressed her lips tight in a thin line, expression cold as she waited for the final outcome.

Unwilling to give up on this opportunity, despite the unease in his heart, Song Lianlu clenched his teeth and punched his fist forwards tenaciously. He could not simply give up on this chance just because he could not figure out Li Yingjie's strange smile. Instantly, he felt his fist strike a soft fleshy body.

Bullseye! Song Lianlu was overjoyed — this meant he had won this match.

But before he could even smile in relief and joy, he felt his abdomen hit by a large force. It instantly broke through his defensive layer of internal energy, penetrating into his body.

"Pffft!" A mouthful of blood sprayed out from Song Lianlu's mouth. The powerful force had directly injured his internal organs — his entire body was sent stumbling back seven to eight steps before he managed to stop. However, right after that, he felt his knees fold and he slumped to sit on the ground.

The cause of this phenomenon was the strange and erratic internal energy running amok in his body. It was brutalizing his innards, nerves, and muscles, leaving Song Lianlu with no more strength to remain standing.

Meanwhile, on the other side, Li Yingjie had similarly been sent stumbling back several steps by Song Lianlu's attack. He retreated even further than Song Lianlu, only stopping when he reached the edges of the stage. Compared to Song Lianlu's injuries, Li Yingjie was undoubtedly hurt even worse. Mouthfuls of blood were being heaved out uncontrollably from his mouth, but even so, he still smiled as he stared at Song Lianlu, smugly and arrogantly.

"This brat, actually choosing a mutually destructive outcome!" In the second-floor box, Li Shiyu smacked a palm into the wall in a fit of anger, leaving a palm print in it. At one side, Yun Xiu's heart ached once more — it looked like the fewer than few credits he had could not be saved anymore.

Still, heartache aside, he was even more worried about the condition of Li Yingjie. "Shiyu, will your cousin be fine after taking that blow?"

"As long as he still breathes, he won't die," said Li Shiyu flatly.

Li Shiyu may have sounded indifferent, but he was still worried for that disappointing cousin of his deep inside. After all, that brat had clearly been injured severely and was likely unable to move anymore. It

was very probable that he would faint dead away on the stage in the very next second. Li Yingjie had not chosen to dodge that heavy blow by Song Lianlu, using his body to take it forcefully instead ... this was full on direct internal damage.

Of course, Li Shiyu also knew well that it was not that Li Yingjie could not dodge — that swaying motion from before, Li Shiyu knew that it had been a lure because the Li family had that particular combination move. However, he had not thought that Li Yingjie would use the method of exchanging injury for injury to counterattack. Although Li Shiyu felt that this was somewhat not worth it, he had to admit that for Li Yingjie to inflict heavy damage on his opponent, this was the only option which had any chance of succeeding. It should be known that if Li Yingjie had chosen to dodge, the opponent would also have had a similar chance of evading Li Yingjie's killer move ...

"This brat has become much more ruthless than before." 'Not only towards others, but also towards himself. Being able to take such ruthless action, this brat has grown up a little more ... it is just unclear whether this growth is good or bad,' thought Li Shiyu somewhat dispiritedly.

On the stage, Li Yingjie knew he was smiling because he had gravely injured the opponent. The aftereffects of the Li family killing move would be more than enough to trouble the other considerably. He had avenged himself — even if he did not win the match, he did not feel disheartened. He believed that his companions would definitely recover this loss.

Li Yingjie was in fact already at his limit. He felt his head spinning and his vision blur — these were the symptoms of massive blood loss. He knew he should lie down and receive first aid, but for some reason, he did not want to just lie down like this. He wanted to see Boss Lan's face and observe his expression, but he just did not have the strength left to even turn his head around ...

'What a pity, not being able to see Boss Lan's expression at this time ... I wonder if he would be satisfied with my performance today?' Li Yingjie thought somewhat bitterly. So he had yearned so much for Boss Lan's acknowledgement ...

"Li Yingjie, today, I'm proud of you!" The distinctly cold voice belonging to Ling Lan rang out by Li Yingjie's ears. This voice made Li Yingjie's spirits perk up; he actually managed to turn his head and saw that icy yet domineering face of Boss Lan.

Currently, Ling Lan had once again walked over to stand by the edge of the stage. Even though his face was as cold and flat as usual, Li Yingjie could clearly feel the sincerity of his words ...

That will do! Li Yingjie closed his eyes in satisfaction, a smile on his lips as he toppled backwards. However, someone very quickly caught him — it was the referee of the fights, Colonel Tang Yu.

The moment Colonel Tang Yu saw Li Yingjie's condition, he knew the other was already completely unconscious, unable to continue fighting. His condition was dangerous as well — even without using internal energy to probe the other's body, he could tell the other had received extensive internal damage, because blood was still flowing unstoppably from Li Yingjie's mouth even now.

Chapter 255: Qi Long Enters the Stage!

“Staff, send him to the treatment centre immediately!” Tang Yu shouted. Two uniformed staff members brought a stretcher onto the stage, quickly whisking Li Yingjie away to the treatment centre.

Seeing this, Ling Lan turned to instruct Qi Long, “Notify Xie Yi quickly. Tell him to go with them and keep us updated.”

Qi Long quickly contacted Xie Yi, telling him to follow Li Yingjie to the treatment centre, and to give them timely reports on Li Yingjie’s condition.

This combat method of Li Yingjie’s which fully displayed his unwillingness to lose even if it would result in an internecine outcome ¹ had moved Qi Long, Wu Jiong, and the others. It had also let the members of the New Cadet Regiment see a whole new side of the arrogant-to-the-point-of-annoying Li Yingjie.

It turned out that that detestable 2nd generation ancestor, who would every so often push them around with his abilities and family background, was as willing as them to put his all into fighting for his companions’ freedom and their futures. At this time, even those New Cadet Regiment members who bore some dislike for Li Yingjie found themselves silently laying down their grudges ...

Since you treat me with sincerity, then I will also treat you sincerely. We are comrades willing to brave life and death together, advancing hand-in-hand without ever giving up!

Li Yingjie was very quickly carted away, leaving a still relatively conscious Song Lianlu on the field. Tang Yu announced expressionlessly, “The second match, 4th year Song Lianlu of the Leiting Mecha Clan wins! Overall, the score is now at 1-1.”

Tang Yu had just announced the results when Song Lianlu on the other side could not hold on any longer either, collapsing to the ground in a dead faint. Tang Yu could only send someone to cart Song Lianlu to the treatment centre as well. It had only been two matches, but all four fighters involved had had to be admitted into the treatment centre — it was clear to see how intense the fights were this time.

A cold gleam flashed through Ling Lan’s eyes, and the surrounding temperature dropped by several degrees. Qi Long and Wu Jiong could not help but shiver — without having to ask, they knew that Boss Lan was currently very angry, otherwise the temperature would not drop so significantly. Still, they were very happy to see Boss Lan react this way. This meant that Boss Lan was about to go berserk, and the fate of the Leiting contingent could only be even worse than Luo Lang and Li Yingjie’s.

Qi Long and Wu Jiong’s anticipatory schadenfreude was, at the heart of it, because Leiting had been too brutal. Their fighters had had no intention of stopping the moment victory was determined ². Otherwise, Luo Lang and Li Yingjie would not have been injured so badly, and Ling Lan would not have become so angry.

Following Tang Yu’s announcement, the waiting Lin Zhidong finally let out a sigh of relief. They had finally won this match. He had not expected the opponent to be this strong, able to fight so fiercely against Leiting’s representative ... Lin Zhidong was somewhat regretful — perhaps he should have found out more about the opponents before making arrangements. However, he only wavered for an instant, and then Lin Zhidong’s eyes became steady again.

With the overall score at 1-1, the two sides were again at the starting line. Of the subsequent three matches, he only needed to win two, and Leiting would win this wagered fight. Compared to the other

side who had already played all their trump cards, he still had two of the strongest jokers³ in his hand — this fight, it was impossible for him to lose.

Lin Zhidong looked towards the two seniors seated beside him watching the fights, and a trace of respect shone in his eyes. With a bowed posture, he softly asked one of them, “Senior Feng-ming, the next match, I may have to trouble you to fight, to clinch another victory for Leiting.” These two powerhouses were not people he could order around casually; he needed to ask whether they were willing.

One of them, the man Lin Zhidong had called Senior Feng-ming, laughed brightly at the question, “Seeing them fight so well, my hands have indeed begun to itch. The next round, I’ll fight.”

His smile as wide as ever, he turned his head to look in the direction of the New Cadet Regiment area. His gaze was tinged with admiration and approval; it looked like he had a very good impression of the New Cadet Regiment. In the end, he did not forget to advise, “Zhidong, if Leiting really wins, inform Qiao Ting that we cannot bully them. We need to cultivate them well. They will definitely become the future supporting pillars of our Leiting.”

Freshly admitted into the military academy, and they were already able to fight on equal terms with older cadets like themselves — he believed that the futures of these youths would perhaps be even better than theirs.

Lin Zhidong smiled and nodded. “That goes without saying. Otherwise, I would not have arranged this wagered fight.” The connotation was that he had set his sights on the other side, which was why he wanted to take them in wholesale.

Senior Feng-ming nodded and said nothing more. Meanwhile, the other strong and good-looking youth beside him said levelly, “The freshmen this year are indeed very strong!”

“Boss Huo?” Senior Feng-ming turned in bewilderment to stare at his team leader, unsure why the other would say this.

“Two Qi-Jin stage masters have already come out. What level is the remaining three at?” The good-looking youth said with a half-smile and a quirked brow.

Senior Feng-ming began to muse in silence at those words, while Lin Zhidong had also been startled into realisation. Slackjawed, he asked, “Boss Huo, you mean ... no, they can’t all be at Qi-Jin stage!” Lin Zhidong shook his head repeatedly in denial, “That’s definitely impossible. How could there be so many Qi-Jin stage masters among the freshmen? Two or three would already be stretching the limits ... they must be using the principle of Tianji’s horse racing. The next one must definitely be their strongest fighter.”

Hearing this, the good-looking youth only swept a dispassionate gaze at the somewhat panicking Lin Zhidong, mentally shaking his head. Although Lin Zhidong performed pretty well on all fronts, he was still not from the military strategy specialization after all, unable to truly hold steady during times of crisis ... However, this was already Qiao Ting’s problem. Since he had already let go, he needed to believe that Qiao Ting could support the whole of Leiting.

On the other side, Lin Zhidong had just submitted the name list when Little Four alerted Ling Lan, saying, "Boss, the other side has sent out Nie Feng-ming!"

"The second strongest, is it?" Currently, Ling Lan could only send out either Qi Long or Wu Jiong. Comparatively, the public regiment commander Wu Jiong could less afford to lose. Ling Lan's gaze landed decisively on Qi Long. Although Qi Long's physical skills level was higher than Wu Jiong's by two levels, he was still no match for the opponent. Still, Ling Lan believed that Qi Long would be able to learn much from this fight ...

"Qi Long, prepare to fight!" Ling Lan ordered.

At her words, Wu Jiong's spirits sank as Qi Long shouted excitedly, "Got it, Boss!"

Both of them had had their fighting spirits stoked by the previous two matches and wanted to be the third to fight. Unfortunately, Ling Lan had chosen Qi Long in the end. Thus, one dejected, one gleeful — two distinctly different expressions appeared just like that before Ling Lan.

Facing the endlessly mournful and piteous signals Wu Jiong was emitting, Ling Lan rubbed her brow and said helplessly, "Wu Jiong, you'll get your turn. Don't rush."

Ling Lan's words made Wu Jiong's eyes light up, and he instantly tucked away his previously mournful expression as he threw a smug look in Qi Long's direction. *You can bloody enjoy yourself in this match first; next round is my turn.*

Right then, Wu Jiong did not know that Qi Long was actually a pitiful cannon fodder Ling Lan had sent off to die — obtaining the final victory would depend on him and Ling Lan.

Tang Yu received the name lists sent by both sides and the moment time was up, he announced, "Leiting Mecha Clan vs New Cadet Regiment, 3rd round, 5th year Nie Feng-ming against 1st year Qi Long."

This announcement caused a commotion to break out below the stage. In particular, those older cadets sported faces full of shock. They had never expected that, for this match, Leiting would actually dig out their previous vice regiment commander. Since he had appeared, then would the previous Leiting regiment commander appear as well? That person was the number one within the military academy for physical combat!

After both representatives had stepped onto the stage, having obtained confirmation from both sides that they were ready, Colonel Tang Yu coolly declared, "Match start!"

Following this cry, Nie Feng-ming made the same decision as Song Lianlu earlier. He wanted to observe the opponent's strength before making a decision, so he did not launch an attack. Instead, he immediately moved into a defensive position, his eyes closely watching the opponent's stance and movements.

Nie Feng-ming thought that his opponent would do the same, but Qi Long surprised him. After jumping back and forth several times to stretch and loosen his muscles, Qi Long suddenly accelerated and charged forwards, coming up to Nie Feng-ming in the blink of an eye, lifting a hand to send a fist hurtling straight at the other's face.

Qi Long's fighting style was not like the typical balanced, simultaneously offensive and defensive, combat of the Chinese Federation. His style was closer to that of the neighbouring Caesar Empire — full-force attacks, substituting offence as defence. It could almost be said that defence did not exist for Qi Long.

Although Ling Lan had always wanted Qi Long to learn some defence, after multiple sessions of intense torment, Qi Long had walked onto a different path of training. Since he could not defend well, then he might as well not defend at all and focus all of his strength into increasing his body's resistance and ability to take hits ⁴. Within Ling Lan's learning space, this type of training method was named Body Refining. It was one of the hardest paths to walk, but once it came to fruition, according to Ling Lan, he would have an indestructible body, able to withstand up to 100,000 catties ⁵ of force.

Thus, Nie Feng-ming was destined to have no chance of observing his opponent — a wild barrage of attacks had begun bearing down on him.

Nie Feng-ming weaved left and right, finally dodging this sudden wild attack of Qi Long's. He was almost drenched in cold sweat by fear. It was fortunate that he had plenty of battle experience — if someone weaker were in his place, they would certainly have been pummelled silly, falling in bafflement beneath these flurry of wild punches before they could even show what they could do.

Nie Feng-ming gradually got used to this unreasonable and brutish method of attacking — he began to inject some counterattacks in between his initial dodging. The two fighters went back and forth exchanging blows, throwing punches and kicks. The fighting was intense; it was difficult to determine who would win anytime soon.

Watching this, Tang Yu's eyebrows quirked and a slight smile emerged on his face. At the beginning, Qi Long's disorganised attack made him think that this youth was the weakest representative of the New Cadet Regiment, perhaps only included to make up the numbers. But now from the looks of it, he had misjudged.

His seemingly reckless actions were actually very systematic — every attack was directed at a tricky spot which would harass the opponent. Even more astounding was the fact that the trajectory of his every attack also shielded all the fatal weaknesses and openings of his own body very well. If the opponent wanted to strike those spots, he would have to choose to battle it out with Qi Long with brute force, otherwise his efforts would be futile.

Colonel Tang Yu was filled with silent admiration. Who'd have thought that there would be so many highly talented youths among this year's freshmen? This youth especially, had progressed even further than his previous two teammates in the realm of physical skills. It could even be said that, while others were still at the stage of learning through mimicry, he had already begun to seek out and develop a combat style exclusive to himself.

Tang Yu's gaze was involuntarily drawn to peer at the area below the stage. There were still two more youths ... would they be just as outstanding?

Chapter 256: The Unkillable Roachie!

In the rest area of the Leiting Mecha Clan, the expressions of many had turned extremely ugly. Who the heck was this youth? Why could he fight evenly with their previous vice regiment commander?

Lin Zhidong could not help but ask Boss Huo beside him, "Boss Huo, can you tell what level that youth is at?" As Qi Long was the primary attacker right now, with Nie Feng-ming defending passively, it was hard to tell for now what realm the opponent's physical skills were at.

Boss Huo responded dispassionately, "It won't be lower than Feng-ming's by much, otherwise Feng-ming would not be so passive. However, this is just temporary." No matter how strong someone at the early stages of Qi-Jin was, they would not be able to hinder Nie Feng-ming to this extent — that youth on the field was certain to already be at the middle stages of Qi-Jin. The only question was which minor level in the middle stages he was at.

Lin Zhidong's face paled at these words, and he said with a rasp, "Middle stage Qi-Jin? How can this be?" For the past few years, even if the freshmen had great talent, some admitted at the level of Qi-Jin, they would still only have just stepped into early stage Qi-Jin. Take Zhang Jing-an for example. Looking back throughout the history of the military academy, it was still only that one year 20 years ago, when General Ling Xiao had entered the academy, that a student had entered the school already at the middle stage of Qi-Jin. It had caused a rather large commotion back then.

With a troubled expression, Lin Zhidong looked towards that youth engaged in a close fight on the stage with Nie Feng-ming. Could this be the aberrant Zhang Jing-an had been talking about?

With much difficulty, Lin Zhidong pressed down the shock in his heart to say resentfully, "I just knew it. For the third round they would definitely send out the strongest one in their team. Luckily I had arranged for Senior Feng-ming to fight ..." If he had sent out their weakest member here, they would very likely have already lost this match. He had initially thought to easily finish off the other side with a breezy 3-0, yet the score was now already 1-1. However, Lin Zhidong still hoped that Leiting could be ahead in points overall, so they would be able to fight from a superior position instead of being pressured to perform with a disadvantage in the count.

Hearing this, Boss Huo could not help but glance at the rest area of the New Cadet Regiment. Was this youth on the stage right now really their strongest fighter? Why had there been a sudden flash of cold air just earlier, which had made fear stir in his heart? Was it an illusion, or was there some powerful instructor from the academy present? Boss Huo could not find an answer, and so could only set aside the concerns in his heart and continue to watch the fight on the stage.

Meanwhile, on the side of the New Cadet Regiment, only Wu Jiong remained by Ling Lan's side. He was clenching his fists, expression nervous as he kept a close watch on the stage. Seeing Qi Long push back the opponent again and again, he could not hold back the joy from his face as he turned to Ling Lan and asked, "Boss Lan, don't you think Qi Long has a chance to win this match?" Qi Long was fighting so well, and he had always been very strong — he would not disappoint them.

Right then, Ling Lan had her arms folded across her chest as she coolly watched the moves exchanged by the fighters on the stage. This was her usual habit — copying the combat moves of the real world and feeding them into the learning space. Besides being able to earn some amount of contribution points this way, she could also obtain the improved and further refined ultimate moves developed by the

instructors based on the moves she fed the learning space for free. From Ling Lan's perspective, this could be said to be killing two birds with one stone.

To Wu Jiong's question, she replied instantly, "The fight has just begun, it is too early to determine."

Frankly, Ling Lan could see very clearly that it actually was not impossible for Qi Long to win, but the probability was extremely small. Even though he seemed to be fighting his opponent evenly for now, the fight appearing to be extremely exciting, Ling Lan could clearly sense that the flow of the match was already gradually leaning in favour of Nie Feng-ming. If Qi Long continued to fight like this, his chances of winning would only keep decreasing.

But would Qi Long change his fighting style? No! Thus, Qi Long's loss, Ling Lan could already almost see it ...

However, it was not completely impossible — all of it would depend on whether Qi Long could achieve a personal breakthrough on the stage. To overpower the strong from a weaker position, the chance lay in securing a breakthrough during the fight, and Qi Long truly had the potential to do so.

Ling Lan could not help but recall the time back when they had been six years old, during the entrance test of the Central Scout Academy — Qi Long's combat moves had been extremely immature, but he had unexpectedly achieved a personal breakthrough then ... perhaps she could place a little hope on this.

The people below the stage were nervous and conflicted, while the two on the stage were getting more and more engrossed in their fight. Qi Long's combat style had always been attack, attack, attack, with no pauses to take stock or defend. He was the type who became more and more berserk as he fought — the more pressure he was under, the harder he fought back. In Ling Lan's words, he was an unkillable roachie. Therefore, despite Nie Feng-ming having the upper hand in terms of the flow of the match, in terms of attack, Qi Long seemed to be on a roll. With the exception of people like Ling Lan whose realm was high enough to discern the true face of things, the other people were all watching as if through cloud and mist. Even if Leiting was extremely confident in Nie Feng-ming, they could not help but find their hearts beating erratically at this moment.

"What's going on?" Lin Zhidong was flustered, "Boss Huo, didn't you say Senior Feng-ming would take control of the situation? Why isn't there any sign of this even now?"

Boss Huo's thick eyebrows knitted tightly, and he replied, "Don't rush, keep watching! The opponent is not weak, but, I estimate that he is weaker than Feng-ming by one minor level ..."

"Boss Huo, you've made out the levels?" Pleasant surprise bloomed on Lin Zhidong's face. As long as the opponent was not stronger than Senior Feng-ming, he was not afraid.

"Hn. The spots that the opponent has been attacking are all the weak points of Feng-ming's moves, making it very uncomfortable for Feng-ming to fight." Boss Huo's eyebrows remained locked together. "The opponent seems to know Feng-ming's combat moves very well ... leading Feng-ming to be countered at every turn. Still, even so, the opponent has no way of taking Feng-ming down. Based on this point alone, we can tell that the opponent's strength is weaker than Feng-ming's, otherwise Feng-ming would be finding it even more difficult to fight."

“Then, when will Senior Feng-ming be able to turn the situation around?” Lin Zhidong’s combat realm was too low, so he really could not tell anything much from watching. He could only ask Boss Huo once again.

Boss Huo answered, “Wait patiently for a little longer. It should be soon.” He had barely finished saying that when he suddenly smiled and added, “There’s no need to wait anymore. Feng-ming is already turning things around now. He should finish off the opponent very quickly.”

Only at this point did Boss Huo notice the shifting of the flow towards Feng-ming. The time it took for him to come to this conclusion was obviously behind Ling Lan’s — it was clear to see that in terms of vision, Boss Huo was no match for Ling Lan.

However, Boss Huo was still astounded enough at the capability of this year’s freshmen. Thinking back to when they had first entered the academy, there had only been one early stage Qi-Jin combat master, and that had already been enough to send the military academy into rapture, pooling their resources to focus on cultivating that talent. Who could have imagined that this year, Qi-Jin stage combat masters were almost like a dime a dozen, popping out one after the other ... Was it because Qi-Jin masters were now mainstream, or had their year just been too lousy?

“Could it be that the military academy is about to be turned upside down?” For some reason, Boss Huo suddenly had this thought, but he very soon shook it out of his head. In the military academy, the determination of whether one was strong did not depend on physical skills, but on mecha control. Perhaps, two years later, they would be able to see if these talented youths were equally aberrant when it came to mecha control.

On the stage, as expected, the flow of the match was developing as Ling Lan had predicted. Nie Feng-ming had become used to Qi Long’s berserker style attack mode, and was slowly turning the situation around. Qi Long’s initially fierce attacks gradually toned down, and his attacks even seemed to give off a sense of being forced and restricted. With this, everyone believed that, not too long after, Nie Feng-ming would certainly be able to defeat his opponent, clinching the victory for this round.

However, everyone had been too idealistic — another 50 to 60 moves passed, and still there was no sign of Qi Long’s defeated figure. Even though he was not fighting as freely and wildly as he did at the start, he was still holding on ...

Another ten minutes passed, and Qi Long was still holding on ...

Twenty minutes passed, and Qi Long was still holding on ...

Thirty minutes went by, and Qi Long was still holding on ...

“F*ck, that freshman is really an indestructible cockroach!” Qi Long’s tenacity finally gained him the admiration and respect of some of the older cadets. How was this freshman so tenacious and resistant to damage? Several times, it was obvious that he had been struck by Nie Feng-ming’s fists and legs — many people thought that Qi Long would be injured by this, and that even if he was not hurt, he would still end up shifting his posture and attack stance due to the pain, leading him to lose the ability to use his offence as defence.

Of course, once that happened, Nie Feng-ming would jump on the chance to launch consecutive attacks and bring him down completely. But surprisingly, even after taking several attacks, Qi Long seemed not to feel anything. The attack motions of his hands were not at all affected — instead, Nie Feng-ming was greatly shocked by Qi Long's pain-free reaction, so much so that *he* forgot to continue attacking. This gave Qi Long a breather and he forcefully tided his way through the attack.

“Damn, does that fellow not have any pain receptors?” Many times they saw Nie Feng-ming's forceful fists strike the other's body — even the audience watching from below could feel their bodies ache in sympathetic pain, but Qi Long remained indifferent, no change at all in his expression.

“What a monster!” Even if his strength was weaker than themselves, meeting such an opponent would cause anyone to have a headache. Frankly, Nie Feng-ming currently indeed found himself presented with a terrible headache. He even wondered if this youth before him was a robot, just cloaked in a layer of human skin.

“Looks like this match has turned into a fight of endurance. Now we just need to see who runs out of stamina first.” Those who were astute had already figured out that the outcome of the fight would not be determined anytime soon.

“That body of Qi Long's is truly abnormal. Even though he's hit, it looks as if he was only tickled. This match is going to drag on for a while; it would be great if the opponent could be worn down.” Wu Jiong stared excitedly at the stage. Every time he saw Qi Long fight, he would be unbelievably excited. It could not be helped — Qi Long's combat style was just like that, every punch meeting flesh, no flairs and dramatics, his pure strength doing all the talking.

“The opponent is extremely collected. At present, Qi Long has no advantage!” Ling Lan replied with a frown. Qi Long may be acting extremely nonchalant, but she had still seen his face twitch slightly whenever he had been hit. It wasn't that it didn't hurt — Qi Long was just suppressing it by force.

Great. Each one of this bunch of brats is even more tolerant than the one before ... they were all bloody turning into teenage mutant ninja turtles ¹ now. She could only hope Qi Long's internal injuries were not too severe, otherwise he would not be able to hold up for long. Ling Lan worried in her heart.

Ling Lan actually did not mind whether Qi Long won or lost. She only hoped that Qi Long would be able to find a chance to breakthrough during this match, pushing past his current bottleneck.

Mind you, Qi Long had been stuck at middle stage Qi-Jin for almost a full year now — although she had sought Qi Long out whenever she had time to spar with him and put him through the wringer, the effects had been insignificant. Perhaps Qi Long had already gotten used to her combat methods, for his bottleneck had not budged at all from their sessions. This was also why Ling Lan had chosen to let Qi Long clash with the second strongest on the opposing team. Even as Ling Lan plotted to ensure the final victory would be theirs, she also hoped Qi Long would be able to benefit from this fight.

“The opponent is pulling away!” Wu Jiong suddenly stood up to shout. At the same time, the development playing out on the stage made Ling Lan's brow crease into a deep furrow.

Chapter 257: Breakthrough in a Hopeless Situation!

Nie Feng-ming, who had been fighting close to Qi Long all this while, suddenly retreated, distancing himself from Qi Long. Qi Long had never been a fighter who relied on speed. He was unable to keep up with the opponent's unexpected move, and a considerable distance was put between them.

A cold light flashed through Ling Lan's eyes — she knew that Nie Feng-ming was probably about to unleash some ultimate move!

Sure enough, Nie Feng-ming suddenly crouched low and then sprang up into the air. Airborne, a surge of Qi seemed to flow from the soles of his feet into his right arm.

With an audible tearing sound, Nie Feng-ming's right arm bulged — the rippling muscles tore through his school uniform, his sleeves turning into tatters.

"Pneumatic Punch!" Nie Feng-ming shouted, his right hand clenched into a tight fist which was hurtling towards Qi Long.

"Good timing!" The fighting spirit in Qi Long's eyes flared. Even if he knew he was no match for the opponent, Qi Long would never cower. He resolutely threw out his own right fist in response, "Take my One-Inch Punch!" Only the 3rd form of One-Inch Punch would be able to help him weather this move.

Seeing this scene unfold, even someone as calm and composed as Ling Lan could no longer sit still. She stood up abruptly, her expression coldly focused as she waited for the final outcome.

The two punches collided with a loud 'boom!' — endless energy surged from the two fists, radiating out from where the fists were connected. This surge of energy shook the entire stage, causing the stage to actually emit groaning noises, creaking as it begun to quake.

Beneath the feet of the two fighters, the ground suddenly shattered. Of course, this was just virtual 3D imaging, but it made the audience feel as if it were real. It was as if the stage beneath the fighters' feet would really be unable to hold on past the next second and thoroughly collapse.

The cracks spread rapidly outwards — the speed and range of those around Nie Feng-ming were slower and smaller, while those around Qi Long were quicker and larger. This point alone proved that the stacked strength Qi Long was wielding with the aid of the 3rd form of One-Inch Punch was still a bracket inferior to the opponent's in terms of internal energy. If not, the remnant force from his opponent beneath his feet would not be so large ¹.

Both fists stayed connected for several seconds; in the end, the two of them could not withstand the opposing forces and were sent flying back at the same time.

With a somersault in the air, Nie Feng-ming dispersed the reaction force and landed soundly on one corner of the stage. Still, even so, he felt his Qi and blood roiling in his chest, a sickly sweet coppery taste at the back of his throat surging to get out. He clenched his teeth and forcefully pushed back this bloody Qi. As the second strongest person in Leiting for physical skills combat, he would not allow himself to be visibly injured on the stage. This was his pride.

Meanwhile, Qi Long was in a worse state. He had no way of dispersing the energy as casually as Nie Feng-ming had — he was instantly sent flying, and in the air, he could not stop himself from spewing out a mouthful of blood.

Qi Long's body had initially already been injured by the opponent; he had merely been suppressing it by relying on his tough body. However, at this moment, being pressured by this tremendous surge of Qi-Jin from the opponent, he could no longer hold back the extent of his injuries. Not only that, this forceful clash had heaped yet more injury on top of his previous injuries, thus resulting in his spewing of blood the moment he was sent flying.

Qi Long was not as vain as Nie Feng-ming — since he could not do it, he might as well not force it. He allowed his body to slam heavily onto the stage, leaving a dent on the already crumbling stage.

Qi Long pressed a hand to his chest as he fell to the ground. By this time, Colonel Tang Yu had already come up to his side, and he crouched down to ask, "Qi Long, can you still fight?" He did not ask him whether he admitted defeat, instead asking whether he could still fight — this was because the impression Qi Long had made in Colonel Tang Yu's mind was that he was a youth who absolutely would not admit defeat.

Qi Long's lips split into a wide grin as he replied loudly, "Fight! Why wouldn't I fight? As long as I can still move, I'll fight till the end."

Even though Qi Long had no dignity to speak of at this moment — his mouth and lips all coated with blood, looking somewhat frightening — his grin and those words and tone filled with conviction moved Colonel Tang Yu. Qi Long's honest face carried a look of determination and a somewhat silly smile, but it was much purer than those clever people and their schemes. He was someone who devoted his entire body and soul into combat — this kind of person would often climb much higher than those intelligent prodigies, walking further than they ever could.

Colonel Tang Yu felt his initially cold and hardened heart begin to burn, and he shouted out loud, "Good! Then let the fight continue!"

Tang Yu abruptly stood up and took two steps back to stand in the middle of the stage. This meant that the match was in a temporary time-out — the fight would need his declaration to resume.

A trace of gratitude flashed across Qi Long's drooping eyes. He looked to be unbelievably guileless, like such a nice guy, but Han Jijyun had always claimed he was in fact very black-bellied — he understood all the things he truly needed to understand. Indeed, that was true — like right now, Colonel Tang Yu's actions may not have been explicitly explained, but Qi Long still understood that the other was helping him.

Interrupting the fight was extremely advantageous to Qi Long. This gave him a chance to catch his breath and deal somewhat with his injuries. It also gave him the time to settle his chaotic Qi-Jin to restore some of his fighting strength.

Qi Long did not sit to rest, but slowly climbed off the ground. He could not let Colonel Tang Yu's good intentions be noticed by anyone else. Colonel Tang Yu saw Qi Long's slow movements, and a trace of approval flashed through his eyes. Able to use the time he had to recover his strength without any outward signs, this silly little fellow was not truly silly. However, this was even better. There were way too many plots and schemes in this world — even someone as formidable as god-class operator General Ling Xiao had not been able to avoid being set up and harmed — a little adaptability was never out of place.

Although Qi Long had obtained a chance to catch his breath, the time was not very long. In the span of a few breaths, Qi Long had stood up straight again.

“Can we start now?” Tang Yu asked Qi Long once again. Seeing Qi Long nod, he then turned to ask the same to Nie Feng-ming, and seeing Nie Feng-ming nod as well, he waved his arm and yelled, “The fight continues!”

During the time when Colonel Tang Yu had paused the match, Lin Zhidong had not been able to stop himself from frowning. He said, “Boss Huo, Colonel Tang Yu seems to be intentionally dragging the time.” Even though Colonel Tang Yu was the teacher adviser of Leiting’s regiment commander Qiao Ting, with regards to this wagered battle, Colonel Tang Yu was obviously leaning towards the side of the New Cadet Regiment.

“Hn, Colonel Tang Yu has a very favourable impression of this batch of new cadets. Looks like the six-person quota of next year has largely been decided now,” Boss Huo sighed. Initially, he had hoped Leiting’s freshmen would be able to secure one or two of the slots, but now, it looked like the chances were low.

Lin Zhidong gaped and said, “You’re saying ... these freshmen?”

“What do you think? Able to represent the New Cadet Regiment, these must be their strongest. And these people will undoubtedly be the future students of the mecha classes. Just the three freshmen who have already come out to fight are already enough to please Colonel Tang Yu ... I only hope that the next two are truly, as you say, the weakest of the New Cadet Regiment’s line-up. That way, our Leiting freshmen may still have some hope of becoming Colonel Tang Yu’s students.”

Lin Zhidong could see Boss Huo’s displeasure, and said in response, “Boss Huo, as long as we win this wagered battle, we will be able to take in the entire New Cadet Regiment. Then, Colonel Tang Yu will still be the mecha instructor of Leiting.”

“You’re not wrong, but outsiders will never truly put their full effort into serving Leiting. I will still rest easier if our own Leiting people manage to obtain some slots,” said Boss Huo with a solemn tone.

People they added in from the outside could be utilised, and utilised well at that, but the full future of Leiting could not be entrusted to them. If by any chance the other held some grudge in their hearts and betrayed them from the inside, then it would truly be a tragedy for Leiting.

Lin Zhidong’s heart clenched in fright, and he hurried to nod and say, “Boss Huo speaks truly. I will be careful. There is still one year’s time. By whatever means, I will find a way to let Colonel Tang Yu accept one of Leiting’s best talents.”

At that, Boss Huo was finally satisfied. “That’ll be fine!”

Lin Zhidong went silent however, beginning to wonder whether his initial thinking had been too simple. As Boss Huo had said, could outsiders really become the future pillars of Leiting?

On the stage, following Colonel Tang Yu's declaration to begin, Nie Feng-ming pounced. The opponent looked like he was at the end of his rope — if he did not attack now, was he going to wait until the opponent had recovered even more to fight? Nie Feng-ming would not let this opportunity go by.

One punch, two punches, three punches — every punch landed on flesh. Even though Qi Long had gained some time, it had not been enough for the roiling Qi-Jin in his body to settle back to normal. Therefore, when Nie Feng-ming attacked, despite wanting to punch back and block, Qi Long found that he actually no longer had the strength to swing his fists. He could only watch helplessly as he was struck.

Following these few punches, a great amount of blood once more poured from Qi Long's mouth. It went without question that his internal injuries were worsening. Qi Long did not know how much longer he could hold on for, but he could not resign himself to being defeated just like that. He thought of Luo Lang, who had been willing to take the risk and activate his innate talent for the sake of victory, and he also thought of Li Yingjie who, despite losing, had savagely taken a chunk of the opponent's flesh in recompense².

Qi Long's eyes once again blazed with fire — what his companions could do, he needed to be able to do too! Even if he could not win, he would make the opponent pay a hefty price!

Qi Long's mind became sharper and sharper — even if he did not have any strength left to swing his fists, his eyes were locked tight on the opponent's fists, watching as those fists struck his body again and again ...

How did it feel like to watch personally as he was tormented by another? Qi Long did not know. All Qi Long knew was that he had not been able to clearly see the opponent's fists at first, but those fists gradually slowed down in his vision, until it seemed as if they were moving in slow motion, individual still frames in his eyes.

From the moment the opponent began circulating his Qi, to the channeling of power into his fists, all of it was presented before him. The attack trajectory of the punches were so clear, unlike before when he had to estimate where the opponent would attack from. Now, he could see so clearly just by using his eyes — he could even determine from his vision which part was the point powering the attack just from its trajectory.

He knew that as long as his fist hit that spot, not only would he not feel the other's strength, that strength would also backfire on the opponent. But he just godd*mn couldn't move right now! If he could move, he would be able to hit that spot, and he believed that he would not lose!

Qi Long was currently extremely frustrated. If he still had the energy, if he could still fight back ... at this moment, Qi Long found to his pleasant surprise that his hand had moved. However, it could not keep up with the speed he needed — he had no way of reaching that spot with the time it would take his hand to get there.

No, he could not give up just like this! Right then, Qi Long could no longer feel the intense pain throughout his body. At that moment, there was only one thought in his mind — faster, faster, and even faster — to let his fist reach that spot in the time he needed it to ...

Ling Lan, who had initially sat down again and was just watching Qi Long be abused, was forcefully holding back her desire to step in. When she saw Qi Long's fist twitch, her eyes abruptly brightened.

However, Ling Lan feared that this was just a subconscious action of Qi Long's, and so remained reserved. But when she saw Qi Long's speed become increasingly faster, actually exceeding his original top speed in the end, she stood up once more.

At this moment, Ling Lan's eyes revealed her pleasant surprise. Could Qi Long really be this lucky? Actually breaking through in this sort of hopeless situation?

BAM! BAM! BAM! These were the sounds of punches striking flesh!

Nie Feng-ming's forehead was already coated with layers of sweat tracks. He did not know how many iron fists he had landed on the opponent's body, but other than some muscles spasms right at the start and some minor reactions to the pain, the opponent had actually not displayed any signs of feeling in the following few attacks. Not only that, the pressure the opponent was exerting on him was getting heavier and heavier — he was even beginning to question whether he was actually fighting a human being anymore.

Nie Feng-ming's attacks became increasingly quicker, his fists raining down on Qi Long's body like a torrential downpour. The blood flowing from Qi Long's lips continued to increase, until he was puking it out by the mouthful. Everyone thought that Qi Long no longer had any ability to fight back, that he would only be able to stand there and let Nie Feng-ming beat him as he liked ...

Even Colonel Tang Yu could not help but wonder whether he should just announce Qi Long's loss, but Qi Long's eyes were still shining with determination. It was as if he had never lost his ability to fight, and was only waiting for the opportune chance.

"Bam!" This sound was different from the ones before it. Everyone stared in astonishment at the youth with his blood-soaked grin. Qi Long, who seemed as if he had no strength left to lift his fist and block, had actually managed to lift his fist to accurately meet the other's attacking fist. That sound just now was precisely the sound of the meeting of the two fists ...

"Great!" Right here and now, even those seniors who did not think well of the new cadets could not help but cheer for Qi Long! Such an unkillable cockroach ... under such circumstances, which everyone had thought was completely hopeless, he had finally counterattacked.

"What is this?" Nie Feng-ming's expression finally changed. He began to doubt himself — could it be that his fists had no strength at all behind them? Was this why he was unable to bring down the opponent, finally giving the other a chance to counterattack?

"Feng-ming, don't blank out, continue to fight!" Boss Huo saw Nie Feng-ming's expression of confusion, and quickly stood up to shout him out of it. As an outside observer, he could naturally tell that Qi Long's internal injuries had already reached a limit. Nie Feng-ming would only need to add on a few more hits to completely defeat the opponent — no, perhaps just one more hit would do.

Nie Feng-ming quickly regained his senses. With a grit of his teeth, he swung his fists up again and sent them punching out fiercely at this youth before him!

"Bam!" What he struck was still the opponent's fist. The other had not punched any slower than he had, perfectly intercepting his own punch at the point where his strength had not reached its maximum,

preventing him from using his full strength. It felt as horrible as being purposefully interrupted just when one was planning to relieve one's bowels³.

"I do not believe you can keep intercepting my fists!" Nie Feng-ming was already heated up from the battle. His fists rained down like a thunderstorm, but every punch was intercepted by Qi Long, each one intercepted at that most uncomfortable spot.

"Argh!" After punching for who knows how many times, Nie Feng-ming suddenly felt the hot blood roiling in his chest. His mouth opened and a mouthful of blood sprayed out, staining Qi Long's chest.

The many accurate blocks had caused his strength to be repressed, forced back into his body since it could not be released. After these multiple stunted attacks, his internal organs could no longer handle the accumulated backflow of energy, finally resulting in internal damage, causing him to no longer be able to hold back from puking blood.

Chapter 258: Fatal Weakness!

"Ah, what's going on? Why is Nie Feng-ming throwing up blood too? The opponent didn't even hit him!" The spectating people were all dumbfounded. Even some of those combat experts were boggled, with only a few people at a higher realm becoming speculative ...

Inside the Wuji box, Han Yu, Wei Ji, and the rest, who had initially been happily chatting and joking around, not thinking much of this match, finally found their expression's twisting in shock. Han Yu in particular could not help but exclaim, "What the bloody hell is going on? It can't be that this is a supernatural encounter, right?"

The opponent was clearly not as skilled as Nie Feng-ming, and he had already been pummelled by Nie Feng-ming till he was half-crippled — even stranger was the fact that Nie Feng-ming had not been hit whatsoever ... how then had he mysteriously gotten injured to the point that he was puking out blood?

Li Lanfeng and Zhao Jun shared a glance, Zhao Jun's eyes similarly brimming with confusion. This was because there was no one who could intercept an opponent so many times at the precise spot where the opponent's strength was the weakest. As this bizarre situation had never occurred before, most people just could not conceive of it, and hence were unable to figure things out.

Li Lanfeng's eyes remained as calm as before, but inside his heart, he kept thinking that those movements were rather familiar — it was as if somewhere deep in his memory, someone else had done something similar before ...

When Nie Feng-ming began throwing up blood, he had no choice but to stop attacking. He leapt back abruptly, pulling away, thinking that Qi Long would follow him, but unexpectedly, Qi Long only stood there, not moving a single step. Instead, Qi Long's eyes were wide as he continued to sport his split-mouthed grin — backdropped by his bloody face, his expression seemed rather stiff and eerie.

Nie Feng-ming swiped at the blood on the corner of his lips, eyes trained on this unbeatable youth before him. No matter how steady and level-headed he was, at this moment, he could not help but become anxious internally. He sorely wished he could strike this detestable youth down with one punch and end this unending sticky-candy of a match.

“Feng-ming, be patient!” Right then, Nie Feng-ming heard a familiar voice ring out from behind him. Turning to look, he saw that Boss Huo had already come up to the edge of the stage, and was giving him a quiet reminder.

As long as the people by the stage did not climb onto the stage, verbal communication was within allowed parameters during the fights. Thus, Ling Lan’s words to Li Yingjie, as well as Boss Huo’s words now to Nie Feng-ming, were all considered legal actions — neither side would have any objections.

Nie Feng-ming nodded at Boss Huo, his initially slightly restless and impatient heart settling down. He turned once more to look at the motionless Qi Long — it was just as Boss Huo had said, the current Qi Long was not the Qi Long at the beginning of the match. Even though he looked half-crippled, for Nie Feng-ming to truly defeat the other, he needed to first find a way to avoid the other’s perfectly timed interceptions.

Nie Feng-ming took a deep breath and moved. However, the direction he chose to attack in was no longer straight on, but from the side — he was betting that Qi Long’s broken body was unable to move.

As expected, Qi Long’s body did not move — his head did not even twitch. Only one fist again appeared abruptly before his eyes, again aiming for that most uncomfortable spot.

So the side doesn’t work? Nie Feng-ming leapt back the moment his fist bumped Qi Long’s. He then once again changed directions to get behind Qi Long.

This scene made everyone cry out in shock, because they all knew what Nie Feng-ming was planning — he wanted to attack Qi Long from behind. This action might seem somewhat unsporting, but on the battlefield, there was no such thing as fairness. Only the person who survived would be the winner.

However, were things really as he imagined them to be? Just as his foot was about to hit Qi Long’s back, he suddenly found that a large fist was once more before his eyes, accurately striking the side of his kneecap.

There was a ‘crack!’ — this was the sound of a joint being dislocated. Qi Long’s strength had accurately struck at the most fragile spot on Nie Feng-ming’s leg, finally causing Nie Feng-ming to grunt involuntarily.

Nie Feng-ming was no ordinary person — even though his knee had been unexpectedly dislocated by Qi Long, he did not yell out. With a stomp of his left leg, he flew backwards to once again stand at his original position. However, now he was using only his left leg as his support. His right leg was dragging on the ground, no longer able to exert any energy.

Qi Long had in fact not turned around completely. He had only shifted half a step, but this half step had been enough for Qi Long to obtain the angle he needed to swing his fist, intercepting the opponent’s attack in a timely manner while bringing him the unexpected benefit of wounding the other further.

With this, the outcome of the match was once more shrouded in mystery — it was possible for either side to win or lose. After all, one person’s body was heavily injured, while the other’s right knee was dislocated. The scales of the match were once again balanced. At this point, even Boss Huo from Leitong could not help but frown, because now even he could not tell how this match would turn out.

He peered at Qi Long, who was still wearing that bloody grin, and felt that that grin of his was really too creepy and unnatural. In his memory, the other had seemed to be like this ever since he had begun using that inscrutable fist to intercept Nie Feng-ming's attacks ...

Could it be ...? Boss Huo's gaze lit up, and both his eyes locked onto Qi Long, tracking him closely. The fight was still ongoing — even though Nie Feng-ming's knee was dislocated, this did not prevent him from attacking. Very soon, Qi Long and Nie Feng-ming were once more engaged in combat.

This time, Boss Huo did not spare any of his attention on Nie Feng-ming. He put his entire focus on Qi Long — whether it was Qi Long's smile or gaze or even his reflexive actions, Boss Huo missed none of it. In the end, his eyes brightened even more. He had discovered what condition Qi Long was in right now.

Apparently, Qi Long was already at his limit. The grin on his face was not a true grin, only there because Qi Long just did not have any spare energy to shift the muscles of his face. He had funnelled all his remaining energy into his fists. As long as Nie Feng-ming continued to harass Qi Long, and drain all his energy, the other would fall in due time ...

While Boss Huo was just figuring out Qi Long's condition, Ling Lan, as Qi Long's boss, had already begun frowning deeply the moment Nie Feng-ming had chosen to attack Qi Long's back.

When Qi Long had shifted that half step to counterattack, the furrow of Ling Lan's brow had deepened even further. That's right, at that point, when no one else had noticed anything, Ling Lan had already discerned that Qi Long was already running on fumes.

For that half step, Qi Long had had to hold back the agonizing pain all across his body to move with a Herculean effort. Beneath both of Qi Long's almost immobile feet were two average-sized puddles. The puddles did not consist of the blood Qi Long had spat out from his mouth, but of sweat which had poured from his body when he had pushed through the pain to execute that half step ...

Ling Lan closed her eyes in regret, feeling sorry for Qi Long. She knew Qi Long's personality well — as long as there was a chance of winning, he would not think of losing at all. However, Qi Long's breakthrough had still been too late. His internal injuries were too severe; his broken body simply could not support his counterattack.

However, this pity Ling Lan felt only lasted for a brief instant. What she prioritised the most was still the improvement Qi Long had gained in this match. Trading one defeat for Qi Long's breakthrough, Ling Lan felt that this was unbelievably worth it.

"Feng-ming, don't be so one-minded! Attack from all angles!" shouted Boss Huo once again.

Nie Feng-ming had the utmost trust in his boss. Thus, hearing his boss's instructions, he did not pause to think about it — with a spring of his left leg, he flew into the air like a large bird of prey. This time, he did not attack Qi Long directly, but in accordance with Boss Huo's instructions, he came up behind Qi Long ...

And then he leapt into the air once more, sending a fist hurtling towards Qi Long's lower back!

With a 'bam!' the two fists collided forcefully. Although Qi Long tried his best to turn around, his battered body would not allow him to abuse it a second time, finally lodging its protest.

This time, Qi Long only managed to shift a small half step, even smaller than that of the first time. Although he did manage to turn, it was not a complete turn, so he did not have the time nor the space and angle to disrupt the opponent's attack. In order to protect his body, he could only take this attack by force.

This was the first direct Qi-Jin confrontation between Qi Long and Nie Feng-ming since Qi Long's breakthrough. The difference was that this attack of Nie Feng-ming's was of a tentative nature, and so did not contain his full power, so Qi Long managed to bear it.

The two fists could be seen to push against each other for about 1 to 2 seconds, and then Nie Feng-ming was sent flying back by the rebound force of the collision. Meanwhile, Qi Long's body swayed violently in place, and the blood which had stopped flowing began to trickle from his mouth once again. Still, even so, he did not retreat even half a step.

It was not that Qi Long did not want to retreat, but once he did, the breath holding him upright would escape. Even under these circumstances, Qi Long still did not want to give up, because he did not want to lose to anyone other than Boss. In Qi Long's mind, he could only lose to Ling Lan.

As expected! Nie Feng-ming landed on one foot, because his other leg was powerless, and to stabilise himself, he had to take several hops back. Though he looked a little clumsy and dishevelled, all this could not stop him from smiling. Due to Boss Huo's advice, he had found Qi Long's fatal weakness.

It turned out that Qi Long was really already at his limit, and could no longer turn around!

"Has it still been exposed in the end?" Ling Lan sighed. Even though Ling Lan had known that Qi Long's weakness would eventually be discovered by the opponent, Ling Lan had still hoped for a lucky fluke in her heart. She had hoped that Qi Long would have a chance to defeat the other before he was figured out by the opponent.

Since Nie Feng-ming had discovered Qi Long's weakness, he naturally did not prolong the fight. He once again moved to Qi Long's back and attacked with a rapid fist ...

Qi Long was still holding on. From the stage, sound after sound of fists colliding could be heard. Following the increase of Nie Feng-ming's strength, the swaying of Qi Long's body became more and more extreme. The blood never stopped flowing from his mouth, instead increasing in volume with time, until it was flowing out like water ...

Now was the time! Nie Feng-ming sensed the power levels from Qi Long's fists once more, and his eyes instantly shone with a radiant light. The next move would be when the outcome would be decided — with just one more punch, he would defeat Qi Long.

However, he did not want to end things like this! As the second strongest combat expert within the military academy, this fight with Qi Long had greatly hurt his pride. Under the situation where he had the full upper hand, he had actually been inflicted with internal injury in a mysterious way. Moreover, the opponent had even found a chance to dislocate his knee. Nie Feng-ming felt that this performance of his was a disgrace. If he could not utterly crush the opponent, he would never be able to lift his head before the people of Leiting ...

A trace a cruelty flashed through Nie Feng-ming's eyes. He took in a powerful breath, concentrating all the Qi-Jin in his body, and shouted, "Pneumatic Punch!"

Chapter 259: Giving Him a Taste of His Own Medicine!

Boss Huo stood up abruptly, yelling in shock, "Feng-ming, stop!"

On the stage, Tang Yu's expression changed drastically. With a shift, his body sprung into motion, prepared to stop this highly destructive ultimate move of Nie Feng-ming. If some major casualty occurred in these fights he was refereeing, it would be a great dereliction of duty ...

There was a 'thwack', clearly distinct from the dull thumps of fists hitting flesh. This sound was obviously much crisper. Everyone found to their shock that, heaven knows when, another person had appeared on the stage.

He stood between Nie Feng-ming and Qi Long, easily holding Nie Feng-ming's fist with one hand. The fluttering of his sleeve proved that this person had just rushed onto the scene.

His fist in the other's palm, Nie Feng-ming's first feeling was that the other's strength was like a bottomless ocean. When the explosive power contained in his fists charged at the other, it was like a stone dropping into a tranquil sea, with nary a splash nor ripple. It was truly as if his strength had been swallowed whole by the boundless depths of the ocean.

This feeling lasted for only a brief instant, and then Nie Feng-ming perceived the opponent's strength as a large mountain — he was only standing there without counterattacking, but Nie Feng-ming could not budge an inch.

What frightened Nie Feng-ming even more was the extremely cold air the other was currently emitting. Nie Feng-ming accidentally made eye contact with the other, and saw endless blood-soaked killing intent. Nie Feng-ming's spirit and body were both already at their limits to begin with, his mental resistance at its lowest — this surge of bloody killing intent struck deep into his inner mind, inciting endless terror, and his body actually began to tremble uncontrollably.

Colonel Tang Yu had finally rushed to Nie Feng-ming's side by this time, but he was a step too late. When he saw that Nie Feng-ming's attack had been intercepted by a passing stranger ¹, he instantly let out a sigh of relief.

However, he soon calmed down and was shocked by a realisation. He had in fact been the person closest to Nie Feng-ming, but the other had arrived a step ahead of him. Didn't this prove that the other was stronger than him?

Tang Yu stared in stupefied wonder at the other. The person was dressed in the regular green military academy uniform, was neither tall nor short, and his figure was somewhat on the slender side, but without the sense of fragile delicacy Luo Lang exuded. His straight-backed figure seemed to contain boundless energy — otherwise, he would not have been able to stop Nie Feng-ming's attack so easily without any harm to himself.

Most surprising was the fact that though he looked extremely cold-hearted and ruthless, this still could not conceal his young and immature face. That unfamiliar face and that extremely common freshman uniform instantly allowed Colonel Tang Yu to know the other's identity.

Tang Yu was not planning to berate the other. After all, Nie Feng-ming's last attack had indeed been too vicious. As teammates from the same group, wanting to save a comrade was perfectly justified — Tang Yu approved of it.

However, before Tang Yu could ask any questions, the students below the stage had already begun to exclaim:

"Who is that?"

"How did he suddenly appear on the stage?"

"Yeah, when did he go up?"

As the newcomer had moved too fast, many students whose realm was not high enough yet had only managed to see that a person had appeared on the stage out of thin air. They could not see how the other had gotten there, which was why they were so baffled.

"That person's speed has almost reached the limits of the human body!" Those people with adequate vision within the boxes all acknowledged this point, stunned to the depths of their heart. Although they did not know the other's background, without discussing it beforehand, they all mutually noted his appearance, determined to investigate once they went back to find out who he was ...

Tang Yu's complexion very quickly returned to normal, and he said to the person, "Cadet, thank you very much for your assistance. However, the fight is still in progress. Please leave the stage."

"That's unnecessary. This round, we, the New Cadet Regiment, have lost," announced Ling Lan dispassionately.

Tang Yu was taken aback, unsure whether the other could speak on behalf of the New Cadet Regiment, when from below the stage, the New Cadet Regiment representative Wu Jiong could be heard to call out, "That's right, we, the New Cadet Regiment, admit defeat for this round!"

Since the representative of the New Cadet Regiment had acknowledged the loss, Tang Yu did not raise any questions, instantly declaring, "The 3rd round, 5th year Nie Feng-ming wins! The overall score is 2-1, Leiting Mecha Clan in the lead over the New Cadet Regiment."

Tang Yu had barely finished his announcement when Ling Lan turned to look at the stubbornly upright Qi Long behind her. A surge of sour pain coursed through her heart. Although she had wanted Qi Long to break through, she had never intended for Qi Long to end up in such a terrible state, becoming so gravely injured. If she had not managed to intercept Nie Feng-ming's blow in time, the force of it would have shattered most of Qi Long's bones. Even if he managed to recover, Qi Long's initially amazingly sturdy body would be downgraded by several levels, perhaps even choking off Qi Long's boundless potential.

At this thought, the rage in Ling Lan's heart flared. She hated the other's viciousness, and cursed her own carelessness at taking things for granted. Fortunately, nothing truly regrettable had happened, otherwise she would have regretted it for life.

Ling Lan took in a deep breath, forcefully suppressing the burning rage in her heart. She said lightly to Qi Long, "The match is over. You can rest now."

The initially standing Qi Long heard this, and as if receiving some command, he collapsed. Tang Yu reacted swiftly, nimbly catching Qi Long and checking on his injuries. His complexion paled slightly, and he yelled out, "Staff, send him to the treatment centre, quickly!" He had not expected Qi Long's internal injuries to be so severe, and the boy had still fought on for so long, unwilling to fall till the very end ... what kind of mental support did this youth have?

Tang Yu could not help but think back to the previous fighters, Luo Lang and Li Yingjie. They too were the same — withstanding almost unbearable injuries to execute horrifying counterattacks ... he could not help but look at this cold-faced youth before him. Even if the other had not made it clear, he could tell that the true leader of the New Cadet Regiment was likely him.

Very soon, Qi Long had been sent to the treatment centre. As his sworn brother, Han Jijun naturally could not sit still any longer. Without waiting for Ling Lan's orders, he took the initiative to accompany Qi Long ...

At this time, Nie Feng-ming, who had been lost in the haze of bloodlust, finally overcame his inner demon by relying on his excellent mental fortitude, becoming aware once more.

"You've woken up?" Ling Lan's expression was still cold and emotionless, but the suppressed rage in her eyes burned brightly once more following Nie Feng-ming's awakening.

"This match is over. Cadet, please let go of the representative." Although Nie Feng-ming's final Pneumatic Punch had been somewhat vicious and uncalled for, nothing unsalvageable had happened after all, so Tang Yu was hoping to minimise the fuss. After all, the match involving Nie Feng-ming was already over — the New Cadet Regiment would not gain anything from chasing the issue.

Hearing Tang Yu's words, Nie Feng-ming began to struggle, trying to wrest free of Ling Lan's grasp. For some reason, he just felt that this cold youth before him was way too dangerous. His instinctive reaction was to get away from the other.

"We admit defeat because our skills are no match for our opponent. However, those who intend to harm my brothers will have to pay the due price!" Ling Lan's icy voice reverberated throughout the entire combat hall. This was Ling Lan's declaration to the entire military academy — towards anyone who would harm her brothers, she would not show any mercy.

Yes, Ling Lan was truly angry now. She wanted everyone in the military academy to know that she, Ling Lan, was no cowardly limp-egg that would willingly shrink away quietly and just take what others dished out².

Her words had barely faded when Ling Lan's hand on the other's fist abruptly lifted, and Nie Feng-ming was thrown bodily into the air. When he was about 2 metres away from the ground, Nie Feng-ming felt a cold and powerful hand press on the back of his skull, which then pushed forwards forcefully ...

This sudden action of Ling Lan's made the expressions of both Tang Yu on the stage and Boss Huo below the stage pale drastically. They thought that Ling Lan was about to commit murder. Without prior agreement, they both leapt at Ling Lan, trying to stop the other's rampage.

Tang Yu was only one step away from Ling Lan, but he had only just thought of approaching when an invisible surge of Qi-Jin stopped him. Meanwhile, Boss Huo was too far away — the duration of that blink of time was not enough for him to get there in time.

A loud "boom" rang out! The entire stage shone with a radiant light and emitted an ear-splitting alarm. The majority of people could not tell what this represented, but as the referee, Tang Yu knew that this meant the force the stage had received was already close to its maximum capacity. If a little bit more force was added, the stage may collapse entirely.

At this moment, Tang Yu could no longer maintain his composure. His face was extremely pale — it should be known that the sturdiness of this stage in the combat hall was enough to withstand all damage below Domain stage. Since the stage was sounding its warning, could it be that this new cadet was already infinitely close to Domain? Or perhaps he had already arrived at that rumoured half step into Domain?

Only after the light from the stage had faded and the warning alarms had died down, could all the spectating students see the situation on the stage clearly, whereby they were all flabbergasted.

Nie Feng-ming's entire body was laid flat on the stage, his front plastered to the ground. On his face which was turned slightly to one side, both of his eyes were rolled up so the whites were showing — it could not be determined from appearance whether he was dead or alive. With his body at its centre, countless large gaping cracks had spread across the entire stage, causing the stage to seem broken and dilapidated. It really led people to worry whether the three people still standing on the stage would collapse the stage entirely if they moved.

Boss Huo, who had already rushed onto the stage, saw Nie Feng-ming's terrible condition, and his eyes turned red. He pointed at Ling Lan angrily and questioned, "Why did you kill him?"

Ling Lan flicked her sleeves, as if brushing off some dust, and replied emotionlessly, "Don't worry, he isn't dead!"

"Not dead?" These words made Boss Huo calm down instantly from his towering rage. He quickly turned to look at Colonel Tang Yu.

At this time, Tang Yu had already rushed forwards to check on Nie Feng-ming. He probed the side of Nie Feng-ming's neck, and his initially troubled expression eased. Luckily the boy was only severely injured and not dead. Otherwise, even if he had wanted to help the New Cadet Regiment, things would not have been so easily settled.

"He's still breathing, but the bones of his entire body have been broken. He must be sent to the treatment centre immediately. It looks like Nie Feng-ming won't be able to recover fully without spending about a year and a half's worth of time." Tang Yu let Boss Huo know Nie Feng-ming's condition, and then swiftly instructed the staff to send Nie Feng-ming to the treatment centre.

Right then, Tang Yu really did not know what to say anymore. In three consecutive rounds, all six participants were sent to the treatment centre. Was this really a combat showdown or was it actually a death match? Never had any waged fight been so brutal — at the bottom of it, it was all because these freshmen, each and every one of them, were such tough nuts to crack, unwilling to admit defeat ...

During the new cadet admission assessment, didn't those unholy terrors³ break these new cadets' proud bones and teach them a good lesson? Colonel Tang Yu could already sense that the pride of this batch of freshmen were extraordinarily robust, not at all like students who had been tormented and shamed ...

Hearing that Nie Feng-ming was ultimately fine, Boss Huo finally let out a sigh of relief. He suppressed the rage in his heart as he asked in a measured tone, "Why did you harm our team member without any reason?"

"Without any reason? I was only giving him a taste of his own medicine." Ling Lan's cool gaze was locked onto Boss Huo, "Could you not tell what your team member was doing just now? If that move of his had landed, my brother would be in his current condition."

"Didn't you manage to save him? Since your brother is fine, why would you be so cruel?"

"And if I had not managed to save him?" Ling Lan shot back, "I will not forgive anyone who harms my brothers. No matter how powerful the other's faction is, or how formidable the other is personally."

At this point of her speech, Ling Lan's icy gaze swept out to encompass everyone watching the fights. She bit out word by word, "Right here, I want to remind everyone in the military academy, including all the major factions. If anyone dares to trouble my brothers for no reason, or harm them, I will definitely never let it rest. No matter how long it will take, I will make sure they pay for it."

Using her spiritual power, Ling Lan made her voice ring out by everyone's ear, including those within the boxes. Quite a few weaker students actually found themselves trembling, their entire bodies feeling cold ...

Only Li Lanfeng's expression shifted at these words, a subdued spark flashing through his eyes. *What familiar energy! Could the other be a kindred type⁴*? Li Lanfeng, who had initially held very little interest in Ling Lan, instantly slotted Ling Lan into his mind. When he found an opportunity later on, he would be prepared to test the other. If they were alike, perhaps there was the possibility of a collaboration ...

Chapter 260: Spiritual Life Coach?

Boss Huo found his breath stifled for a moment by Ling Lan's question, but fury soon followed in response to Ling Lan's arrogant words. In his extreme rage, he laughed and said, "What shameless boasting. A tiny first year actually daring to threaten us?" Where did these first year students get the gall to do this?

"Oh no, I'm just clarifying our New Cadet Regiment's principles in dealing with outsiders," responded Ling Lan calmly, "I also believe that, the other groups, including senior's Leiting Mecha Clan, will have something similar to this creed as well. We are just doing what we should."

Ling Lan was not wrong. As an organisation, in order to protect the group and the welfare of its members, there must be some action. For example, the Leiting Mecha Clan's method of doing things was even more bossy and tyrannical than what Ling Lan had said. It went to the extent where if an outsider did not want to submit to them, they would be targeted on all fronts.

However, this was all established on individual strength ... an idea sparked in Boss Huo's mind. He unleashed his full aura and pressed it down on the youth opposite him, and said slowly, "Ambitious, and your words are haughty, but it still remains to be seen whether you have the corresponding level of strength to back them up. Otherwise, it's all hot air, and you will only be laughed at for biting off more than you can chew."

Right beside them, Colonel Tang Yu sensed the great force of Boss Huo's aura pressing down, and his expression could not help but shift subtly. He threw a hurried glance at the main target of this force, but found Ling Lan still standing there with his back straight, expression unchanged, and the colonel's expression eased as he let go of his worry.

Ling Lan seemed to not feel any of the pressure Boss Huo was silently heaping on her. Airily, she replied, "You can try."

Boss Huo was just about to retort to that when Colonel Tang Yu suddenly opened his mouth to interrupt, "The names of the 4th round have yet to be announced, so both of you please leave the stage. Do not affect the continuation of the fights."

Boss Huo cast a contemplative glance at Tang Yu, and then peered searchingly at Ling Lan for a long moment before sneering and said, "I hope we'll have the chance to fight. What you suggested just now is precisely what I intend to do ..." That said, he did not linger. With a dash, he left the stage, returning to Leiting's area.

The corners of Ling Lan's lips quirked at these words, revealing a very light trace of mockery. She of course knew what the other was hinting at. It was nothing more than wanting to take revenge for his team member ... the two of them were destined to fight in the end anyhow; she would just wait and let things be.

Thus, Ling Lan also dashed back to her own territory. Right then, Wu Jiong approached nervously and asked in a low voice, "Boss Lan, can we really win?"

For the first time, some uncertainty actually appeared in Wu Jiong's expression. This greatly surprised Ling Lan — in her mind, Wu Jiong had always been a mentally stable and assured youth who would never lose confidence in himself.

"What are you trying to say?" Ling Lan quirked an eyebrow.

Wu Jiong averted his eyes briefly and said, "Even Qi Long lost, will I ... will I be okay?"

Wu Jiong knew very well that the situation was extremely disadvantageous for the New Cadet Regiment right now. They needed to win both of the final two rounds to win this wagered fight. This meant that, regardless of which match he had to fight, he could not lose. This type of pressure was not easy to bear, and on top of that, he had just seen Qi Long, who was stronger than him by a hair, fighting so hard just to lose in the end anyway. This caused him to begin harbouring a tendril of doubt in his own abilities.

These words of Wu Jiong's made Ling Lan turn her head abruptly, her bleak gaze shooting straight at Wu Jiong.

This gaze pierced Wu Jiong's heart like a sharp blade, causing him to lower his head in shame. He knew that something had gone wrong with his mental state — behaving so disgracefully at this critical juncture, he was really letting Boss Lan down ...

With a 'thwack', Ling Lan flicked a forceful finger onto Wu Jiong's forehead, causing Wu Jiong to look up and cover his forehead reflexively, his expression confused.

"Have you woken up?" asked Ling Lan.

"Ah ..." Wu Jiong was gaping in bewilderment, reflexively making a sound in response. It looked like Ling Lan's finger-flick had really stunned him silly. After all, he and Ling Lan's relationship was unlike that of Ling Lan with Qi Long and the others of his team — childhood companions who had grown up together — but more of a working relationship. And Ling Lan's action just now was extremely intimate, like the way one would treat a beloved follower. This made Wu Jiong emotional and conflicted at the same time, making him unsure how he should react all of a sudden.

"Wu Jiong, frankly, your combat talent is not much weaker than Qi Long's," said Ling Lan after Wu Jiong had calmed down slightly.

"Ah ...?" Once more, Wu Jiong was left stunned by Ling Lan's words. Was Boss Lan trying to console him? Mind you, he had always been suppressed by Qi Long, having never beaten the other even once. It was obvious that his talent was no match for Qi Long's.

"The reason you can't beat him, is that you are not as simple as Qi Long here," Ling Lan pointed to her own chest.

Ling Lan's words confused Wu Jiong, but Ling Lan continued to explain, "Other than combat, Qi Long's heart has nothing else. But you are different. The things you think about are many, such as your future, and the futures of the members of your team ... all these distract your mind from pure combat, which is why you will never catch up to Qi Long in terms of combat."

Wu Jiong grinned wryly at these words and replied, "Qi Long has you, Boss Lan, to help him. Of course he can focus without any distractions ..."

Ling Lan interrupted him to say, "No, remember when I left the academy for three years? Without my help, you still did not manage to chase up to Qi Long. Have you never considered the reason for that?"

Wu Jiong blinked, his expression troubled. For a beat, he could not understand what Ling Lan was saying, but he was after all a clever person. After turning the idea around in his mind for a while, he figured it out, and instantly chuckled bitterly, "So that's how it is. It's because Qi Long has Han Jiyun, has Luo Lang, has Lin Zhong-qing, has Xie Yi ..."

"Yes, Qi Long's other strength is his willingness to believe in his companions. He believes his companions will handle the other things well, so he does not have to worry, able to immerse his full heart and soul into the path of martial combat," said Ling Lan, nodding, "Qi Long understands his role in the team very well, and has always been working hard to live up to his role."

At this point, Ling Lan peered at Wu Jiong and said, “On the other hand, you, trusting only Ye Xu, have taken on the roles of almost everyone else ... you have too much to worry about, so with regards to martial combat, you of course cannot match up to Qi Long.”

As he listened, Wu Jiong ducked his head in shame. What Ling Lan was saying was precisely the problem with his team. Despite being very strong individually, in comparison with Ling Lan’s team, his team members were all clearly much weaker in their role designations. Previously, he had always thought it was because the skills of his team members were no match for Lin Zhong-qing, Xie Yi and the others of Ling Lan’s team, but now, from the looks of it, he himself was the problem.

“But, from another perspective, you should also be proud of yourself.” Ling Lan’s words took an abrupt turn, causing Wu Jiong to lift his head in surprise, to stare at Ling Lan in disbelief. He had already behaved so terribly ... why would Boss Lan still say he should take pride in himself?

“Even though your attention had been split up among so many things, you still were not left too far behind Qi Long. Isn’t that something to take pride in?” Ling Lan asked, lifting an eyebrow.

These words of Ling Lan made Wu Jiong’s heart feel warm instantly — so he really was not that much worse than Qi Long!

“That is why I believe in your strength, that you will definitely win at the critical moment ...” Ling Lan finally gave her answer. All of this talk was actually just to eliminate that little speck of self-doubt in Wu Jiong’s heart. As the big boss of the regiment, she really did not have it easy ...

Ling Lan was in fact very bothered inside. When had she also taken on the job of being the spiritual life coach of these children? Li Yingjie was one, and now Wu Jiong was another ... but, upon reflection, Li Yingjie’s and Wu Jiong’s behaviours were more like those of a normal 16 year old teenager. Qi Long and Luo Lang were the ones who were weird, actually submitting themselves to a round of torment on the field without any reservations.

Could it be that because she was not a normal 16 year old girl, her companions who grew up with her had also become abnormal along with her? At this thought, Ling Lan could not help but feel a bout of remorse. Of course, this feeling only lasted for a very brief moment before being thrown to the back of her mind.

In the course of one conversation, Ling Lan achieved her purpose. From his initial uncertain state, Wu Jiong had now become unbelievably confident. This also allowed Ling Lan to relax — after all, no mistakes could be made in these final two rounds.

“Boss, the opponent has submitted their name list! As expected, it’s their weakest member, Chang Le ¹!” Little Four finally piped up from within the mindspace. This time, Leiting had submitted their name list very late, basically right at the border of the allocated 5 minutes. However, following the submission of the opponent’s name list, Little Four instantly sent Wu Jiong’s name over.

This was Ling Lan’s instruction. She had already told Little Four that she would be fighting against that strongest Boss Huo, while the weakest Chang Le would be Wu Jiong’s opponent. Thus, when the opponent’s name list was revealed, Little Four had sent Wu Jiong’s name over without checking in with Ling Lan again.

On Colonel Tang Yu's end, to the naked eye, it looked as if the New Cadet Regiment and the Leiting Mecha Clan had submitted their name list at the exact same time. This made the colonel raise his eyebrows, silently impressed at how unruffled the two factions were, able to wait till the very last second before submitting their name lists. He could not know that this process involved some flawlessly executed cheating by a miraculous intelligence entity.

"Leiting Mecha Clan vs New Cadet Regiment, 4th round. 4th year Chang Le against 1st year Wu Jiong!"

Following this announcement, Leiting's Lin Zhidong rapped his own head with a fist in frustration. He had initially wondered whether to let Boss Huo go up in this 4th round, but then, he was afraid that that mysterious youth who had crippled Nie Feng-ming in one blow would also be fighting in this round. After much thought, he decided to send out the weakest Chang Le to be sacrificed against the opponent's strongest member, but unexpectedly, the opponent was so calm, actually sending out their regiment commander, Wu Jiong.

At this moment, Lin Zhidong already knew that this Wu Jiong was most likely just the public regiment commander of the New Cadet Regiment. The one truly in charge of the New Cadet Regiment should be that mysterious youth, because the pressure the mysterious youth exuded was much heavier than that of Wu Jiong's ...

"This is good. I really want to personally teach that youth a lesson," Boss Huo suddenly spoke up from beside him, causing Lin Zhidong to jump. With that, Lin Zhidong no longer dared to reveal any more of his frustration, only nodding to show that he understood.

However, both their reactions showed that they did not look favourably upon Chang Le's chances in this match. After all, Wu Jiong was the public regiment commander of the New Cadet Regiment, so he really could not be that weak. The other three who had come out so far were all at Qi-Jin stage, so this Wu Jiong must surely be at Qi-Jin stage as well. It was just unclear whether he was in the early stages of Qi-Jin or the middle stages ... meanwhile, although Chang Le was also at Qi-Jin stage, he was only at the mid-level of early stage Qi-Jin. This match, would definitely be tough to win.