

## Crossing 61

### Chapter 61: An Intense World of Competition!

Qi Long was not one to back down from a fight. Hearing what Li Yingjie said, he rolled his eyes and replied, "Too much? So what if I'm too much? You've something to say about it?" Sometimes Qi Long was outright shameless because he didn't need to think about the consequences. He believed that his good friend Han Jijyun would definitely come to his rescue, and now he also had Boss at his back, causing him to become even more impudent.

Of course, at his back, his 'solid shields' Ling Lan and Han Jijyun weren't as lighthearted. They shared a commiserating look, wry smiles on their faces. Han Jijyun, in particular, was rather troubled. He found that Qi Long was becoming more and more reckless, which wasn't a good thing. He decided that he would need to sit Qi Long down and give him a good brainwashing soon when no one else was around.

Qi Long's words finally set off Lackey #1 who was standing behind Li Yingjie. He jumped out raging, "Punk, do you know who he is?"

"The third grandson of the Li family head." Qi Long picked at his ear, indicating that he wasn't deaf and that he had heard everything clearly the first time.

"He's also the number one ranking student in this year's special class — the most promising scout student in the Federation this year." The pride on Lackey #1's face made it seem as if the number one rank belonged to himself.

Li Yingjie's face was also full of smugness. He was very proud of the fact that he had managed to stand out among the masses with his skills, obtaining the coveted position of first place.

First place? Qi Long cast a searching look at Li Yingjie. The smug fellow didn't feel that strong — the presence seeping from his body wasn't even a match for his own, not to mention against his Boss's. Qi Long had already had a taste of his Boss Lan's indistinct yet menacing trace of malevolent aura, and knew that it was not to be taken lightly.

Qi Long's natural gift was his strong intuition — in Han Jijyun's words, animal instinct. He didn't have to think much, being able to accurately gauge an opponent's strength just via pure intuition.

Sensing that the first place of this year's Special Class-A was not even a match for himself, Qi Long's mood took a dark turn, and his attitude became even meaner. With clear disdain, he said, "So what?"

This answer was obviously not according to script, sending the opponent into an immediate apoplectic rage. The others also burst out laughing — Qi Long was absolutely the type that could cause someone to keel over dead out of sheer anger, and the most frightening thing was that he himself wouldn't even be aware why the other died.

"You — wait till our Boss comes after you!" Lackey #2 was also moved to help.

"Is that so? Then I'll be waiting," said Qi Long shortly, still looking at Li Yingjie with contempt.

Qi Long's impudence was because he had the utmost confidence in himself, and he also believed that no one could best him aside from his own boss. Furthermore, even if he did sh\*t the bed, there was still

Boss to pick up after him. He had faith that Boss Lan would not just stand by while his own followers were being bullied ... in any case, Qi Long was already shamelessly counting on Ling Lan.

Qi Long's words caused Li Yingjie's cheeks to puff up like a toad's in anger. However, he still had the mind to maintain the poise of a member of an elite family, and chose not to start a fight right then and there. In the end, he only glared darkly at Qi Long, and left with these words, "Just you wait."

The waters of the scout academy were truly deep! Li Yingjie still remembered the cautionary words of his father — before he fully figured out how things stood in the scout academy, he should not move recklessly. His father had also mentioned that the main principle in the school was 'survival of the fittest' — it was almost impossible to dominate within the school by relying on one's family background or wealth unless you managed to buy the loyalty of some of the more formidable students to be part of your guard. Otherwise, he could only suck it up even if he were bullied by the commoner children within the school. His family would not intervene, so he could only rely on himself to resolve any problems.

He had reservations because of his father's words, so he decided that he would hold off for now. After he had gained a better understanding of the school and had built up his own power base, then there would be plenty of opportunities for him to discipline that impudent fellow and teach him what's what. Li Yingjie was very confident. With his own abilities and his family background, there was no reason he would lose to anyone in the academy.

Since the master had left, the lackeys were sure to follow, but the fierce glares they left behind was a clear sign that the matter wasn't over. Nevertheless, this was now a matter for the future. Li Jinghong released a heavy breath. Finally, he was rid of that annoyance.

"Why do you hate him so much? I heard he was a strong contender to be the next family head." Han Jijun was curious; the struggles within the Li family had always been intense. Every generation, the crowning of the family head was always the result of a descendant of the main family stepping up to bend all the other contenders to his will by force — the so-called hierarchy of inheritance was just an empty promise. According to the survival principles of the elite families, Li Jinghong, a branch family member, should be doing his best to kiss up to Li Yingjie.

Li Jinghong's expression dimmed, and he said, "I really don't like him. No matter how talented he is, I still won't like him. You all don't know ... but our eldest cousin brother is really really nice. All of us children in the branch families really like him, but unfortunately ..." Abruptly, Li Jinghong's expression hardened with determination. "Regardless of the result, I will never stand on the opposite side of my eldest cousin brother."

"This way, won't you offend Li Yingjie?" Han Jijun shook his head. Li Jinghong's way of thinking was really unsuitable for survival in a large elite family like the Li family. The consequence of being led by one's emotions was often becoming mere cannon fodder in the crossfire. If Li Yingjie really ended up becoming the family head, Li Jinghong's actions now would guarantee that he would have no place within the Li family in the future.

"It's fine. Who knows if a child more talented than him would appear in the future?" Li Jinghong did not believe that it would be so easy for Li Yingjie to just claim the position of family head. In this generation, due to his eldest cousin brother's mediocrity, all the children of the main family were champing at the

bit — hidden manoeuvres abounded as they all fought with their sights set on the position of family head.

“Not to mention, even if Li Yingjie really got lucky and managed to inherit, I am not afraid. I’m prepared to become a professional soldier, so the Li family can’t touch me in the future.” Li Jinghong laid out his plans, stating why he wasn’t afraid of offending Li Yingjie now.

He didn’t want to see his favourite elder cousin brother forced to lose the position of family head and being put into captivity for the rest of his life. So, he decided to leave the messy quagmire of the Li family as early as possible. What he couldn’t see couldn’t hurt him.

This was the reality of a large elite family — the complex environment full of cruelty and bloodshed forced the children within it to grow up so quickly.

“Welcome then.” Han Jijyun really liked Li Jinghong’s personality. Planning out his future so early, and pursuing it with determination, ignoring all the miscellaneous distractions along the way — this type of person would succeed easily. Han Jijyun liked making friends with people like this because they wouldn’t give him any trouble.

Yup, one troublemaking Qi Long was more than enough, thank you. Han Jijyun refused to accept a second one.

The ten people of group 072 did not get hung up on the matter for long and continued to feast and be merry. At this moment, Ling Lan was still unaware that her future would be full of entanglements with the Li family ...

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In the afternoon, they toured the entire campus grounds of the scout academy. Halfway through, when they passed by a combat hall, Qi Long had dragged Ling Lan in for a fight. Naturally, Ling Lan pummeled Qi Long soundly. However, despite his swollen eyes and bruised nose, Qi Long continued to keep a silly grin on his face. Seeing his full mouth of white teeth on display, one could just tell he was really very simple and was a masochist to boot.

After eating lunch, Ling Lan had already arranged the time for her pick up with her family. When it was about time, she bid farewell to these companions of group 072. Perhaps it was just the way of this world that the children were so mature and intelligent, in such a way that Ling Lan did not feel at all annoyed or bored when interacting with them. Of course, she was also exceptionally patient, because these adorable children with varying personalities had triggered her maternal instincts to the max ...

With reluctance, the children accompanied Ling Lan to the school gates. Especially Qi Long, who strongly requested Ling Lan to convince her parents to let her stay with them at school. According to him, being able to fight with Boss Lan every day — it was awesome just thinking about it!

Learning of Qi Long’s plans, Ling Lan, who had originally started considering staying at the school after all, decisively dismissed the idea completely. Dammit. She definitely had no interest to cross moves with Qi Long every day. This fellow fought like a maniac, and was as stubborn as a cockroach — although she was confident in defeating him, she couldn’t be certain how long it would take, so it was overall a troublesome labour which exhausted both her mind and body.

The school gates were shut tight. All was silent, and there was no one around. When the guard at the gates saw Ling Lan's group coming out, he immediately rushed forward to stop them. Ling Lan's group was still dressed in their own clothes, so the guard couldn't tell which class they were from. As today was registration day, the school did not restrict the children's dressing. But from tomorrow onwards, the students of the Central Scout Academy would have to put on their individual uniforms, otherwise they would find it very difficult to get around the scout academy.

With regards to the scout academy uniforms, there were a total of four colours. These colours were not for distinguishing between the lower grades and the upper grades, but were meant to distinguish between the classes. This taught the children to recognise what rank and privilege were from the very beginning, and about what 'survival of the fittest' meant.

The school uniforms resembled the Federation military uniforms and looked very smart when worn. The colour of the Special Class-A uniforms was a vibrant red, and the edges of its sleeves and collar were also different from the other classes. They were decorated with gold patterns, an understated nod to luxury. The uniform represented the school's hopes for these children — may they blaze as brightly as the red of their coats, and finally become one of the dazzling battle stars of the Federation.

According to school rules, when facing a child wearing the red uniform of Special Class-A, children wearing uniforms of any other colour, regardless of their grade level, would have to give way. Of course, if someone from Special Class-A insulted a child wearing a uniform in any other colour, the child had the right to challenge the other to combat during the large-scale ranking every six months. All consequences to be borne by the involved parties, of course.

Meanwhile, Special Class-B had white uniforms. Special Class-B consisted of children who were just a shade weaker than the Special Class-A kids. In the future, it was possible that they could achieve the heights of the Special Class-A kids, but they could also end up becoming a mediocre member of the military. Therefore, the white of their uniform was a message, telling them that their future was up to them to colour in — what colour it became in the end was all up to their own individual efforts.

Then, the uniforms of the merit classes were blue, while the regular classes' were green. Both these colours symbolized sources of life — the school wanted to tell the children through these colours that they were an indispensable part of the Federation.

Of course, the colour of one's school uniform was not set in stone. As long as you worked hard, there was a chance to move up every six months. The school would be impartial in rearranging the classes based on the newest rankings.

The 50 slots of Special Class-A were the prize being fought over by over tens of thousands of students, while the original special class kids would have to give it their all to keep their spots.

From the very first day of school, the Central Scout Academy had already started teaching the children that this was an unbelievably intense world of competition.

Chapter 62: An Intentional Arrangement

When the guard found out that Ling Lan was a member of Special Class-A, who had also chosen to be a day student, he was dumbfounded. After so many years of being a guard at the school, this was still the first time he had met a day student.

From this, we can see that the freedom to be a day student offered by the school was basically just an empty privilege. It's obvious if you think about it — with such a competitive system in place, every student would wish that they could spend the 24 hours each day as if they were 48 hours ... who'd be willing to waste time commuting back and forth from school?

Although the guard was shocked, he still let Ling Lan out of the gates without comment. Of course, Qi Long and the other kids were mercilessly locked within the gates. Who asked them to choose to board at school? Upon becoming a boarder, students were not allowed to take even half a step out of school grounds outside of specified times, even if one was a special class student.

Ling Lan waved goodbye to her companions and stepped out of the school gates. Right outside, the Ling family hover car was already parked, waiting.

This time, the Ling family had sent out five hover cars, and Ling Lan's main escort was the only non-betrayer of the rescue team, Ling Yu. Chamberlain Ling Qin hadn't come because he was busy wrapping things up with the betrayers.

Ling Lan got into the hover car arranged by Ling Yu, and Ling Yu got in after her, and then started reporting on the investigation results they had gathered in the course of the afternoon.

It turned out that Ling Hua had betrayed the Ling family because he didn't want his child to follow in his footsteps to become a Ling family loyalist for the next generation.

Ling Hua's son, Ling Yi, was younger than Ling Lan by one year. At his birth, he was assessed to be just a hair weaker than Ling Lan in terms of fitness and potential. In other words, Ling Yi had a very high probability of becoming an ace operator. However, the offspring of Ling family loyalists had no right to enrol and study in a scout academy — they could only accept the in-house education organised by the Ling family. This meant that Ling Yi's growth would be stunted — he would never be able to pilot a mecha better than the standard mecha, and his chances of being promoted to an ace operator were pretty much nil.

As Ling Yi grew closer and closer to turning six, Ling Hua had been tormented by his internal struggle. It was then that a chance for his son to excel beyond his station had appeared before him, and so Ling Hua's loyalty had wavered.

The other party had promised that as long as Ling Lan died, the Ling family would be dissolved. Then, Ling Hua's family could become regular citizens again, and Ling Yi would be able to formally enrol and study at a scout academy, obtaining a bright and limitless future.

After listening to Ling Yu's report, Ling Lan sighed regretfully. "How stupid."

Ling Yu said dazedly, "Yes, the captain was really so stupid ... if only he had told us about this, he could have used the information to gain enough merit to request for his freedom."

Ling Yu still remembered that there was one rule among the Ling family rules: Any loyalist who performed exceptionally meritorious services could request one thing of the family head that was within

the head's means. As long as Ling Hua had related the plan against Ling Lan to Chamberlain Ling Qin, it would have counted as an exceptionally meritorious service, and he would have been able to put forward his request. Ling Lan and Chamberlain Ling Qin would never have refused him.

Till this point, Ling Lan and Ling Yu just couldn't understand why Ling Hua had been willing to walk down this dark path, finally choosing to betray the Ling family rather than use this information as a bargaining chip.

However, once Ling Lan returned to the living room of the Ling family main estate, the waiting Ling Qin told her the rest of the information he had just discovered, which included the other reason behind Ling Hua's betrayal.

With a serious expression, Ling Qin said, "According to those three loyalists, during a fit of boasting, Ling Hua revealed that the other party had promised to provide his son with six tubes of gene stimulating agent every year until Ling Yi could absorb no more. Of course, he had also promised the other three loyalists that their descendants would also be able to enjoy this privilege if their stats were good enough."

"The other party is certainly generous. Looks like this person who's after me is someone powerful." Ling Lan finally understood why Ling Hua had chosen to betray them in the end. Even though the offer seemed to be just six tubes of gene agent, it had given Ling Hua a sense of how powerful the other side really was, implying that crushing the Ling family was not too difficult for them.

"Ling Hua was frightened. He felt that the Ling family would not be able to go up against that person; he didn't want his child to be buried along with the Ling family." Ling Qin naturally understood Ling Hua's mentality as well, and sighed sadly once again.

"Young Master Lan, what do you plan to do with Ling Hua's wife and child?" asked Ling Qin carefully. There wasn't a single family which would accept the orphan of a traitor; many families would choose to eliminate the problem entirely by getting rid of them as soon as possible.

Just as Ling Lan was about to answer, a commotion broke out at the main gates. A child could be heard crying, "Young Master Lan, Young Master Lan, I beg you, please see me!"

From the sofa, Ling Lan quirked a brow, lifting her head to look at Ling Qin. As such, she saw when a hint of awkwardness flashed past Ling Qin's face. It looked like he knew who the child screaming outside was.

Ling Lan did not ask any questions. She just stood and walked to the gate, with Ling Qin and Ling Yu following close behind her.

The moment Ling Lan arrived at the gate, she saw a little midget just a little smaller than her struggling within the grasp of one of the guards. He was still screaming for Young Master Lan, and when he saw her appear, his eyes lit up with a savage joy.

"Who are you? Why do you want to see me?" Ling Lan asked impassively.

"So you're Young Master Lan?" At Ling Lan's words, the little midget struggled even harder.

Ling Yu, who was standing behind Ling Lan, threw a pointed look at the guard holding onto the child, and the guard immediately loosened his grip and retreated to the side.

"I'm called Ling Yi. My dad's Ling Hua." The midget straightened up and introduced himself after calming himself for a moment.

Ling Lan nodded internally. No wonder Ling Hua was willing to become a traitor for his son — the child was indeed very bright, and could already control his emotions well enough to grasp opportunities in his path.

"They told me that, my dad is dead ... my dad was so strong, how could he die?" There was still hope on Ling Yi's face, as if hoping that Ling Lan would tell him that all this wasn't true.

Ling Lan secretly sighed; Ling Hua may have wronged her, but he hadn't wronged his son Ling Yi. A thought tumbled through her mind, and she replied, "Even the strongest person cannot always fend off an enemy's underhanded schemes. Ling Yi, your father is really dead."

"Who killed my father?" Ling Yi's eyes were clouded with despair.

"I do not know, but we're guessing that the orders came from someone in the upper ranks of the military, and that my father was also killed by one of the opponent's plots," said Ling Lan sadly and regretfully.

Ling Lan resolutely pushed the blame of Ling Hua's death onto the enemy who wanted her dead. She looked forward to Ling Yi's vengeance against the other once he grew up. After all, even though Ling Hua had died at her hands, wasn't the root cause the other party's inducement?

Of course, Ling Lan's words caused a flash of surprise to pass through both Ling Qin's and Ling Yu's eyes, but their expressions quickly relaxed, as if pleased with the way Ling Lan had spun things.

Gaining the answer he sought, the flames of hatred blazed in Ling Yi's eyes. "Young Master Lan, I'll definitely become stronger. At that time, I hope Young Master Lan will give me the chance to end the enemy with my own hand."

Ling Yi's words caused an irrepressible shudder to run through Ling Qin's and Ling Yu's body. A chill settled in their hearts — could this end up being a case of warming a snake in one's bosom?

Only Ling Lan seemed unperturbed, as she nodded and said, "Alright, I promise you this. Also, I must tell you — when your father sacrificed himself, he requested that you be set free, and I've agreed to it ..."

But Ling Yi interrupted Ling Lan to say, "I don't want to leave the Ling family."

"Why?" Ling Lan was curious.

"I want to inherit my father's position. I want to become Young Master Lan's most trusted loyalist." Ling Yi's face was filled with determination. Ever since he was little, he had received education telling him to be loyal to the Ling family and the family head — the thought of leaving the Ling family had never crossed his young mind.

This response caused Ling Lan to fall silent.

Ling Hua, you betrayed yourself, and betrayed the Ling family ... but your child had no intentions to leave the Ling family to begin with. Wasn't that just ironic?

"I really want to agree with your request, but unfortunately, I promised your father first. A person should not go back on their word ..." said Ling Lan regretfully.

Ling Lan's words made Ling Yi burst out into tears instantly. After all, he was only just a five year old child — facing an unknown future, even the strongest and brightest child would not be able to bear the anxiety within his heart. Like the child he was, he wailed.

"Ling Yi, if you want to inherit your father's position, then you can't cry anymore," with reddened eyes, Ling Lan comforted the boy. "Your father wished for you to enter a scout academy, and then obtain a place in a military school, and finally become a professional military man. You cannot let your father down."

Then, Ling Lan patted him on the head and continued, "However, I didn't say anything about sending you away. You will still be a member of the Ling family, only a free man in name. When you've grown up, it'll be up to you whether you want to leave or return to the Ling family."

Ling Lan's words reignited the hope in Ling Yi's heart. He wiped away his tears, and said, "Yes! I'll work hard, Young Master Lan. I'll definitely come back." He said this with steel-like conviction.

He then turned around with a serious look on his face to speak to Ling Yu, who was behind Ling Lan. "Brother-in-law Yu, I'll leave Young Master Lan to you for now. Once I've become stronger, I'll definitely come back to take your position from you." That said, he bowed to Ling Lan in farewell and left the Ling family main estate.

With a face full of worry, Ling Yu asked, "Young Master Lan, isn't this arrangement too risky?" If Ling Yi ever found out the truth, it was very likely that he would turn against them instead.

Ling Lan smiled a slight smile. "Isn't it more interesting this way? Whether or not Ling Yi becomes useful to me in the end, he is still a good chess piece."

Ling Lan's words rendered Ling Yu speechless — he really couldn't figure out what Ling Lan's true thoughts were now.

Ling Qin's expression was a little unsettled, but in the end, he said nothing.

Ling Lan turned her head to face Ling Qin with a harsh expression. "Grandpa Chamberlain, you've already handled the traitors and those prisoners, right?"

Ling Qin's heart skipped a beat, and he stared at Ling Lan intently.

Ling Lan asked, "About Ling Hua's betrayal ... besides the three of us, who else knows?"

Ling Yu hurriedly shook his head. Out of caution in case there were other traitors within the Ling family, the three traitorous mecha squad members had been interrogated personally by him and Ling Qin. No one else knew any details.

Ling Qin's verbal response corroborated this. After Ling Yu had left, he had continued the interrogation on his own, which was how he had found out the key reason behind Ling Hua's betrayal.



“That’s good. After getting rid of those people, as long as the three of us keep our mouths shut, Ling Yi should never be able to find out the truth.” Ling Lan’s words sent cold sweat running down Ling Qin’s and Ling Yu’s back. Was this Ling Lan’s subtle way of warning them?

“What if the person who tried to buy Ling Hua comes out to tell Ling Yi the truth?” Ling Qin was still uneasy about this; Ling Yi was clearly a ticking time bomb.

“Perhaps then we can inculcate the idea in Ling Yi that all of it is a plot by the opponent ... Anyway, it’s a bigger problem if he doesn’t reveal himself. If he comes out, we could then follow the vine to get the melon 2 , and find out once and for all who is trying to harm our Ling family.” Ling Lan’s expression was sly.

Ling Qin’s eyes lit up. “This is a good plan.” If Ling Yi really managed to draw out that venomous snake from the shadows, it was worth it to take the risk.

Just like that, the three of them discussed things a little more, and then Ling Qin and Ling Yu went off to handle their respective matters. Meanwhile, Ling Lan was left sitting alone on the sofa of the large living room. Once she confirmed that the two men had left, she sighed softly, “To save Ling Yi, was it really necessary to make things so complicated?”

On the surface, Ling Qin and Ling Yu had seemed as if they really wanted to tear the weed out by its root 3 , but in truth, everything they did was to salvage Ling Yi’s life. Otherwise, how could the little Ling Yi suddenly appear at the main door of the Ling family main house?

The loyalists protecting the main house must have received the order to let Ling Yi through to the main doors, and both Ling Qin and Ling Yu should have something to do with this order ... The moment Ling Lan saw Ling Yi, she had understood this immediately.

Although Ling Lan had no intention of taking Ling Yi’s life to begin with, this sort of intentional arrangement annoyed her.

It was great that the Ling family rules were humane and reasonable, however, they weren’t ideal for warding against insubordination. In times when the family head was weak while the servants were stronger, this type of subtle nudging without the master’s express permission was likely to happen. Although they didn’t mean any harm, and there was no negative impact on her currently, if she let this go on unchecked, it might end up causing her a lot of trouble someday.

Perhaps she should think of a way to change the current status quo, otherwise, it may really become impossible for her to continue putting her trust in the Ling family people. And that, would truly be a tragic thing. Both for Ling Lan, and for Ling Qin and the rest.

Chapter 63: Number Five Appears!

Walking out from the Ling family main house, Ling Yu finally couldn’t contain himself any longer, and asked Ling Qin in front of him, “Elder Qin, why didn’t you ask about the cockpits ejecting from the mecha?”

Ling Yu knew that that must have been caused by Ling Lan somehow, otherwise he wouldn't have been so calm when the mecha had fired. It's just — he really couldn't figure out how Ling Lan had done it. Could it really be that he could control A.I.?

Of course, Ling Yu knew that this was preposterous — a joke. Everyone knew that A.I.s were self-contained systems. If a hacker was crazy enough to try and control an A.I., the A.I. would shut down automatically, and the mecha would automatically switch over to manual controls.

Even the most skilful hacker in the world would not be able to succeed. Moreover, once the A.I. had shut down, the controls would still be in the hands of the operators in the cockpits. It couldn't be that all three operators had made the same control error, right?

Of course, another possibility was the A.I. itself glitching ... Ling Yu naturally shied away from this avenue of thought. If that were true, it would certainly be a catastrophe of epic proportions — it would utterly destroy the entire weapons system of the Federation. The Federation just could not afford for this to be true.

In front of him, Ling Qin paused for a moment before turning his head back to caution, "Ling Yu, you overstep."

Ling Yu's heart skipped a beat. Every generation of the Ling family head had his own trump card and last resort, and these were considered forbidden territory within the Ling family. No one was allowed to look into it, and violators of this unspoken rule would receive a bloody end. And here he had stumbled across the line unknowingly.

"Yes, thank you, Elder Qin, for the reminder." At this point, Ling Yu no longer held a whit of curiosity about it; perhaps this was just one of the Ling family's last resorts. It made sense when one thought about it. Mecha were the ultimate solo weapon — even the common standard mecha could easily wipe out a bare-handed martial expert. If he didn't keep something up his sleeve, how could the Ling family head put mecha into others' hands without worry?

It had to be said that Ling Yu had an overactive imagination, his brain easily coming up with all sorts of wild ideas to fill in the blanks. The result of his 'reasoning' was a back drenched with cold sweat, and the already loyal Ling Yu had no more stray thoughts, becoming Ling Lan's most loyal loyalist in his lifetime.

Ling Qin observed Ling Yu's realisation and acceptance, and smiled a satisfied smile. Ling Qin was a good elder, and a good guard, but he was not a good steward. If he hadn't been so lax in his management all these years, the people of the Ling family wouldn't have been so uncertain about their own position within the household, resulting in that tragic betrayal. However, Ling Qin was a person who knew how to reflect. Since he had made a mistake previously, then he would change now.

So he had deviated from his usual agreeableness into this stern demeanour, and had issued an immediate warning in the face of Ling Yu's curiosity. If this was before, Ling Qin would have patiently explained things to Ling Yu before counselling Ling Yu to drop the matter. He wouldn't have outright warned Ling Yu without providing an explanation.

It looked like Ling Lan wasn't the only one who had sensed the problem within the Ling family. Ling Qin had sensed it too and had begun his attempts to correct it. As for whether it would be effective, only time would tell.

Of course, Ling Qin may have been affecting an enigmatic look as he warned Ling Yu, but in reality, he himself had no clue how the cockpits had been automatically ejected from the three mecha. Back then, his first thought was indeed that this was a last resort of the Ling family.

He still recalled that when Ling Xiao had left, he had said something carefully and intently by Lan Luofeng's ear. Perhaps even then, Master Ling Xiao had sensed the problem within the Ling family, and for precaution's sake, had passed the secret of this last resort on to Lan Luofeng. (Grandpa Chamberlain, you're really thinking too much. The man just wanted to say some sweet nothings to his beau and was embarrassed to be overheard.) And later, Lan Luofeng must have passed it on in turn to Ling Lan.

It should be noted that Chamberlain Ling Qin's ability to fill-in-the-blanks was certainly a match for Ling Yu's — initially, Ling Lan had still been worried about how she would explain this issue away, but now, because of these two's misunderstandings, it was no longer a problem.

Mind you, as Ling Lan had been discussing the matter of Ling Yi earlier, she had been constantly worried that they would ask about that. Of course, she had already come up with a strategy to handle it, but unexpectedly, the dreaded question hadn't come even when they had left. This made Ling Lan very thankful, and she could finally relax. Since everyone was willing to pretend, she was also happy to play along.

Still, Ling Lan wasn't happy for long before she was mercilessly dragged into the learning space.

That night, under Lan Luofeng's praise, Ling Lan had played up her cuteness to the max and feasted until she was full. Just as she was humming and preparing to lie down to rest, she felt her consciousness being sucked out of her body by a terrifying force.

F\*ck! Not again!

Ling Lan savagely raised her middle finger against the dark world before her, mentally cursing at the tyranny of the learning space, and at how it didn't know how to respect its own host. Of course, Ling Lan only dared to be so impudent now — once Instructor Number One showed up, Ling Lan would be as obedient as she could be. It couldn't be helped. Number One was just too scary — Ling Lan's strength was improving little by little, and the more it improved, the more she could sense how overwhelming Instructor Number One's strength was. With just one look, he could render her immobile ...

As expected, the sombre coffin-faced Instructor Number One appeared, and Ling Lan immediately hid away her indignant expression, lowering her head and smoothing her brows into a face eager to learn.

"Today's ambush. What are your thoughts?" asked Number One directly.

"In front of mecha, the ultimate solo weapon, pure physical strength is nothing, like an ant." Ling Lan would never forget the helplessness she had felt when facing the mecha. If it hadn't been for Little Four's help, she would have been done for.

"For the present you, it's already not bad that you could comprehend that." Number One didn't seem particularly satisfied with Ling Lan's response, but he wasn't angered by it either. He continued, "Based on your current performance and condition, I have to adjust your training plan."

Ling Lan was taken aback; she had no idea what Instructor Number One meant.

“Number Five!” Number One spoke once again, but called out an unfamiliar number.

“Big Bro, I’m here.” A vaguely lazy voice rang out from behind Ling Lan.

Ling Lan abruptly turned her head, and saw a rather dashing looking young man with a smile on his lips. When his eyes met hers, he waved at her enthusiastically. Facing Number One’s stifling presence, he seemed entirely unconcerned.

Ling Lan’s gaze narrowed; this man was definitely more than he seemed. She knew very well how formidable as usual Instructor Number One’s presence was — the fact that this man could be so carefree in the face of that ... did it mean that his presence was just as formidable?

“After this, your training will be led by Number Five, with Number Nine assisting.” Number One didn’t seem to mind Number Five’s flippant attitude, disappearing after laying down the law.

Meanwhile, Number Nine had also appeared in the learning space. When she saw Number Five, the subtle smile on her face faded into ice. “Number Five, long time no see.”

“Lil Sis Number Nine! It’s been such a long time. Your brother here has almost contracted lovesickness since it’s been so long. My hair turning white overnight and all ...” Number Five scurried over to Number Nine, face filled with emotion as he clasped Number Nine’s hand. His expression was full of longing, completely oblivious of the throbbing green vein on Number Nine’s forehead.

Faced with Number Five’s shameless words and actions, Number Nine threw a kick at him without any hesitation.

With just a single leap, Number Five escaped the range of Number Nine’s attack, but he still showed no restraint, continuing to tease, “Lil Sis Number Nine, so passionate even after so long. You make elder brother so happy.”

“Number Five, do not forget your mission. Number One isn’t as patient as I am,” huffed Number Nine coldly. She seemed used to Number Five’s lackadaisical attitude, bluntly reminding him not to go overboard.

When Number Five heard this, his grin visibly froze for a beat.

Number Nine didn’t pay any more attention to Number Five, turning instead to Ling Lan to say, “Ling Lan, Number Five’s training will not be easy, you must be prepared.” Facing her pet disciple, she couldn’t help but worry a bit more than usual. She understood that Number One wouldn’t allow her to be the only one responsible for Ling Lan’s training this time because he was afraid that her affection for Ling Lan would affect her progress.

Although Number One seemed to be very dissatisfied with Ling Lan, nitpicking at any little flaw, Number One actually thought very highly of Ling Lan, even training her up as if she were his successor. Otherwise, Number One wouldn’t have modified his training plan for Ling Lan again and again.

Hearing this, Number Five’s smile deepened once again. “Number Nine, relax, Ling Lan’s also my student. I’ll take good care of him.” For some reason, looking at Number Five’s smile, Ling Lan felt a chill settle over her heart.

Ling Lan's intuition was not mistaken. When Number Nine heard Number Five's words, she did not relax at all, but rather looked at Ling Lan with strange pity in her eyes. This gaze set off the final alarms in Ling Lan's mind — hells, this was definitely nothing good.

Before Ling Lan could ask Number Nine any questions, Number Five flicked a finger, and Ling Lan was thrown into a new learning area, an endless grassy plain. With a tortured look on her face, Ling Lan heard the voice of the system ring out by her ear:

Mission: 1 minute later, a wolf pack will come. Please hold out against the wolf pack's attack for 20 minutes without dying. Reward for completion unknown! Punishment for failure unknown!

Ling Lan had no thought to spare right now for reward or punishment. Her forehead was beaded with sweat — goddammit, actually expecting her to fight bare-handed against wolves! And she had to hold out for 20 minutes as well — this was definitely a mission meant to kill someone. Ling Lan did not believe that the wolves in this wolf pack here would be like the wolves from her previous planet. The wild beasts within the learning space were definitely several times bigger and stronger than their earthly counterparts.

It wasn't that Ling Lan had not considered running away, but unfortunately she had no idea which direction the wolf pack would come from, or even if they would attack from all directions. Since she couldn't be sure, recklessly running away might just put her in a worse situation. She might as well just save her strength and wait for the final battle.

Ling Lan naturally used the last of her waiting time to observe her grassy surroundings. If she could just find an easily defensible location, then setting aside 20 minutes, she should even be able to defend for a fair bit longer.

Unfortunately, Ling Lan was disappointed. The learning space was not like the games of her previous world, full of bugs — in this grassland before her, there wasn't a single obstruction in sight, the endless flat plain of grass only followed by yet endless flat plain of grass. And on the ground itself, there was only soft grass on top of loose soil. There weren't even any hard rocks, so Ling Lan couldn't even find one to use as a weapon even if she wanted to.

Dammit, the learning space was truly vicious. It wouldn't allow Ling Lan to borrow any external strength whatsoever, determined to make Ling Lan fight off the wolves with just her bare hands.

A minute's time went by swiftly, and then countless howls broke the silence from all around Ling Lan. Sure enough, the wolves were not going to come from just one direction, but were surrounding her. For Ling Lan, this just made the situation even more perilous.

Ling Lan narrowed her eyes and released the malevolent aura contained within her body in a sudden blast. The moment this malevolent aura appeared, a change fell over the wolves' howls ...

Chapter 64: The Rabbit Sky Leap Skill!

Against a wolf pack, showing any weakness was not going to work. A wolf pack wouldn't think as deeply as a human would — in their eyes, the weaker the prey, the easier it would be for them to release their

aggression upon it. In contrast, against a stronger opponent, a wolf pack would be much more cautious, and wouldn't just pounce recklessly.

Sure enough, the full blast of Ling Lan's malevolent aura made the alpha wolf pause — after all, Ling Lan was someone who had killed the King of the Swamp before and had been baptised in the blood of the various kingly beasts. This malevolent aura caused the wolves to become wary, and the wolves who had been bounding at her from all directions stopped at the lead wolf's howling cries. Still, they remained poised to attack, just waiting for the alpha wolf's signal.

The dense pack of wolves almost filled the entire grassy plain, and every wolf was extremely large and fierce, their bodies as big as a small cow's. Their snouts were spread in savage grins, and drool hung from the razor-sharp tips of their exposed teeth.

Facing such delicious prey, the eyes of this pack of ravenous wolves were almost glowing green ... If a normal person was here and was faced with this scene, he would likely piss his pants and collapse to the ground.

Still, Ling Lan was unaffected. She remained cool-headed and continued to look for her chance.

At this moment, she was very grateful that she had gone through the survival training in the primordial forest. After experiencing the terror of surviving there, she could keep her calm in this situation, heart steady and muscles pliant.

Both sides observed each other for a long moment. And then, the alpha wolf's howl rang out once again. Ling Lan's ears twitched, sifting through the cries coming from the wolf pack, and she managed to confirm that there were actually five alpha wolves of equal rank within the pack. Pleasant surprise flashed through Ling Lan's eyes — perhaps this was the fighting chance she had to hold out for 20 minutes.

Without waiting for the five alpha wolves to come to an agreement, Ling Lan charged forward, her target being the area to the northeast side. Different from the other wolves in the wolf pack, the wolves in this area had a clear red line on their foreheads.

Ling Lan's unexpected action caused chaos to break out within the pack surrounding her, but a piercing howl rang out, followed closely by the cries of the four other alpha wolves', bringing the pack back to order and silence.

Only the wolves with red-lined foreheads continued to bare their fangs at Ling Lan who had invaded their territory. It looked like the alpha wolf of this part of the pack felt that this was a direct challenge to its authority, and that Ling Lan was a prey that had delivered itself to death's door.

Although Ling Lan's fists flew furiously, savagely sending red-lined wolf after red-lined wolf flying, she was still keeping a close watch on the whole situation. Seeing the other wolf packs under the other alpha wolves sitting by the side-lines as she had expected, her heart settled.

Of course, Ling Lan didn't think the danger was over yet. If the red-lined wolf pack couldn't handle her, the alpha of this pack would probably compromise in the end and choose to cooperate with the other wolf packs. At that time, she would still be subject to a group attack.

Frankly, although the wolves had looked as if they worked together like a single entity at first, they were still divided by their respective packs. Cooperating to take down a prey was fine, but if one pack wanted to enter another pack's territory, that was definitely out of the question. Unless the particular wolf pack was weaker and needed the reinforcement of outside help, only then would the alpha wolf loosen this restriction. Ling Lan had cleverly grasped hold of this point and had jumped on her own into the red-lined wolves' territory, forcing the other wolf packs to step back and wait.

Ling Lan may be small, but the power behind her fists wasn't, and her physical fitness was certainly of the abnormal sort. After six years of continuous training with the Qi cultivation exercises, along with the medicinal baths of the Ling family, her body's resilience had long since exceeded that of an average person's. Although her skin still looked as fair and rosy as a maiden's, it was very difficult for normal blades to leave any sort of mark on her body.

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Somewhere high up in the air out of Ling Lan's sight, Number Five and Number Nine were watching the fight.

Number Five nodded and said, "Not bad, she has good basics. Number Nine, looks like you put in a lot of effort."

Number Nine's eyes held a trace of a smile, and her tone was proud as she said, "Yes, Ling Lan is very hardworking and motivated."

Number Five glanced at Number Nine with a half-smile on his face. "You're satisfied with her current progress? It doesn't seem like she's reached her limits yet — Number Nine, you've become soft on her after all. That's not like you."

Number Nine sniffed. "I think this level of progress is best suited for her." However, after she said this, a subtle blush stole over the skin behind Number Nine's ears.

It couldn't be helped — Number Nine couldn't really say that with full honesty. It was the truth that she hadn't pushed Ling Lan as hard as she could in the past few years.

Mind you, the teaching approach of the learning space was to use the most extreme and cruellest methods imaginable to force the children to break past their limits and unleash their innate talents. It made the children challenge their limits in every way, physically and mentally, and even in other respects.

This sort of cruel teaching approach put every single child who entered the learning space under an endless amount of torment and duress. Almost all the children had not been able to bear it, and would end up either breaking down in tears, running away in fear, or even losing all their confidence to loudly beg for mercy ... this was all part of the phase of vulnerability that the children had to experience and overcome.

But Ling Lan stood out as an oddball. It was as if she had already established her goals early on (the girl was a proper adult who had lived two lives, not an ignorant young child, of course she wouldn't be so easily scared off by this type of teaching approach), so, in the six years with Number Nine in charge, no matter how harsh the training, or how unreasonable the courses, Ling Lan had endured. She had never

voiced a single complaint, nor shed a single tear. This stoicism ended up moving the typically unfeeling Number Nine, leading her to become somewhat soft on Ling Lan.

It had to be said that this was a beautiful misunderstanding!

Number Five touched his chin with his right hand, and the smile on his lips deepened. Perhaps this was why Number One had unsealed him — this child had actually managed to affect Number Nine, how interesting ...

Seeing Number Five's strange smile, Number Nine couldn't help but worry for Ling Lan. She raised her voice in warning, "Number Five, don't go overboard."

Number Nine knew how insane Number Five could get — at the beginning, countless promising prodigies had had their wings snapped by his hand. Of course, anyone who managed to survive his training would certainly become an unimaginable talent ... but she had never seen Number Five succeed in training anyone.

Number Nine looked over at Ling Lan with a complicated gaze. It's not that she didn't want Ling Lan to become great, but rather than subject her to the unspeakable torments of the training period, she'd rather see Ling Lan happy and carefree ... but could a powerless person truly be happy and carefree?

As if coming to some realisation, Number Nine abruptly turned away, and with her back to Number Five, she said, "Once you're done with training, come find me."

Number Five quirked a brow. "What? Not going to follow us around anymore? Aren't you afraid I'll end up ruining your beloved disciple?" After all, the reason they had come here was due to Number Nine's worry to begin with.

At this moment, Number Nine's face no longer held any traces of worry. With a cool expression, she said, "Number One did the right thing. I am not suitable to be Ling Lan's main instructor right now. But, I believe that Ling Lan will definitely complete your training course."

"So much confidence in her?" Number Five was taken aback. For context, it should be known that he had ruined several hundred prodigies with his training methods previously, which was why he had been sealed within the learning space. Thus, he himself was very surprised when he was unsealed this time — and even more surprisingly, Number One had actually put him in charge of their current host.

"Ling Lan's not just my pet disciple, she's also Elder Brother Number One's." A confident smile appeared on Number Nine's lips before she disappeared from the area.

Number Five stared at the spot where Number Nine disappeared and smiled thoughtfully. Number One's disciple? That was just too interesting!

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Meanwhile, around Ling Lan, the bodies of red-lined wolves were beginning to pile up, and although yet more red-lined wolves continued to circle her, their attacks were not as aggressive as they had been before, and were perhaps even a little tentative.



This scenario enraged the alpha wolf of the red-lined wolves — it felt that its authority had been undermined by this weak little prey before it. So it let loose another howl, spurring on the attacks of the red-lined wolves, causing them to become more aggressive.

Bam! A red-lined wolf who was lunging for Ling Lan's throat was punched right in the head.

Crack! Its skull fractured, and its calf-sized body fell heavily to the ground. And there the red-lined wolf lay, whining piteously, and after a few final fluttering breaths, its chest went still and the wolf never got up again.

The current Ling Lan was no longer her usual serene self — her eyes held a limitless amount of killing intent, and she attacked with precision and ruthlessness. This sort of life-and-death scenario did not allow for any carelessness on her part; she was determined not to experience death being torn apart by wolves.

She had already begun circulating her Qi the moment she started attacking, as this was one of her trump cards when charging into the wolf pack. As long as the opponent was not stronger than her, the energy expended in her attacks could be completely recuperated by the circulation of Qi. In other words, Ling Lan would never be in danger of a tragic death by exhaustion.

The alpha of the red-lined wolves watched as its subordinates fell one by one, with no visible effect on the weak prey. Finally, it could tolerate it no longer, and with a howl, it rushed into the fray.

The alpha of the red-lined wolves was much bigger than the other red-lined wolves; its body could be compared to that of an adult bull. It approached with bloodshot red eyes — the countless deaths of its subordinates by Ling Lan's hands had sent it into a towering rage.

The other red-lined wolves backed away in the face of their alpha, leaving the battlefield completely up to their leader.

Ling Lan exhaled softly. Plans and counterplans flashed through her mind as she considered whether she should try to draw out the fight with this alpha wolf, so she could while away a bit more time.

But the red-lined alpha wolf was not going to give Ling Lan the time to think, pouncing at her the moment it got within range. It swung its thick claws at Ling Lan, trying to tear this detestable prey in half.

Ling Lan leant back slightly, just enough to avoid the alpha's claws, when suddenly, the wolf's claws mysteriously lengthened.

Ling Lan's heart skipped a beat, and she quickly pushed on her two feet to spring back further, narrowly managing to avoid those sharp extendable claws.

After evading the attack, Ling Lan struggled to regain her balance as she peeked at the alpha's claws. All four of the alpha's claws had extended by approximately 10 centimetres. Who knew that the red-lined alpha wolf within the learning space would have the ability to retract its claws? This surprise had almost made her take some unintended damage.

The alpha wolf wasn't going to give Ling Lan time to adjust, immediately lunging at her once again, and its main weapon this time was its sharp teeth.

Ling Lan met it with a fist, but this time she felt as if she was hitting a solid rock. Her fist throbbed in pain, and the resulting aftershock of energy pushed her back by five to six paces.

On the other hand, Ling Lan's punch didn't seem to have caused much damage to the alpha. The alpha landed squarely, and when it saw Ling Lan falling back, it charged forward once again with all its might, jaws wide open in preparation for a savage bite.

"Rabbit Sky Leap!"

Chapter 65: A Rip-Off of a Mission Clear Reward!

Ling Lan's right arm was numb so she could no longer use it to attack, so she decisively threw out a back kick, using the technique she had trained diligently to obtain in the past five years — the Rabbit Sky Leap. And now she would finally be able to test it out for real, and see how much power this skill, which had cost her 10 honour points, truly wielded.

With a loud "Bam!", the red-lined alpha wolf was sent flying amidst its own pained cries. It smashed onto the ground and actually rolled another five to six metres due to the remaining energy behind the blow before coming to a stop.

Ling Lan put down her right foot, her eyes full of satisfaction. As expected, the Rabbit Sky Leap was really powerful — the strength of her own fists had not been able to do much damage to the red-lined alpha wolf, but the Rabbit Sky Leap could, and it looked like the damage value it dealt was significant.

According to Ling Lan's calculations, the Rabbit Sky Leap technique could increase her leg strength by as much as five times — and this was just at the basic level of mastery. If she continued to practise and became even more proficient with the skill, it would definitely become one of her killing techniques.

At this moment, the red-lined wolf tottered upright again. As its head was hit directly, it seemed to still be somewhat dazed. The red-lined alpha wolf shook its head to try and dispel the dizziness, but this move only made it fall over again.

The condition of the red-lined alpha wolf caused the red-lined wolf pack to fall into disarray. The wolves were all howling at the sky worriedly, as if asking if their leader was okay.

Still, as befitting one of the reigning kings of the grasslands, the red-lined alpha wolf stood up once again. This time, it seemed to have regained full awareness, and turning to face the one who had kicked it, its eyes were crimson, filled with the need to rip Ling Lan into pieces.

Still, the wild beasts within the learning space had a certain level of intelligence — Ling Lan's kick had shown the alpha wolf that this small prey before it was not as weak as it seemed. It knew that it would not be able to handle the prey on its own, and so the red-lined wolf cast away its dignity, and howled up at the sky.

Very quickly, the wolves all around took up the howl as well, and the wolf packs in all directions bowed down collectively. From different directions and from different wolf packs, four huge alpha wolves emerged. They were like kings, strolling out proudly from among their subjects, slowly approaching Ling Lan.

Apparently, the red-lined alpha wolf had called out for assistance from the other alpha wolves.

Ling Lan's expression turned frigid. Although she didn't have to continue duking it out with the sea of wolves, the combined attack of five alpha wolves was also nothing to sneeze at. She really feared that she might lose her life under the fangs and claws of these alpha wolves as soon as the fight began.

"Interesting, didn't expect her to have that skill." Number Five's eyes narrowed in contemplation, a complicated expression on his face as he watched Ling Lan preparing to do battle against the five alpha wolves. Had that skill been her own choice? Or had it been just luck?

At that moment, the five alpha wolves officially began their attack on Ling Lan. With the red-lined alpha wolf as the lead attacker, the other alpha wolves circled around, darting in every so often to try and score a sneak attack. Their movements were well-coordinated, nothing at all like the messy and chaotic attacks of the regular wolves of the wolf pack.

The attacks of the alpha wolves had a sort of beauty to it, unlike the crude savagery of the regular wolves' attacks. The alpha wolves' movements could even be called graceful, though sometimes strange and elusive. But every collaboration between the wolves was just right, causing Ling Lan to be extremely harried as she evaded, almost dying several times in the process.

Ling Lan no longer held anything back. She pushed Qi into her two arms, instantly doubling their strength. Although it couldn't compare to the power of the Rabbit Sky Leap, it was still more than enough to penetrate through the alpha wolves' thick hides and deal them some pain.

Right now, Ling Lan's own body strength was not enough to fight against these alpha wolves — Ling Lan had already become aware of this during her first battle with the red-lined alpha wolf.

The perfectly coordinated attacks of the five alpha wolves gave them the upper edge, but Ling Lan wasn't helpless under these attacks. The powerful Rabbit Sky Leap was something the five alpha wolves had to watch out for because they just couldn't tell which kick was actually a Rabbit Sky Leap in disguise.

Under this scenario, the two sides were actually pretty evenly matched.

Still, the fearsome attacks of the alpha wolves let Ling Lan experience the thrill of dancing with death — she slowly let herself go, subconsciously descending into a pure world of combat, not a single stray thought within her mind. After fighting for a long while, Ling Lan felt a rush of euphoria permeate through her body — the shackles holding her back had finally been broken.

Ling Lan felt as if she had entered a whole new world, where the energy within her body was cheerfully waving at her, as if announcing their return.

Ling Lan knew what this was — it was the shackles she had put on herself previously to control her own strength. Within the past month, Ling Lan had been embroiled in combat training with the Ling family loyalists, all for the sake of restraining her malevolent aura. Even so, Ling Lan was very afraid that her malevolent aura would suddenly burst out, causing her to lose control and harm her family by accident. And so she had cautiously convinced herself, that no matter what the situation, she would not permit herself to release all of her strength in its entirety ...

Gradually, this self-hypnosis of sorts became a type of shackle, until finally, Ling Lan found that even if she consciously wanted to, she was unable to unleash all of her strength. Ling Lan didn't know whether to laugh or cry at this result.

Later on, she had sparred with Qi Long, and although she should have been able to defeat Qi Long with a straightforward show of strength, she had found it impossible to bypass her own personal limiters. In the end, she could only keep dragging out the fight until Qi Long had been exhausted for the spar to end.

Naturally, faced with such a frustrating situation, Ling Lan was very unhappy. But unfortunately, she had been unable to resolve the problem, and so had had no choice but to push it to the back of her mind, and wait for a solution to present itself later. Unexpectedly, at this crucial life-or-death moment, Ling Lan had broken past her shackles, regaining full access to her strength.

The alpha wolves sensed this change in Ling Lan; slowly but surely, they sensed the strength of their opponent grow stronger and stronger — attacks which had only caused minor pain previously, were now actually hurting them to their bones.

Ling Lan didn't know how long she had been fighting the alpha wolves, but she was starting to feel that her Qi circulation could no longer keep up with her energy expenditure. Her stamina was gradually fading, seeming as if it would disappear entirely the very next moment. She should have been anxious and worried by this, but she was uncharacteristically calm — just as if she wasn't the Ling Lan fighting for her life right now, but rather a cold-eyed observer on the side-lines.

Indeed, she had actually entered a strange sort of plane, where the attacks of the five alpha wolves seemed to occur almost in slow-motion. She could actually see a hole in the collaborative attacks of the five alpha wolves, and sensed that if she targeted that spot, she would definitely manage to land a solid hit.

Although Ling Lan didn't know why this was happening, she instinctively knew that this was a precious opportunity. Thus, she absorbed energy through her circulation of Qi once more, sent it running down into her right fist, and then threw a firm punch at the hole she had noticed.

Meanwhile, from Number Five's perspective, Ling Lan's right fist vanished mysteriously all of a sudden, and then a loud smack rang out, and an alpha wolf was sent flying to sprawl on the ground a distance away. However, the alpha wolf wasn't heavily injured and managed to struggle back to its feet, and then with an angry howl, it rejoined the battle once more.

At that moment, Number Five's face was a study in shock. Disbelievingly, he muttered to himself again and again, "How can this be? How can this be? Could it be the zone?"

Even as the thought reared its head, he squashed it. He shook his head forcefully, telling himself to calm down, that what he was thinking was impossible. What child would be so aberrant as to touch on the borders of a zone at six years old? Perhaps it was just a lucky shot by Ling Lan.

Seeing their own comrade being sent flying, albeit just briefly, the other alphas were enraged — this was an outright challenge! They no longer held any of their initial notions of fooling around, deciding to give the fight their all.

Ling Lan still remained calm; she had once again noticed a hole in the defences of the five alpha wolves. Even now she was unsure how her fist had connected with the head of one of the alpha wolves — the area she had aimed for had clearly been an empty space. Her last attack had been half-hearted, tentative as she was only testing it out. But this time, she would no longer hesitate.

“Rabbit Sky Leap!”

Resolutely, Ling Lan used her strongest technique on the hole. Immediately after, a desolate cry rang out — and one of the alpha wolves was seen falling heavily to the ground. A large hole had been ripped open on its belly, and its blood was gushing out like a river ... there was no possibility that it would survive.

The Rabbit Sky Leap technique could really be used as a one-hit-kill blow; Ling Lan was extremely pleased. Perhaps there were other skills and techniques much stronger than the Rabbit Sky Leap, but Ling Lan still felt that the Rabbit Sky Leap was much more useful and adaptable. Since the movements for it looked no different from a regular kick, she could hide it when she used it — no one would be able to tell which kick of hers was a Rabbit Sky Leap, so it was an extremely stealthy move.

The wolf who died was the red-lined alpha wolf. All we can say is that the red-lined alpha wolf was just too unlucky — coming on so strongly because it thought it had the upper hand, only to lose its lupine life.

At the death of the red-lined alpha wolf, the red-lined wolf pack started a round of mournful howling and then quickly dispersed. Within the span of two to three minutes, they had all fled the scene.

The four remaining alpha wolves stared at each other for a moment, and then decided to follow the example of the red-lined wolf pack. They swiftly retreated, howling out to their subordinates as they did so.

Ling Lan watched as the wolf packs slowly retreated until they had left her range of sight. Still, she didn't relax yet, staying on her feet for another three minutes. Finally, she could hold on no longer and toppled over to lie down on the ground. Those final two blows at the end had drained all of Ling Lan's physical energy. She had only remained standing out of sheer stubbornness, afraid to reveal her inability to continue to fight. Only when her body could really take it no longer had she given in to fall to the ground.

If the wolf packs chose to return and rally a second attack on her right now, it would definitely be an easy task for them to make mincemeat out of Ling Lan. Fortunately though, the wolf packs had really departed, so Ling Lan managed to survive by the skin of her teeth.

Even so, Ling Lan was still fearful as she recalled the situation. Once again, she was keenly aware of how important Little Four was to her. Without his comprehensive monitoring, her safety was entirely up to fate and circumstance — Ling Lan really detested this feeling of uncertainty. Of course, most importantly ... it was rather lonely without Little Four by her side.

However, Ling Lan's thoughts quickly turned to the sensation she had experienced in the earlier battle. That ability to glean the defensive holes of an opponent with one look, the feeling of having the flow of battle within her hands ... that sensation was just wonderful.

Ling Lan laid on the ground and held a fist up to the sky. Although she had no clue what that sensation was, she knew that it came from within her own body. In the fight, both her combat instincts and her physical strength had been pushed past her original limits, progressing one step further.

Was this what was meant by a personal breakthrough? But before Ling Lan could get too caught up in her excitement, a wet-blanket in human form appeared in her sight.

Number Five had materialized out of thin air right above Ling Lan. Peering down at Ling Lan, he grinned widely as he said, "Congratulations, you've cleared the mission."

At the same time, the system's voice rang out by Ling Lan's ear: "Mission completed. Reward — intense training by Number Five obtained!"

When Ling Lan heard the contents of the reward, her gut reaction was that she had been ripped-off. If she had known that this was the reward for clearing the mission, she would definitely have committed suicide right off the bat, so that she would utterly fail the mission. Ling Lan had not forgotten Number Nine's gentle warning ... Boo hoo hoo! Could she have a redo?! Ling Lan really felt like crying, full of regret for what might have been.

However, Number Five didn't give Ling Lan much time to regret her life choices. With another quick grab, he tossed Ling Lan into his own special training area.

Chapter 66: Still Ended Up a Boarder

Somewhere on the planet of Doha, in a top-secret location, someone was reporting the results of their operation through a communicator. "Sir, the people below have sent back the news — we have failed."

"What happened?" The screen was pitch-black, and the disguised voice that came through was cold and mechanical.

"There were way too many people protecting that brat, not just those opposing us, but even the Blades showed up."

"The Blades? Why are they involved?" The other could not understand why the bladed forces would appear here and now.

"Sir, what should we do now?" The caller's forehead was dripping with sweat. His superior was unforgiving of failure — he was deeply afraid that he would lose his head over this.

"Looks like the situation is a little complicated." The bladed forces' involvement was clearly a concern to the other. "Ling Xiao's son ... perhaps they are using him as bait now."

"It can't be." The caller just could not believe it. Ling Xiao was the Federation's hero — how could they treat a hero's child so heartlessly?

"Hmph. For their own benefit, what wouldn't the people in power abandon?" The other laughed coldly, tone mocking as he continued, "If Ling Xiao were still alive, and found out that the country he defended with his life was using his only descendant as bait, putting him in danger, he would probably be filled with endless regret."

As if finding his own words rather pointless, the mechanical voice regrouped and commanded sternly, "Forget going after Ling Xiao's son. Using him as bait to draw us out? In their dreams!"

"Understood!" The caller reflexively stood up to receive his orders, however, he was still worried, so he asked, "Sir, that boy is the child of a god-class operator — according to the transmitted data, his potential is excellent. If he is like Ling Xiao, and grows up to be another god-class operator for the Federation, this will be very disadvantageous for our Empire. Shouldn't we just take the risk and eliminate him ...?" god-class operators were just too strong beyond belief, capable of deciding the ultimate outcome of a battle if they were present.

The speaker of the mechanical voice picked up on the worried tone of his subordinate, and chided in dissatisfaction, "Didn't you do research on the information regarding god-class operators? Over the last several hundred years, has the offspring of any god-class operator manage to achieve that pinnacle? Even ascending to the level of an ace operator has been difficult for them. Didn't the geneticists of our Empire publicize their research thesis? When a particular bloodline has culminated in a god-class operator, that means that the energy potential within the genes of that bloodline has already peaked. This also means that all the energy potential of that bloodline has been consumed by the produced god-class operator, resulting in his descendants becoming more and more mediocre ... Ling Xiao's descendants are done for."

Otherwise, Ling Xiao's son Ling Lan wouldn't have failed to even make the top 10 of the Central Scout Academy. The decline of the Ling family was a foregone conclusion, so they weren't really worth their attention.

This news dropped onto the caller's head like a bomb, sending his mind reeling. If Ling Xiao's son wasn't a real threat to the empire, then why had his superior spent so much effort trying to assassinate Ling Lan?

As if sensing his subordinate's bewilderment, the mechanical voice rang out once more through the communicator, "It has been almost seven years since Ling Xiao's death, but all the military personnel of the Federation have not forgotten this extraordinary god-class operator, still filled with unflagging admiration for him. If at this time, news that his son had been assassinated by official mecha operators of the Federation were to spread ... how do you think the military men in service of the Chinese Federation will react?"

The sweat started to flow freely from the caller's forehead. "They may start to suspect that Ling Xiao's death was due to a conspiracy, a sacrifice in the power struggle among the upper ranks of the military — a mutiny may occur within the Federation." Who knew that his boss had been planning to use Ling Lan's death to set up such a large stage?

"What a pity the opponent also thought of the same thing, and decided to just play along with our trick, choosing to use Ling Xiao's son as a sacrificial pawn to bait us. I think, even if we really killed Ling Xiao's son, the opponent will be able to fabricate evidence to pin the blame on our Empire." The mechanical voice was filled with regret. This exchange was his loss — it was just lucky that he had discovered this early on, and managed to clean up after himself, only exposing some unimportant pawns in the process.

Listening to the analysis of the situation by the mechanical voice, the caller's forehead was beaded with sweat; he had almost ruined his superior's grand plan. He quickly nodded and bowed, saying, "Yes, Sir, I understand now."

"We shall scatter our forces and lay low for now. Don't do anything rash. The matter of the Ling family ends here." The mechanical voice decisively gave up on the operation to assassinate Ling Lan. He just could not let the opponent pin the death of Ling Xiao's son upon the head of the Empire.

Ling Xiao's death had already shown him the fervour of the military men of the Federation. Due to his death, the conflict between the two nations had escalated into an epic long-standing feud, which currently still showed no signs of stopping. If Ling Xiao's son's death became more fuel to the flame, he was afraid that the Empire would become overrun by those military men of the Federation and be utterly destroyed.

"Yes, Sir," responded the caller, before carefully shutting his communicator and turning to relay his superior's orders.

Just like that, the threat towards Ling Lan was resolved. When Ling Lan later became the Federation's star warrior of a new generation, these people would be filled with regret, beating themselves up for not choosing to continue with their assassination operation ...

Meanwhile, the commander of the Blades had received news from 413, who had secretly escorted Ling Lan all the way home. The assassination attempt this time had chilled him, even as it infuriated him. He had never expected that the opponent had already managed to secretly control some of the high-ranking people within the federal military.

The band of mecha operators 413's squad had captured and brought in were indeed serving military men of the Federation, but unfortunately, they really didn't know anything and were just a bunch of idiots who had been used.

Still, the commander of the Blades had been able to confirm that the power base of the opponent hidden within the Federation was considerable, and that a bunch of traitors had already been gathered around him. But for now, his greatest worry was for Ling Lan's safety. Ling Lan may have narrowly escaped this time — but what about next time?

The commander of the Blades hesitated for a brief moment, but finally connected to that particular contact number once more ... in the end, when he shut his communicator, the tension in his brows had faded and his expression was light and cheerful.

Although that old fellow had mercilessly extorted a substantial sum from him, it was alright as long as his objective had been achieved. At the most he'll just have to take on a couple more strenuous jobs in the meantime, but for the preservation of the bloodline of the Federation, this trouble was worth it!

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Early the second day, Ling Lan finally escaped from the torments of Number Five. With low spirits, she levered herself out of bed and washed up, and then rapidly wolfed down her prepared breakfast. There was no helping it — the distance to school was rather far, so she needed to hurry to make sure she had enough time for the journey. Of course, Ling Lan was also considering whether she should look for a



place close to the scout academy to live — wasting so much time every day on commuting was not a sustainable plan in Ling Lan's opinion.

Ling Lan decided that she would discuss the matter with her mother when she returned from school that day. Just as she finished her preparations and was about to leave, an unexpected guest showed up on the Ling family doorstep — the dean of the Central Scout Academy.

The dean's arrival was for one purpose only, and that was for Ling Lan to give up her special class right to be a day student. This was because Ling Lan was the only person this year who chose to be a day student, so the dean was concerned that Ling Lan's grades and progress would be held back by this.

Of course, as the academy was the one to request for the student to relinquish this right, the academy promised that Ling Lan could request something else from the academy, as long as the request was within the academy's means.

Although Lan Luofeng was very tempted by this offer, she could not agree. Why had Ling Lan chosen to be a day student to begin with after all? Because of the problem of her gender. If she stayed with someone else, the risk of exposure would be too high — Lan Luofeng could not afford to take the risk.

Even if Lan Luofeng wanted to refuse, she still needed to have a legitimate reason for refusing. This moment fully displayed Lan Luofeng's ability to improvise. In an instant, she actually managed to concoct a believable excuse — she said that ever since Ling Xiao had passed away, she had contracted an extremely severe case of depression. Consequently, she could not bear to be apart from her loved ones for long. If Ling Lan were to board at the school, she would be unable to control herself, and may end up harming herself.

Ling Qin, who was standing to one side, was very cooperative, immediately affecting an extremely morose expression, nodding gravely to affirm that what his mistress said was true. Meanwhile, with a face full of worry for her mother, Ling Lan regretfully declined the dean's kind offer.

Playing the pity card was obviously a smart move, for the dean's expression was awkward and filled with helplessness. Just as the three believed that the dean would give up on his plan, the dean seemed to come to some momentous decision and suggested an arrangement that shocked the three of them.

He actually suggested that Lan Luofeng live together with Ling Lan in the school. And since the academy had the iron-clad rule of not allowing non-staff to live on campus, the dean even went so far as to offer Lan Luofeng a position at the school as a teaching assistant, so that she could legitimately board at the school.

The dean also promised that Ling Lan and her mother could live alone in one of the villas at the school, where they wouldn't be disturbed. On top of that, the dean even specially permitted Lan Luofeng to bring along two servants to help her manage the villa.

With this, there was no longer any reason for the three to refuse. Ling Lan quickly thanked the dean, agreed that she would relinquish her right to be a day student, and would try her best to finalise the procedures required to board at the school as soon as possible.

Having received a satisfactory answer, the dean was greatly pleased and automatically offered to give Ling Lan the day off so that she could finalise all the procedures today itself. Then, without leaving a

trace of his visit, he left, only leaving behind three dumbfounded people who hadn't regained their senses sitting in the living room.

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The dean walked out of the Ling family gates, boarded his hover car, and finally dropped his noble bearing to slump in his seat. He wiped the sweat from his forehead, and once again lamented to himself at how difficult the Ling family was to handle. He thought back to the time when he had to persuade Ling Xiao — he had also had to sacrifice a lot then to succeed ...

However, he had still managed to achieve what his old friend had asked of him. Although the academy had had to pay a steep price, the result was still wonderful. The dean smiled in satisfaction. He had gotten many concessions from his old friend for this, so it was overall worth it.

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Ling Qin was the first to regain his senses. With a face full of joy, he turned to say to Lan Luofeng, "Mistress, this is a great thing! If Young Master Lan lives at the school, her safety is guaranteed."

Lan Luofeng remained uncertain and suspicious, smiling wryly as she said, "Uncle Qin, why do you think the academy is so accommodating towards Ling Lan, even going so far as to open a backdoor like this for her? I'm very worried. Ling Lan had just been ambushed, and now right after, the Central Scout Academy is giving Ling Lan such preferential treatment?"

It should be known that the gates of the Central Scout Academy were not so easily entered. The work benefits offered by the school was unquestionably the best in the Federation, so even a lowly teaching assistant position there was still highly sought after by countless highly-educated people. Lan Luofeng had never dreamed that such a coveted position would just fall into her lap due to her connection with Ling Lan. Of course, Lan Luofeng was not impressed by the position since she didn't need it. Although the Ling family seemed weak now, it still had a substantial foundation, enough so that both Ling Lan and Lan Luofeng could live N-lifetimes without having to trouble themselves over living expenses.

Lan Luofeng's words made Ling Qin hesitate as well — could it be that this was just another plot against Ling Lan? Ling Qin was beginning to become a little fearful. The assassination attempt and its series of attacks had troubled the heart of the old man, and he hadn't had time to get over it yet.

Seeing this, Ling Lan hurried to remind them, "I hear that the Central Scout Academy has the highest safety ranking, and students are prized most highly by the academy. Ever since the academy has been established, not a single student has ever been harmed on school grounds. Grandpa Ling Qin, is this rumour true?"

Ling Qin's eyes brightened, as if reminded of something, "Mistress, Young Master Lan is correct. The scout academies are run independently of any government or military system, and god-class operators are the ones in charge of protecting them ..."

Ling Qin's gaze was passionate and heated; Ling Lan was very familiar with such eyes — some rabid fans of superstars in her previous world had eyes which shined with the exact same type of light.

Ling Lan knew that Ling Qin's passionate reaction was drawn out by the god-class operators he mentioned. What exactly was that all about?

Ling Lan was determined to let Little Four dig up some information on this later on. Suddenly, she realised that she really didn't know much about this world at all. The assassination incident had given her her first glimpse of real mecha, blinding her with obsession for a moment ... these past few years, she had just been focused on training hard and had rather neglected all the interesting things in the outside world.

In truth, Ling Lan could not be blamed for this. Some information was actually classified by the government, and Little Four had felt that Ling Lan really didn't need to know about these sort of things at her age, and so hadn't collected these information. As such, Ling Lan naturally wouldn't have known about any of this.

Thus, poor Ling Lan was still unaware that her father was the idol of the military men of the Federation, and that he had been the youngest god-class operator of the Federation.

Ling Qin's words reassured Lan Luofeng, and so she happily ran upstairs to pack for both Ling Lan and herself.

Just like that, Ling Lan did not show up in Special Class-A for the first official day of school. When the homeroom teacher of Special Class-A glossed over the fact that Ling Lan had already applied for the day off, his tone was obviously protective. This stirred up the discontent of the other students in Special Class-A, provoking a flurry of private discussion ...

While Qi Long didn't think much of the matter, Luo Lang seemed to have sensed something, but only Han Jiyun had a serious expression on his face ...

Boss Lan, who are you really?

Chapter 67: The Impudent Challenger

In the mirror, a little boy was wearing the rumoured military-style uniform of Special Class-A. The bold red, the fitting tailoring, the glittering bronze leather boots that were so polished that one could almost see one's reflection in it, and the leather belt with a metal buckle around his waist — all of it added a dash of charm to the already handsome boy, swaying the heart of the woman beside him, causing her heart to swell with motherly love.

Lan Luofeng framed her face with her hands, expression dreamy as she said, "Lan Lan, you really look so much like your daddy today — so handsome beyond compare."

Ling Lan couldn't help but roll her eyes. Praise her if she wanted to praise her — why did she have to bring up her old man? Could it be that she was praising her on the surface, but was actually thinking about her old man?

Thinking about Lan Luofeng's long previous history of such occurrences, Ling Lan was pretty sure her mum was caught up in her own romantic fantasies again. She decided to disregard the woman, turning to say to Ling Nanyi directly, "Grandma Chamberlain, I leave mum in your care."

Ling Nanyi was Chamberlain Ling Qin's wife. This time, moving into the scout academy, Lan Luofeng and Ling Lan had brought Ling Nanyi along, tasking her with the running of the villa. And Ling Nanyi had then

also selected a servant girl who was deadly loyal to the Ling family with an impeccable record to come along with her, to help her with the cleaning of the villa.

With a smile, Ling Nanyi replied, “Young Master Lan, please don’t worry.”

That done, Ling Lan waved goodbye to them and walked to the villa doors. Just as she opened the door ... Lan Luofeng finally shook herself out of her love-dazed state. “Ling Lan, what do you take your mother for? You ingrate!” Lan Luofeng bellowed from behind her. She had just registered what Ling Lan was implying, and her ire was raised.

Ling Lan turned to look back with a smile. “Congratulations, Mum, you haven’t become a complete idiot.” That said, she slipped out of the house.

“Crash!” Some unidentified item slammed into the doors, and Lan Luofeng’s lion roar could be heard once again. “Ling Lan, just you wait, you’ll get it once you get home!”

With a smile on her lips, Ling Lan left the villa behind. She knew her mum was just talk — when she really returned later, her mum would definitely hug her close and kiss her all over her face, almost seeming as if she wouldn’t stop until Ling Lan’s face was visibly swollen with her love. There was a time when Ling Lan wondered whether this bad habit was something her mum had learned from her dad ... but unfortunately she had no frame of reference, and so the truth would never be known.

Ling Lan slowly walked over to the main road which led to this patch of villas. At this dawn hour, there were already quite a few children and teens about, dressed in the same red uniform. Though their ages ranged, the direction they were headed in was the same — towards the learning area of the scout academy.

It turned out that this villa area that Ling Lan was boarding in was specially allocated for the Special Class-A students — from the first grade to the tenth grade, all of them were in this area.

However, very few of these students were walking like Ling Lan. They wore shoes which jetted air out backwards and were flying freely over the main road.

These shoes were called jet-rollers, very similar to the roller skates of Ling Lan’s previous world, which had wheels attached to the bottom of the shoes in either two rows or just one single row. However, jet-rollers were even more advanced than roller skates. On both sides of the shoes and the heel area, miniature drivers were installed, which could draw power from the energy storage unit to power the jets. When a certain velocity was achieved, the shoes would lift off the ground along with the person wearing them. Of course, their maximum achievable height was only about 2.5 metres.

Ling Lan was a little puzzled. The school rules did not allow students to use external powers to fly or speed around within school grounds — how could these special class students be so daring to do so so blatantly?

“It can be confirmed that these students are all second grade and above,” Little Four jumped out to say.

“Look it up, why can they use jet-rollers in school?” Ling Lan didn’t believe that they were so free just because they were in Special Class-A; there must be some other reason.

“Found it! Apparently they used battle points to redeem those jet-rollers, which is why they can use them in school.” Little Four was reliable as ever, piggybacking on a random wireless signal to log on to the school intranet, and quickly finding the answer that Ling Lan needed.

“The redeemed jet-rollers are specially customized by Central Scout Academy, tagged with the Central Scout Academy’s identification code, which is why they can be used within the school grounds. Other jet-rollers are forbidden — if found to be used, demerits will apply, and the student will immediately be downgraded by one class level.” Without waiting for Ling Lan to prompt him, Little Four continued to supplement his explanation.

That’s more like it! Ling Lan had just been wondering how the academy could differentiate between redeemed jet-rollers and those brought in from the outside, but Little Four’s explanation answered all her questions. She stared enviously at those seniors zooming around, and decided that she would also redeem one when she had the chance later on.

Ling Lan walked to one of the hover car stops servicing the villa areas. The academy was just too vast — if the students were to walk, they would definitely not get to the learning area within an hour. And as new students, they didn’t have jet-rollers, so the only way they could save time was to rely on these hover car stops set up by the academy.

Even before she arrived at the stop, Ling Lan could see the long line of people in wait. A little put off, Ling Lan scratched her brow. Looks like she wouldn’t be able to take the first few cars, but hopefully she wouldn’t be late still. Ling Lan had actually left the house a little late due to Lan Luofeng’s fussing.

Ling Lan maintained her current speed as she walked towards the stop. Right then, she heard a familiar voice shouting out from somewhere not far behind her, “Jijyun, Luo Lang, hurry up! We’re going to be late ...”

It was Qi Long! Ling Lan was extremely surprised; what a coincidence to bump into Qi Long and the others here. A mischievous smirk appeared on her lips. The three boys still didn’t know she had started boarding at the school, so they probably wouldn’t expect to bump into her here so early in the morning.

Sure enough, Qi Long didn’t notice that the person walking in front of him was Ling Lan. Just as he was about to zoom past Ling Lan, she stuck a foot out in his path.

“Qi Long, watch out!” From behind, Luo Lang could see this very clearly, but because he was too far away, he couldn’t do anything to stop Qi Long aside from yelling out to him, hoping that he would notice in time.

Qi Long truly had the intuition of a wild beast — Ling Lan had stuck her foot out at the most perfect timing to catch him unawares, but even so, just before the moment Qi Long would trip, he managed to catch himself in time to draw his feet back enough to just slide by Ling Lan’s foot, escaping the fate of being tripped. However, everything happened too fast, so Qi Long’s rhythm was still thrown off. His landing was uneven and he stumbled, almost falling down anyway.

“You goddamn bastard ...” After finding his feet, Qi Long turned around, raging, fully prepared to teach the sneaky fellow a lesson, but was faced with Ling Lan’s cheeky grin instead.

“Boss, it’s you!” Qi Long was overjoyed. He took a large step forward and enveloped Ling Lan in a bear hug, before voicing his doubts, “Why are you here?”

Han Jijyun and Luo Lang had also rushed over angrily in the meantime, but at Qi Long’s joyful shout, their anger melted away into pleasant surprise. Han Jijyun’s eyes were even sparkling as he asked, “Boss Lan, you’ve decided to board at school?” Seeing Ling Lan here, there should be no other possibility.

Helplessly, Ling Lan said, “I had no choice. The school forcefully cancelled my day study right, so I could only board at the school.”

“That’s great! Now we can always learn and train together.” Qi Long was the most pleased by this; he finally had someone who could keep up with him in a fight. Yesterday, he had sparred with Luo Lang, but Qi Long had not been satisfied at all. Sparring with Boss Lan was still the best, although he would always be thoroughly trounced by Boss Lan.

Han Jijyun and Luo Lang’s expressions were also pleased though, and amidst laughter and chitchat, they arrived at the hover car stop. By this time, there was already much fewer people waiting in line. Han Jijyun flashed his communicator at the stop’s sensor, and the sensor responded in an automated mechanical voice, “The hover car you require will arrive in 3 minutes and 20 seconds. Please be ready.”

Very quickly, the students lining up before them had all boarded a hover car and left, and their group of four was next. The academy’s hover cars were all built for four people, with two seats in the front row and back row respectively, and looked quite like a convertible car from Earth. Their hover car arrived very punctually, 3 minutes 20 seconds later on the dot from the time Han Jijyun had checked. Ling Lan’s group of four seated themselves randomly on the two rows and selected the first year Special Class-A classroom as their destination.

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They had just arrived at the classroom doors when the preparatory bell indicating the start of class rang out from within the classroom. The children within the classroom immediately found their seats and began their final preparations for the day ahead. When Ling Lan walked in, she drew their curious gazes. Because Ling Lan’s was an unfamiliar face, they quickly surmised that Ling Lan was the mysterious student of probable remarkable origin who had taken leave on the very first day of school yesterday.

Han Jijyun signalled Ling Lan to follow him. It turned out that the homeroom teacher had already assigned everyone’s seats yesterday, and Ling Lan’s seat was directly behind Han Jijyun’s, while Qi Long and Luo Lang were seated to the right and left of Ling Lan.

“How did it end up this way?” Ling Lan was very surprised. This arrangement was very convenient for them to converse and interact, but it was just too coincidental for all four of them to be seated together.

With a resigned expression on his face, Han Jijyun replied, “Your seat and mine are according to the teacher’s original arrangement, but Qi Long’s and Luo Lang’s are the results of battle.” It looked like Han Jijyun had tried to stop Qi Long and Luo Lang, but had not succeeded.

“What do you mean ‘results of battle’?” Ling Lan was curious.

Qi Long piped up excitedly from the side, “After the teacher finished assigning the seats, he said that if anyone was unhappy with their seats, they could challenge the student who had the seat they wanted. If

they won the challenge, then they could switch seats; if they lost, then they'll have to serve the student they challenged for a month. Both Luo Lang and I won."

Ling Lan was speechless. This world was truly a dangerous world — they were all so young, but the teacher was already starting to cultivate their fighting spirit. Looks like she really couldn't take it easy if she wanted to achieve something in this world.

Right at that moment, the bell signalling the official start of class reverberated through the classroom, and an elegant and refined youth sedately entered the classroom. He was their first grade Special Class-A homeroom teacher.

In the new students' first week, there was no official teaching. The first half of the day was taken up by a course teaching them about the academy's rules, while the later part of the afternoon was allocated for physical training and getting used to the academy's training machinery and facilities.

The homeroom teacher of Special Class-A was named Cheng Yuanhang. When he saw Ling Lan, his gaze turned cold, and then he announced to the class, "Yesterday I said that if anyone had a seat they preferred, they could challenge the owner of that seat as they liked. Originally, the activity should have ended yesterday, but because a student was absent yesterday, we could not just end it. So, I'll ask again today — does anyone here want Ling Lan's seat?"

Ling Lan's brow furrowed. Looks like the homeroom teacher didn't like her, otherwise he wouldn't specifically call her out by name.

The students looked at one another, but no one made a peep. Nobody wanted to challenge Ling Lan. Think about it. Challenging a fellow student with unknown capabilities just for a seat that was not that much different from another — and if you lost, you'd have to serve the other for a month ... no matter how you looked at it, it just wasn't worth it. Although Ling Lan's rank was only 17, Qi Long and Luo Lang whose rankings were behind him had risen up like dark horses and had shown just how unexpectedly strong they were. The students couldn't help but be wary after that.

Just as Cheng Yuanhang thought no one would challenge, a weak and skinny child stood up and said, "I want to challenge!"

"Lin Zhong-qing?" All the students were in an uproar. The dead-last of Special Class-A actually wanted to challenge the upper middle ranking Ling Lan? Wasn't that just looking for trouble?!

## Chapter 68: You've Lost

Ling Lan wasn't particularly bothered by Lin Zhong-qing's impudent challenge, but her follower Qi Long was riled up instead. He felt as if his boss had been looked down upon, so with a loud slap on his table, he stood up and shouted, "Dammit, daring to challenge my boss? You're too cocky! Teacher Cheng, I'm willing to accept his challenge and fight on behalf of my boss."

Qi Long's interruption startled Lin Zhong-qing, but then a trace of glee flashed through his eyes. Perhaps no one else saw it, but Ling Lan did. Of course, all the credit should be given to Little Four who was comprehensively monitoring the classroom. No one's expression within the classroom could escape Little Four's sharp eyes.

Qi Long's unexpected request for battle caused rage to cross Cheng Yuanhang's face. Coldly, he said, "Qi Long, don't test my patience."

Cheng Yuanhang had really been angered. How old were these children? Already forming groups and saying boss this boss that — what do they take this sacred Central Scout Academy for? Cheng Yuanhang was of commoner descent, and had only achieved the success he had today via the cultivation of the Central Scout Academy. As such, he deeply loved the academy, and loathed any bad children that might harm the academy's reputation.

And Ling Lan, Qi Long, and the others in his group, were all bad children in Cheng Yuanhang's eyes. Especially Ling Lan. On the very first day of school, he had already made the dean come personally to request leave for him — Cheng Yuanhang was very dissatisfied by this. The esteemed dean was the person Cheng Yuanhang respected the most. In his opinion, getting the honourable dean himself to come and handle the trivial procedures of applying for leave — this must definitely be due to pressure exerted by the power backing Ling Lan ...

Because of this, Cheng Yuanhang privately came to the conclusion that Ling Lan's inclusion in Special Class-A must be due to manipulation of a back door. Against these second-generation rich degenerates who relied on their family background and power, he was full of contempt. Therefore, Cheng Yuanhang had decided to give Ling Lan a harsh awakening right at the start of today, so that the boy would understand that the Central Scout Academy was not a place where he could dominate just with his family connections.

Of course, Qi Long wasn't content to just step back. Just as he was about to argue the point, Ling Lan stepped out from the side and pressed him back into his seat, signalling for him to stop speaking.

Ling Lan then turned to look at Cheng Yuanhang, and asked serenely, "What do you think, Teacher?"

Cheng Yuanhang gave her two options. "You can choose to accept the challenge, or you can refuse. But refusing means that you automatically give up your seat. Student Ling Lan, what is your choice?"

Ling Lan looked steadily at Lin Zhong-qing, and said, "Since Student Lin wants to challenge, of course I shall accept."

When Lin Zhong-qing heard Ling Lan accept, a complicated expression crossed his face. There was a trace of unease, but more a sense of relief — this was not the typical expression a challenger should have.

"Boss, looks like that midget has an ulterior motive in challenging you." Once again, Little Four had caught on to Lin Zhong-qing's change in expression, and spoke up to caution Ling Lan.

"Ok. Let's wait and see." Ling Lan secretly put up her guard. Although Lin Zhong-qing looked rather weak, she had read N-many amount of novels, comics, and anime, and knew that there were many main characters who liked to pretend to be weak to fool their opponents 1, who knew if this Lin Zhong-qing wasn't someone like this? Ling Lan kept her attention focused as she continued her vigilance.

Ling Lan's acceptance of the challenge caused all the first year Special Class-A students to become excited. Under Cheng Yuanhang's lead, the whole class came to one of the combat halls within the academy.



Walking up to the Information Input Station within the main hall, Cheng Yuanhang personally keyed in Ling Lan and Lin Zhong-qing's battle request, and under 'Nature of Combat', he selected the option of 'Open Arena'.

Pensively, Ling Lan glanced at Cheng Yuanhang. Looks like this teacher was really against her — it wasn't just her imagination.

This wasn't the first time Ling Lan had come to this combat hall. On registration day itself, she had already requested a fight here before together with Qi Long. Thus, she knew very well that there were many options under 'Nature of Combat', ranging from 'Closed and Private', 'Closed Small Arena', 'Semi-Open Small Arena', 'Open Small Arena', 'Closed Arena', 'Semi-Open Arena', to 'Open Arena' ...

Any option with 'closed' meant the fight would be private and hidden, rejecting any viewing audience, just like her spar with Qi Long. Back then, they had chosen a 'Closed and Private' battle, while this battle between her and Lin Zhong-qing was actually best suited for the 'Semi-Open Small Arena' option.

A 'semi-open' battle would open a unique combat room, and audience members would need to have the room's passcode to enter. They would just have to let the Class-A students know the passcode, then they would have been able to fight a match without any outside disturbance. In that situation, even the side who lost wouldn't have his embarrassment broadcast to the public and lose face.

But an 'open' fight was different — this type of battle was open for viewing for all students within the Central Scout Academy. Furthermore, before the fight, the combat hall would even do a comprehensive announcement. As such, open battles were usually only used during the ranking battles every six months, extremely rare under normal circumstances.

Sure enough, the news of the Open Arena battle was announced repetitively by the combat hall, drawing all the other students who were here for their own individual practice to the side of their ring. When this impromptu audience saw that there were two new students on the stage wearing eye-catching red clothes, they knew it was a fight between Special Class-A kids. Pleasantly surprised, they started discussing the fight in earnest, and the atmosphere around the arena became even livelier.

Quite a few students even turned on their communicators so they could contact their good friends to come spectate as well.

Ling Lan and Lin Zhong-qing were currently standing on the left and right side of the stage respectively, facing each other. In contrast with Ling Lan's calm composure, Lin Zhong-qing looked extremely nervous.

Cheng Yuanhang looked at the two people on the stage and asked them, "Are you two ready?"

The two nodded in confirmation, and Cheng Yuanhang issued the command, "Battle, start."

Lin Zhong-qing heard Cheng Yuanhang's call to start, but he didn't choose to attack immediately. Instead, he retreated swiftly, putting some distance between him and Ling Lan.

"What is he trying to do?" asked Little Four in confusion.

"We'll know when we fight. By the way Little Four, while I'm fighting, don't make any sound to distract me," reminded Ling Lan worriedly.

She still remembered the time a while back when she had been going through combat training with the Ling family loyalists. Due to Little Four's importune interruption, she had been struck heavily by one of the loyalists, almost gaining a serious injury. Fortunately, the Ling family medicinal bath and the Qi exercises were very reliable, supporting Ling Lan so she didn't have any lasting damage. Still, that one time was enough to scare Ling Lan half to death — it turned out that her life was still not guaranteed.

Little Four immediately pulled an imaginary zipper across his mouth in response, signalling that his lips were sealed. He would definitely not cause Ling Lan any trouble.

Ling Lan activated her Qi circulation, and could instantly feel all her senses heighten. When she looked at Lin Zhong-qing once again, she had the feeling as if the entire course of the battle was within her grasp ... it was glorious.

This was also part of the results of two nights of training under Number Five — a newly discovered ability. Although it had only been two nights in real time, due to the time rate conversion, Ling Lan had actually been tormented viciously under Number Five's hand for a little over two months, almost driving Ling Lan up the wall.

Luckily, this ability had progressed from its erratic functionality based on her mental condition, to its current stable functioning of working 5 to 6 times out of 10. Ling Lan's suffering had been worth it.

The next second was it! Ling Lan's intuition told her that Lin Zhong-qing's attack was coming.

Sure enough, of the two people facing off, Lin Zhong-qing was the first to attack. He swooped in abruptly, and his angle of attack was a tricky one.

Many of the higher grade students nodded in approval when they saw Lin Zhong-qing's attack. Lin Zhong-qing's timing was spot on as well — the time he attacked was the precisely the point when a human's mental focus would wane after intense concentration; it was when people were the slowest. Moreover, his attack stance was also great, not just any regular combat art.

However, Ling Lan's reaction shocked and awed the watching students. As if well-prepared, Lin Zhong-qing's attack only made her move a tiny step, and with a slight tilt of her body, she had easily dodged his attack.

"F\*ck, this kid is just too confident in himself. Actually choosing to dodge in such a narrow range, isn't that too much?" The older students were all rather stunned, and started criticizing Ling Lan for being too reckless in her evasion movements.

Qi Long and Luo Lang looked at one another, and read the shock and surprise on each other's faces. They knew very well that using the smallest angle possible to dodge was Ling Lan's specialty. This was definitely the most energy efficient way of dodging, but only Ling Lan would dare to do so. Qi Long and Luo Lang didn't even dare to try — this was closely related to confidence and ability, and they just weren't at that level yet. However, what shocked and surprised them was not that they were familiar with this evasion move, but because they had sensed that Ling Lan had an even deeper understanding of this type of small-range evasion now, which made her movements look extremely graceful and natural.

Lin Zhong-qing's first strike struck air, but he didn't retreat directly, choosing to follow up with a flurry of combo punches, moving forward with the determined air of wanting to defeat quality with sheer

quantity 2 . Unfortunately, Ling Lan's strength was really just too far above him — this sort of tactic was no problem at all for Ling Lan.

Gently swaying her body, Ling Lan swiftly dodged all of Lin Zhong-qing's combination attacks, and somehow, she found herself once again in that strange state she had achieved during her fight with the five alpha wolves. This state was still currently not under Ling Lan's control, so whether she could enter it or not was really up to her luck.

Once she entered this state, all of Lin Zhong-qing's attacks became weakness after weakness in Ling Lan's eyes. With just one punch, she would be able to knock Lin Zhong-qing down ... it's just, now, seeing Lin Zhong-qing's desperation as he attacked with clenched teeth; his rage and stubbornness made Ling Lan decide to just wait a little longer.

Lin Zhong-qing's boxing skills only consisted of a few moves, and after Ling Lan saw the second repetition of the attack pattern, she knew it was time to end this.

Ling Lan did nothing other than make a simple fist, and throw it out firmly at the largest weak point in her eyes.

Bam! Ling Lan's fist smacked into a soft ball of flesh, and then that thing was sent flying out like a cannonball, to land heavily on the arena floor.

With just this punch, Lin Zhong-qing had been hit, and was now lying still on the ground without any sign of getting up.

All the observing students were gobsmacked. Was this not a battle between two Special Class-A students, but rather a battle between a Special Class-A student and someone from the regular classes? They knew very well that although Special Class-A had a ranking of 50 spots, all the children didn't really differ much in terms of ability, and were practically on par with each other. But this scene before them shattered everything they knew — was there such a large gap, such as that between clouds in the sky and dirt on the ground, even among the Special Class-A students?

"You've lost," said Ling Lan calmly towards the fellow lying on the stage who was still unwilling to get up. Although her punch had seemed heavy, it definitely would not have done any significant damage to the opponent.

#### Chapter 69: Ling Lan's Problem

Expression dark, Lin Zhong-qing sprang to his feet and said dejectedly, "It's my loss." However, he quickly raised his head again, and with wide, open eyes, and a face full of tenacity, he added, "But next time, I won't lose to you again." The fight and confidence in his eyes were still present, not at all dampened by this loss.

Contemplatively, Ling Lan looked at him, and then said sedately, "I'll be waiting." This little guy was no fool — with that performance, he had probably drawn the attention of the homeroom teacher.

Sure enough, Cheng Yuanhang started applauding from below the stage, expression approving as he said with a smile, "Not bad, Ling Lan, as expected of one of the higher ranking students in our class." Then, he turned to look at Lin Zhong-qing with an expression of deep appreciation for talent, clearly showing

who Cheng Yuanhang truly approved of, and said, “Lin Zhong-qing, your performance was very good. Failure is the mother of success — keep it up, you’ll succeed one day.”

Hearing this, Ling Lan was speechless — Teacher Cheng, oh Teacher Cheng, when you say this, could you not do it right in front of me? Wasn’t this just cursing her to one day lose at Lin Zhong-qing’s hands? Ling Lan was currently simmering with resentment.

Receiving Cheng Yuanhang’s praise and encouragement, Lin Zhong-qing suppressed the gratefulness in his heart as he replied, “Understood, Teacher. I will work hard.”

That’s awesome, he had managed to leave a good impression on his homeroom teacher! Lin Zhong-qing gave himself a mental fist-pump. Then, he turned to look at Ling Lan, who was standing across from him with his hands folded before him, and doubt rose in his heart.

Subconsciously, he swept his gaze to the area below the stage and saw Li Yingjie’s unconcealed anger at Ling Lan’s success in the limelight. At that, his mind settled.

Heaven destroys those who don’t look out for themselves!

By this time, Little Four had sensed Lin Zhong-qing’s intentions. In the mindspace, he was so angry that he was stomping around, insisting that Ling Lan should teach that horrible punk a lesson — better yet, she should beat him up until his own mum couldn’t recognise him. Darn it, actually daring to think of using his boss — did he really think his boss would be so easily taken advantage of?

At this moment, Ling Lan was flipping through the files on Lin Zhong-qing which Little Four had passed to her. She found out that Lin Zhong-qing was a commoner child, and tracing back N-generations, all information indicated that his family was of perfectly normal commoner descent. Lin Zhong-qing’s [S] rank body and tier-1 spiritual power were definitely due to a type of genetic mutation. The child was really quite pitiful. For the sake of money and other benefits, his parents had given him to the military as research material.

However, after six years of research, Lin Zhong-qing was determined as the result of a lucky genetical mishap, and so did not have any research value whatsoever in the stimulation of genetic mutation. As a material with no research value, the military was unconcerned about his whereabouts. Thus, Lin Zhong-qing became a member of the Central Scout Academy this year.

For such a person of 3-lacks (lacking family, lacking money, and lacking power), what was it that pushed him to challenge Ling Lan? If Lin Zhong-qing had only continued to maintain a low profile and avoid attention, he could have smoothly completed his ten years of education at the Central Scout Academy, and then be free to choose the future he wanted.

But he had instead chosen to grandstand, and though he had indeed managed to attract the homeroom teacher’s attention, the disadvantages were obviously greater than the benefits, and Lin Zhong-qing did not seem like an impetuous person.

Thinking of this, Ling Lan said, “ Little Four, dig a little deeper. I don’t think this matter is that simple.”

Little Four patted his little chest energetically, saying, “Boss, don’t worry, I’ll keep a close all-rounded watch on Lin Zhong-qing. I’ll definitely find out his secret!” That said, Little Four scarpereed off to write out his comprehensive monitoring plan, seeming as if he would not rest until he found out everything

there was to know about Lin Zhong-qing. At this moment, Ling Lan made a silent prayer for Lin Zhong-qing. Being targeted by Little Four basically meant that he would have no more secrets to himself.

And so Ling Lan and Lin Zhong-qing's fight ended just like that, but the ripples following the event were not over yet. Among the special class students of the upper grades, rumours spread about a first grade Special Class-A kid who was extremely strong, so much so that his Class-A classmate, who was also within the top 50, had been defeated with just one blow.

Everyone began to anticipate the ranking battles coming in six months. Every year, the top-ranking student of Class-A had the right to challenge across grades. Who knew how far this first year Class-A student could go? How many grades ahead could he defeat? (These people didn't even consider the possibility that Ling Lan wouldn't be the top-ranking student.) At that thought, the first grade students were keyed up, while the upper grade students were eager as well, ready to teach this arrogant upstart a good lesson. (As the rumours spread, they became more and more twisted, finally skewed in such a way that Ling Lan became an extremely strong and capable punk with a terribly arrogant attitude.)

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In the fourth grade Special Class-A, a sunny youngster grinned cheekily as he said to his companion beside him, "Shiyu, with such a formidable kid in the first grade, your little cousin brother's position at the top is at risk."

"That brat Yingjie — if he doesn't take a loss, he would really think that he's at the top of the world." Li Shiyu's face was full of contempt as he said this, as if extremely scornful of his own younger cousin.

"You Li family members are really something. If your eldest cousin brother really has no talent, then why do you all insist on making him the first in line to inherit? Causing your entire household to be full of civil strife, so troublesome." The sunshine youngster was grateful that he was born in the Yun family. Although there were also some messy affairs within the family, in comparison with the Li family, those issues were not really issues at all, so his family affairs could even be described as clean.

"Yun Xiu, you look down on my eldest cousin?" Li Shiyu's expression was a little strange as he glanced at him.

Yun Xiu threw a sarcastic look at him, "You think? He's older than you by a few months, but he couldn't even qualify for the Central Scout Academy. I heard he was sent by your grandpa family head to the Li family origin planet of Azure to study at the scout academy there? Looks like your family head isn't optimistic about this first inheritor of your family."

Planet Azure was a third-rate planet, and was one of those planets that were rather behind on resources; it could not compare at all with the premium capital planet of Doha. Typically, any child with even a speck of talent would never be assigned there.

"Who knows ..." Li Shiyu's expression was a little lost. He had not had many encounters with his eldest cousin because ever since his eldest cousin had been born, he had been taken away by Grandfather for personal training. From young, the times they met were fewer than few, countable on just one hand. But even so, he had a very deep impression of this elder cousin brother of his. This profound impression was not due to his status as first inheritor, but was something caused by the very essence of his elder cousin himself.

His eldest cousin had a warm aura about him that invited others close, mysteriously drawing in the people around him. Even if everyone in the Li family said that his eldest cousin wasn't fit to be the first inheritor, he had never seen a trace of resentment or dissatisfaction in his cousin's bearing. That never-changing, warm smile led others to become reflexively happy in his presence.

Although Li Shiyu was also a strong contender for the right to inherit, every time after he met his eldest cousin, the yearning to fight for it would lessen just a little more. Sometimes, he even felt that letting his eldest cousin become the family head wasn't such a bad idea. He would be very willing to help his cousin blaze his way forward, eliminating any rebellious Li family members in his path ...

Li Shiyu shook his head, trying to dislodge this notion. His parents would never allow him to do so. He couldn't help but sigh softly. "My eldest cousin, is hard to understand ... viewing him as an enemy is very difficult."

Ever since their eldest cousin brother left for planet Azure, he had not returned in four years. Quite likely, Li Yingjie had very little memory of this cousin brother, which was why he was so fixated on getting the inheritor position. If he really met their eldest cousin, he would very likely start gradually losing the motivation to steal this right from him.

"The old grandfather of your family is still going strong anyhow. Any fight over the position will still have to wait for many years later. It's still too early to think about all this. But, I'm curious. When that self-important younger cousin of yours gets robbed of his rank at the top, what will his expression be like?" Yun Xiu smirked evilly — it was his favourite thing to see the expressions of those pompous brats who thought they were geniuses when they were being ground into the dirt.

"Ho, so your vulgar taste remains unchanged ... well, you'll see in six months," teased Li Shiyu, expression light and casual. Li Yingjie wasn't the eldest cousin he didn't want to fight; he would gladly see him become a laughing stock. Alright, so brotherly ties were weak in the Li family to begin with — it's just that this generation had produced an oddball like his eldest cousin brother.

"Leave me alone, aren't you even more vulgar? That's your younger cousin, you know." Yun Xiu smacked Li Shiyu's shoulder in mock anger. Li Shiyu's interest in seeing Li Yingjie make a fool of himself was no less than his own, as expected of someone from the Li family.

Li Shiyu just laughed at Yun Xiu. One really didn't need that many friends, sometimes just having one who really understood you was enough.

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Ling Lan's study life had officially begun, or we should say, Ling Lan was getting along just fine. Although the homeroom teacher Cheng Yuanhang had treated her rather harshly on her first day, he had changed his original view of her after seeing her impressive performance, and consequently no longer went out of his way to give her trouble. This was one of the pay offs of her battle with Lin Zhong-qing ...

Another pay off was her popularity among the Class-A students. The entire class consisted of boys (Ling Lan's current identity was that of a boy, so we can just ignore this irregular case), and they followed the mentality of 'survival of the fittest'. As such, Ling Lan's defeat of the last place Lin Zhong-qing in one move was greatly admired by all her classmates, so they all wanted to be friends with her. This was because they felt that they themselves would have been unable to pull off what Ling Lan had done.

Of course, there were still some who were averse to Ling Lan, such as the small group that was led by Li Yingjie. They shunned her subtly, and were even a little combative at times.

Regarding this, Ling Lan was apathetic. She had never considered herself as a femme fatale invincible from all angles — someone who had flowers blooming in her presence, people falling at her feet, who caused havoc on heaven and earth, disturbing gods and spirits alike with her beauty ... (Ling Lan was of the opinion that such a woman was definitely not human.) Thus, it was perfectly normal for there to be people who didn't like her. Furthermore, speaking of Li Yingjie, she also didn't like him in return. That smug look of his was just like that of a narcissistic peacock, not cute at all.

Fine, although Ling Lan wasn't a pure 'face-con' 1, she was a certified 'moe-con' 2, only being fond of pretty and adorable children ...

However, the fight didn't just bring Ling Lan good results, it also brought along a large problem.

And that was this uninvited guest, Lin Zhong-qing, before her. Even though Ling Lan had refused the month of service he owed her after he lost his challenge, Lin Zhong-qing would not accept it. He still insisted on paying this debt with full diligence. According to Lin Zhong-qing, you reap what you sow — he took the gamble, so he must pay the price — this was what a true man must do.

Chapter 70: The Meaning of Companions!

Lin Zhong-qing's decision was supported by many of the students in Class-A — even teacher Cheng Yuanhang was full of approval — but Ling Lan was aggravated by it.

Bastard! Ling Lan cursed in a very unladylike fashion, extremely disdainful of the people who supported Lin Zhong-qing's high-handed way of doing things. Was causing trouble to others really something a real man would do?

Alright, perhaps if she really was a boy, she wouldn't be so confused by this. But dammit, she was a girl, definitely a girl, forever a girl ... if she let a boy serve her in such close range, and if the truth came out, how would she still get married in the future? Ling Lan had still not given up on the idea of getting married as her true self in the future, primarily because she really wanted to give birth to a child of her own to play with.

Adding up the ages of both her lifetimes, she was already an old lady of over 30 years old. Her mental age was definitely at that particular stage where she desperately wanted to get married and have kids. However, Ling Lan was still rational and knew that she could only think about it for now. If she really wanted to have a child, she would still need to wait for this body to mature, and for that, she would still need to wait for about ten years ... or was it twenty years?

When the horrific concept of twenty whole years crashed into Ling Lan's awareness, Ling Lan was immediately reduced to tears. How was she to pass her days from now on? Did she really have to wait until her mental age was already at the level of the grand Monkey King, Sun Wukong 1, before she would be able to wed and have kids?

While Ling Lan was still caught up in her melancholic musings and her endless resentment at the cruel drag of time, completely lost in her own mind, that extremely troublesome person in her life right now appeared again.

“Classmate Ling Lan, here are the notes for the previous theory class that I’ve spent all night compiling.” Respectfully, Lin Zhong-qing came over to hand over a blu-ray USB storage drive from this world. The storage drive was very advanced — one only had to align one’s wrist-communicator to face the drive and turn on the blu-ray function to transfer all the data within the drive into the communicator, to be read at the user’s convenience.

Ling Lan wasn’t sure whether to laugh or cry at Lin Zhong-qing’s good intentions. She really had no need at all for any notes, for Little Four had the ability to record the entire lecture of a teacher, available for her to peruse whenever she needed.

Of course, Little Four’s supremacy could only be fully realised within this period of time — when it came to the second half of the year, the first grade students would be allowed to enter the virtual world to study, so they would no longer have to fear being left helpless when they couldn’t understand their lessons.

In the virtual world, all the academy’s courses had an equivalent virtual counterpart. However, every time one accessed these virtual classes, one would have to spend credits (i.e. money), or use battle points to redeem credits for use.

Lin Zhong-qing’s way of doing things was just a troublesome annoyance to Ling Lan, but a particular little brat had been utterly driven up the wall by him.

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Within the mindspace, Little Four was throwing a violent tantrum. He felt that Lin Zhong-qing was taunting him, challenging him for his treasured position as Ling Lan’s number one follower. The infuriated Little Four lifted the kitchen knife in his hand up high (who knows where he got it from), and swung it around impassionedly. This caused Ling Lan’s eyelid to twitch nervously, fearful that Little Four would accidentally cut himself.

Vehemently, Little Four swished the kitchen knife down before him, raging, “I’ll kill him. I must kill him. Boss, don’t you stop me!”

But I’ve never even thought of stopping you! Ling Lan would really like to say that, but unfortunately she was afraid that Little Four would start to cry as if tears were free — that amount of tears would certainly be enough to turn her mindspace into an endless ocean ... and she really didn’t want to drown to death.

Head aching, she rubbed her forehead and said helplessly, “Little Four, are you able to kill him right now?” Hells, how would an incorporeal Little Four kill a flesh-and-blood Lin Zhong-qing? Don’t bring up things that are impossible; people will just laugh at you.

Realizing how idiotic his actions have been thus far, Little Four threw away his little kitchen knife, and pounced on Ling Lan to cling to her thigh as he whined, “Boss, you’ll definitely help me, right?”



Was this how the rumoured 'thigh-hugging' 2 felt like? Hn, it truly feels pretty good. Little Four rubbed his face against Ling Lan's thigh. Although Little Four was still just a little bean right now, his actions were already moving towards becoming a little pervert.

Unaware that she was being taken advantage of 3, Ling Lan stared at Little Four's shameless actions and a vein throbbed on her brow. She dearly wished she could just grab Little Four and give him a good beating. Unfortunately, she had already promised Little Four that she would not resort to domestic violence, so this wish had to be left unfulfilled. This made Ling Lan feel that she had agreed too hastily in the beginning. If she had only known then how much worry Little Four would cause her, she would definitely never have simply agreed to this condition just to cheer him up then.

However, Little Four's next words thoroughly chased away all of these thoughts from Ling Lan's mind. Cold sweat started to flow freely from her pores, and even her legs felt a little weak. "Boss! Just you wait, the moment he logs on to the virtual world, I'll definitely show him! I'll make sure he dies silently within the virtual world, hehehe!"

Little Four's sinister demeanour caused the hairs on Ling Lan's back to stand — how had she forgotten about Little Four's powers within the virtual world? Finally understanding that Little Four's words were not just idle threats, Ling Lan panicked.

That's right. Although she did feel that Lin Zhong-qing was bothersome, and also wanted to get rid of this bother — that didn't mean she wanted him to die! No matter what, Lin Zhong-qing was still an adorable little kid ... although she didn't like this kid so much since he was a little complicated.

She rushed to talk down Little Four, speaking gently to try and dispel this terrifying notion from Little Four's mind. "Little Four, don't worry, that punk is no threat to you. Little Four will forever be the most precious follower in my mind."

At this moment, Ling Lan was unstinting with all the flowery sweet talk she could muster, just so she could get rid of Little Four's killing intent. All this to save a totally irrelevant 'Villager A' — why was life so hard?

Ling Lan's words made Little Four blush instantly. Happily wriggling his little bottom, he asked coyly, "The most precious, most important, number one follower, right?"

Ling Lan nodded decisively. "That's right. Little Four is my most precious, most important, number one follower — no one can take away your position. So Little Four, you can just enjoy looking down upon the other followers fighting beneath you ..."

Er ... she had never thought of continuing to collect followers though ... why did the conversation take such a weird turn as she was speaking with Little Four? Dammit, it must be Little Four's fault. He must have some strange ability to distort the topic of conversation. Ling Lan resolutely put all the blame on Little Four.

Little Four had no idea what Ling Lan was thinking, but hearing what Ling Lan said, he seemed to come to some realisation. "Boss, I understand now. You mean, those other followers are all followers of this follower!" he said, pointing to himself gleefully.

Ling Lan could almost cry. That wasn't really what she meant, right?! Unfortunately, at that moment, she didn't dare not to nod. If Little Four went crazy again, it could be predicted that half a year later, a large swathe of Special Class-A students would be dead. That would definitely result in a terrifying upheaval, and she would most likely be implicated. Therefore, she needed to stop Little Four now.

Alright, so Ling Lan didn't really have the saintly love of a matron goddess; in the end, she was still just looking out for herself.

Decision made, Ling Lan nodded again firmly. In her mind, a scene formed where Qi Long, Han Jijyun, Luo Lang, and the others were chasing the kiddy Little Four around yelling out 'big bro', while Little Four had his little hands on his waist, laughing long and loud into the sky above.

Ling Lan was instantly pained, sweating internally as she made a silent apology: Sorry dear brothers, for the sake of world peace, and humanity's safety, you all will just have to put up with this.

Because she had never imagined that she would actually bring this "nuclear weapon" down upon this world — she was culpable!

Finally, it seemed that Little Four was hit by Ling Lan's candy-wrapped missiles, and calmed down. He stated grandly that he would be merciful, and let that Lin Zhong-qing go this once.

When Ling Lan heard this, she immediately turned up the sugar level, cajoling Little Four until he was all smiles again, no longer having any thought of almost losing his precious number one follower position. Only then could Ling Lan relax and turn her attention to the sticky problem of Lin Zhong-qing. When all was said and done, the root of all the problems was Lin Zhong-qing.

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This time, Ling Lan no longer wanted to reject diplomatically. She pushed the USB drive back directly, and said coolly, "I don't need it." She had even refrained from putting it more politely — do you see how much effort she was expending just to save this fellow? Even Qi Long and the others had had to pay a 'painful' price for this objective, although they weren't aware of it ...

Ling Lan's brusque refusal froze Lin Zhong-qing's expression, but he soon regained his composure. He hesitantly took back the blu-ray USB drive, and pretended not to notice Ling Lan's cool dismissal, continuing to ask with a smile, "Classmate Ling Lan, where will you all be going later?"

There was just one period of Mandarin class in the early afternoon, and then it was all free time until lunch time. As Ling Lan's personal attendant, Lin Zhong-qing needed to know what Ling Lan was going to do next.

Ling Lan merely glanced coolly at him, saying nothing. Ling Lan already had no more patience to continue going back and forth with Lin Zhong-qing.

Beside her, Han Jijyun seemed to have picked up on Ling Lan's mood, so he spoke up, "Lin Zhong-qing, we do not welcome you here, and we do not need your so-called service. We hope that you do not come looking for our Boss Lan anymore."

Being rejected formally and verbally for the first time, Lin Zhong-qing could no longer maintain his smile. His face fell and he looked at Ling Lan with a troubled expression. However, this time he did not continue to cling on with words, but just bowed politely to Ling Lan before he turned and left.

Lin Zhong-qing's abrupt departure puzzled Qi Long. "What does he mean by that? Will he not bother us anymore?"

Uncertainly, Luo Lang replied, "Probably. We've already said it so clearly."

Han Jijyun watched Lin Zhong-qing's gradually departing figure, and his brows furrowed as he said, "Boss Lan, this person ... is probably not so easy to chase off."

Ling Lan nodded. "Yes. Him sticking to me is not because he lost the challenge, but for some other purpose."

Han Jijyun was startled. "What purpose?" He had not sensed anything at all, thinking all this time that Lin Zhong-qing was simply doing this so he could fulfil his bet, to show how trustworthy he was and gain some brownie points in the teachers' eyes.

At this moment, Han Jijyun felt a little lost; he had self-categorized himself as the intelligent strategist in Ling Lan's group. He had categorized himself this way because his combat ability was no match for Qi Long's — Qi Long was a natural born fighter, certain to be a high-level mecha operator in the future. Already aware of Qi Long's superior combat prowess, Han Jijyun was mentally prepared, and so wasn't too depressed by it. But he had never expected that Luo Lang, who joined in later on, would also be stronger than him in combat ability. This caused him to abruptly lose his self-set place, so he had no choice but to search for a different position he could fill. Very quickly, he had noticed that their group was still lacking a wise strategist. With regards to this character setting, Han Jijyun felt that he was quite suited to the task. So although he didn't state it outright in front of his companions, his actions and the learning courses he chose all started leaning in that direction, a clear sign of his determination.

However, Ling Lan's words floored him once again. Could it be that he wasn't suited for this character setting after all? The more Han Jijyun thought about it, the more insecure he felt, and his mood dipped significantly.

Seeing Han Jijyun's expression change, Ling Lan felt a headache coming on again. Why did these little fellows by her side all require so much care?

Ling Lan could only deepen her wry smile and say, "Actually, I'm not too sure myself. It's just that every time Lin Zhong-qing looks at me, his gaze gives me that sort of feeling ... perhaps I'm just thinking too much."

Although Ling Lan's expression was a little exaggerated to the point of suspicion, those words weren't actually lies. She really still wasn't sure what Lin Zhong-qing's motives were in trying so hard to get on her good side. However, Ling Lan wasn't anxious. She believed that with the passage of time, she would naturally learn of the other's plan.

Besides, they were all just six year old brats right now, not involved in much power struggles for wealth or political clout. No matter how much Lin Zhong-qing plotted, not much harm could come to Ling Lan. This was yet another reason why Ling Lan was not at all impatient, and could just ignore Lin Zhong-qing.

Ling Lan's words let Han Jijyun temporarily push away the uncertainty in his heart. With a serious expression, he said, "Since Boss Lan has said so, there must be something wrong with Lin Zhong-qing. We need to be a little more careful." Despite Ling Lan's rather ambiguous explanation involving intuition, Han Jijyun decided to put his faith in her full-heartedly, and started cautioning the others to be more alert.

It wasn't just Han Jijyun who trusted Ling Lan — even Qi Long and Luo Lang were the same, nodding firmly to show that they understood.

The unquestioning faith of her companions surprised Ling Lan slightly, and an indescribable swell of warmth rose within her heart. Was this what was meant by the trust of one's companions?

In her previous life, Ling Lan had always been stuck in the hospital, constantly struggling at the border between life and death. She had never experienced what the term 'companion' meant, but now, Ling Lan felt as if she understood it a bit better.

It was soon proved that Han Jijyun's judgement was very accurate — Lin Zhong-qing was not someone who easily backed down.

At noon, Ling Lan and the others had just walked into the school canteen when they heard a familiar voice cry out, "Classmate Ling Lan, here, over here."

Ling Lan lifted her head and looked over, and saw Lin Zhong-qing waving at them enthusiastically with a wide smile on his face, just as if that awkward situation earlier that afternoon had not happened at all. She was thoroughly impressed by Lin Zhong-qing's thick skin. Already having been denied so heartlessly, how could he still greet them so passionately? This child's resilience was really just too strong.

Qi Long and the others looked at one another, unsure how they were supposed to react. All their lives, they've never met such an agreeable child — they couldn't find it in themselves to keep rejecting Lin Zhong-qing in the face of his unreserved smile. Even the typically cold-hearted Han Jijyun had nothing to say.

Ling Lan exhaled a quiet breath. Fine, she too found it impossible to continue refusing such a resilient child, so she said, "Let's get to know him a little better. The four of us, against one of him — no matter what how you look at it, we won't lose."

These words were unanimously approved by all three of her companions, and so they headed towards the beckoning Lin Zhong-qing.

However, internally, Ling Lan was more vigilant than ever. This Lin Zhong-qing was so unbelievably tolerant — what he wanted must not be trivial.

She couldn't help but sigh again. The children of this world were definitely non-human ... even with two lives worth of experience, she could only stay ahead of them by a little. If she compared her true six year old self from her previous world with these children, she would undoubtedly lose all the way to distant Siberia 4 .