

Crossing 91

Chapter 91: Test or Choice?

Right after the announcement by the system, a large black vortex appeared once more before Ling Lan and sucked her in without any fanfare.

F*ck, again?! Ling Lan was speechless; couldn't the learning space be a little more gentle? However, having experienced it once, Ling Lan was no longer as flustered this time.

It was still impossible to pin down a sense of time, but when a brightness flashed before Ling Lan's eyes, she knew that she was about to be disgorged.

Sure enough, just like the first time, she was spat out into the air, but this time Ling Lan was ready for it. She landed on her feet in an absolutely elegant pose; Ling Lan decisively gave an internal cheer for her own outstanding performance.

Of course, the check before landing was still necessary, for Ling Lan had not forgotten the sly ways of the learning space ... yep, it was definitely sly to the extreme. Ling Lan, who had fallen for its traps more than once at the beginning, had by now already learned the basic instinct of maintaining her vigilance at all times.

The spot where Ling Lan had landed on was a desolate hillside. The completely exposed yellow soil no longer contained any of the flourishingly beautiful vigour of life of the mountain valley, but was all dried and yellow cracked earth, with hardly any of the greenery which represented life. At a glance, there was only bleakness and desolation, and even an almost suffocating sense of despair.

Even more frighteningly, a weathered old road weaving through the land was already stained with a sheet of red, the way littered with corpses.

Not too far from Ling Lan, some frightened people were running in desperation, while a group of frenzied men chased them from behind with swords and knives in hand.

Ling Lan could see that this was definitely the scene from the second panel. Only now, the protagonist from the image was missing, while Ling Lan herself had been added.

Was this a test? Were they looking to see what choice she would make? To become an emissary of justice, or to remain as a cold-hearted observer?

Taking joy in helping others was a good thing — Ling Lan felt that this was the basics of being a good person. However, there was a prerequisite to this. Before helping, she had to consider whether she had the ability to help, and also whether the other was someone worthy of her help.

For instance, these people before her right now, those folks running away — were they worth her help? Also, how strong were those people carrying weapons? Were they good or bad?

Ling Lan, who was standing high up at the top of the slope, looked down at the bloody scene below with a cold expression, as if she could see none of the loss of life going on.

Why? Why did those people just think of running, and did not even try to fight back? Ling Lan's emotions were a little conflicted, somewhat sympathetic and filled with hate for the attackers, yet also a little disappointed with the victims. In fact, those people running away were not much fewer in numbers than those chasing them — if they had really wanted to fight back, the situation wasn't entirely hopeless.

Ling Lan looked at the person right at the front of those escaping, and saw that the person's eyes were filled with a desire to live so intense that it had turned into a fervour which cared nothing for the costs incurred in its pursuit. And abruptly, Ling Lan felt as if she understood.

When faced with a situation where their life hangs in the balance, humans would reflexively choose the path which they feel is the safest and most dependable. Like right now, in this sort of desperate situation, as long as he could run just a little faster than the other people, the man would be able to escape from the range of the slaughter, which meant that he had the hope of surviving ...

This was basic human instinct, a deeply concealed inner ugliness. It was a demon that would be released in this sort of desperate times.

Ling Lan couldn't help but laugh, the sound laced with mockery. Wasn't this just another version of survival of the fittest?

Unfortunately ... Ling Lan's gaze turned to those killers giving chase. The contempt and cruel joy in their eyes were unmistakable. All this just proved that no matter how hard the people tried to run, it was useless. All of those people trying to escape would not be able to outrun the killers' blades. The killers were just whetting their appetite for the kill by first playing a game of cat-and-mouse, enjoying the spectacle of ants displaying the baseness of their humanity.

Ling Lan suddenly thought of the invasion of Japanese troops into China in her previous world. The Kwantung Army of a mere twenty thousand men had actually managed to conquer the entire Northeast China. This result was undoubtedly ludicrous — just the total population within those provinces was enough to flatten the Kwantung Army several times over. So why had they been able to invade and take control so easily? Was there the same baseness of humanity at play then?

Ling Lan shook her head and laughed in spite of herself, and cast off all the stray thoughts in her mind. The current Ling Lan was only the Ling Lan of this life; the previous world did not concern her anymore.

Just then, at the very back of the pack, an older man finally could not evade the swords any longer. He fell to the ground, but at the same time, he gave a strong shove to the young man who had been dragging him along all this time as they ran ...

"Xiaolong, run quickly!" Knowing that he had no hopes of survival, the old man grabbed onto one of the chasing killers as they stepped over him. He held on with a death grip, and his face was filled with a savage sort of release.

The young man who had been shoved forwards did not dare to stop, and could only keep running forwards with all his strength, tears streaming down his face. He could not let this chance gifted by his relative go to waste.

The old man was swiftly killed under the hacking of blades, and one of the killers spat on his corpse as he pulled back his sword, and said scornfully, "Thinking to survive from our blades? In his f*cking dreams."

A dream, was it? Ling Lan's right hand surreptitiously slipped a sharp dagger from the side of her calf. She held the hilt in an inverted grip, with the end of the hilt between her thumb and index finger. Meanwhile, her left hand pulled out an extremely short tri-edge trench knife. She had decided that she would help these escapees — the actions of that old man before his death proved that they were not cowards; it was just that there was no one to spark their rage and courage.

Perhaps Ling Lan's killing intent was too strong, for one of the killers who was in the midst of enjoying his slaughter suddenly turned to look in Ling Lan's direction. Of course, Ling Lan wasn't planning to hide. Just like that, she stood high above and watched them, waiting for them to move.

Those people saw that it was a just a child, and their faces filled with glee. After killing so many adults, they had gotten a little sick of it ... perhaps this pitiful little rabbit would bring them more satisfaction. The first killer pointed Ling Lan out to the men beside him and indicated for them to bring the child over.

One of the men leapt out from the crowd and headed towards Ling Lan. Seeing this, Ling Lan suddenly turned and ran. This reaction was just too normal — when a child saw something or someone that frightened them, this was what they would do.

This movement of Ling Lan's also drew the attention of the runners, and Ling Lan could then clearly hear several shocked cries, as well as several shrill voices urging her to run faster!

So, even as their humanity was on the brink of crumbling, these people still retained a smidgen of care for the young? Humans, as expected, were extremely complicated. Even though it was obvious that they couldn't even help themselves in this scenario, seeing an even weaker being in peril, they couldn't help but be concerned.

However, the moment did not allow Ling Lan to ponder this any further. The killer who had split off from the group was already close, having run up the slope.

"Little baby rabbit, stop running. Come quietly and follow your gramps back, so we can play together ..."
The man's face was filled with excitement, and his tongue actually slipped out to lick at his lower lip. He was thinking of the ways he would torment this poor little wretch that seemed so pitiable, and was truly very pitiable.

Originally, Ling Lan had decided to just kill the other here, because she had already drawn the opponent to a blind spot out of view of the other people, but when she heard this, she changed her mind. She decided not to do anything, and let the other capture her.

Ling Lan wasn't going to let any of them go. She wanted to keep all of them right here. To do this, it wouldn't be easy. Ling Lan didn't know if the opponent had something that could transmit messages instantly. If she made a move, and the person had reflexes quick enough to send out information on her to the rest of his group, it wouldn't be good.

It was true that Ling Lan wanted to help these people, but she also didn't want to bring trouble on herself. To avoid this, she would have to kill all the enemies here instantly. If these people were

unprepared, she was confident that she could get them all in one go. But how could she make them lower their guard to let her draw close ... ? That had been Ling Lan's only problem, and now, with this, the problem was no longer a problem.

Ling Lan screamed as she was grabbed by the other. She struggled desperately, but how could her tiny body escape the powerful grip of an adult man? The man cheerfully dragged Ling Lan back to his group. Behind him, the tri-edge knife in Ling Lan's left hand was already positioned over the other's heart — at any strange movement, her knife would be thrust without mercy into the other.

"Chief, here's a cute little mouse." The beast holding onto Ling Lan threw her directly before his leader, where Ling Lan cowered and peered at them fearfully.

Meanwhile, those people running away had also been surrounded by some of the other killers, who were herding them towards Ling Lan's direction. Sure enough, the killers had just been playing around with these poor people, giving them the false impression that they had any chance of survival.

From the corner of her eyes, Ling Lan saw the despair on the ash-pale faces of the people being herded back at sword point. The opponents' sudden burst of speed let them know once and for all that they had never had any hope to begin with, and so, they gave up on themselves.

Why did they have to give up? Were they not willing to even try? Failure and giving up were what Ling Lan hated the most. Your life was your own — even if it had to end, shouldn't it be of your own choice?

"Doesn't look like someone from their village. He really looks so fresh and lovely." The leader immediately noticed how different Ling Lan was compared to the others. His brows drew in slightly, and there was some doubt and suspicion in his eyes.

Ling Lan's expression stayed unchanging — other than fright, there was just more fright — it perfectly encapsulated how a six year old child would react when faced with strangers, when faced with danger ... Yup, thank you very much to Instructor Number Five, for teaching her all these random useless things ... now they were actually useful.

"Perhaps it's a child from a merchant group. Didn't we just rob and kill a merchant group yesterday on the old road?" One of the men didn't think it was a problem. It was quite normal after all for some people to slip through while they were busy robbing.

His subordinate's words cleared up the leader's concerns, though he really wasn't all that concerned to begin with, and had only been a little puzzled. After all, what harm could a five or six year old child do? Even if the child had a kitchen knife, it was a bigger worry whether the child would cut themselves.

"True, true, then let us have some fun." The leader's words made the men around him burst out into raucous laughter. Some of them were even itching to get started, eager to personally torment this pitiable little mouse. Wouldn't extreme terror look interesting on a child's face?

Meanwhile, the other people who had been chased over to observe didn't dare to make a sound, afraid that if they made any noise, they would be the one to be tortured and killed instead.

Of course, some of them even had the guilty thought that perhaps if this child could satisfy the perverse appetites of these demons, maybe they wouldn't be killed ...

Ling Lan had not pinned any hopes on these people to begin with, but unexpectedly, someone within the group actually tried to beg for mercy on her behalf. “I beg you, please let him go. He’s just a child ...”

From the corner of her eyes, Ling Lan saw that the one who spoke was the young man who had been pushed by the old man. His face was full of entreaty, though of course, more despair — perhaps he too knew that speaking out was useless, but he had still chosen to open his mouth at a bid for that almost non-existent chance of hope.

Chapter 92: Massacre In Progress!

“Haha, punk, such pretty words ... then, would you like to die first in his place?” The head stared at the young man in amusement. He was truly interested to see if there really was someone who would be willing to trade their life to save a completely unrelated stranger.

How could that be possible! Ling Lan knew very well that she herself would never do such a thing. She also didn’t believe that there would be someone so saintly that they would willingly give their life for a stranger. However, the youth’s reply stunned Ling Lan. For a moment, she even thought that she was experiencing an auditory hallucination.

That young man had actually stated that he was willing to trade his life.

F*ck! Darn learning space, couldn’t it present a slightly more normal scenario? Ling Lan scorned it mentally, but it couldn’t be denied that her heart had sped up for a beat at the moment she had heard this answer. Perhaps her heart also couldn’t understand how an imbecile like this could exist in this dimension?

“Haha, little mouse, looks like you have pretty great luck! Someone’s actually willing to die in your place.” The head patted Ling Lan’s face, and lifted his head to chortle, “Shouldn’t you properly thank that big brother?” The young man’s unexpected response had thoroughly amused the head, giving him a taste of something new. Of course, he was even gladder to destroy and push these two people before him into the depths of despair.

“Come, as thanks, you’ll have to smile and watch as my subordinates slowly peel his skin off ...” The head savagely twisted Ling Lan’s head to face the young man. Meanwhile, the young man had already been propped up by two large men, while another, licking the polished knife in his hand, looked as if he was considering which part of the young man he should start cutting from.

When the people being forced to kneel saw this scene, their faces filled with terror. Some of them were even filled with disbelief, unable to comprehend why the young man would try to save a strange child, and even be willing to be subjected to such inhumane torture for the child’s sake before his death.

On the side of the killers, all of their attention were now on the young man. They had revelled in this sort of scenario all along — seeing the pain and despair of a person and listening to their wails before they died excited them. Even the head’s attention was on the young man, completely forgetting about Ling Lan within his grasp.

This was a chance! With everyone’s attention on the young man, Ling Lan knew that the best moment for her to strike had arrived.

Ling Lan's head remained still, but her arms twisted and bent to an extremely bizarre degree, breaking past the physical limits of the human body. The dagger in her hand then swung down mercilessly at the head still holding onto her face.

The head was guffawing as his subordinate slowly neared the young man, staring delightedly at the young man's desperate struggles. He was anticipating the scene when the young man would finally crumble, when he would scream and cry about how much he regretted his choice ... then suddenly, he felt a cold flash at his throat, and then the scene in front of him was spinning.

He saw his subordinates, as they busied themselves making preparations to kill and maim those pitiful ants. He even saw the pitiable little mouse in his hands, who was strangely standing beside a very familiar body. But of course, most surprisingly, that body did not have a head ...

Head? Familiar? Wasn't that his body? He was falling apart in his shock — what the hell had just happened?

Ling Lan had succeeded in one move, and without any hesitation, she broke the grip of the palm still holding onto her, and leapt at the few killers nearest to her. They still hadn't noticed that their head had been killed, and was currently happily watching as their companion threatened and tormented that self-sacrificing young man.

In order not to attract the attention of those at the front, Ling Lan kept a tight control on her speed. She didn't move as fast as she could, but made sure to watch her shadow, and moved with a stealthy silence. Several times she flickered, and another few people had their throats callously slashed by Ling Lan's dagger.

As blood gushed violently from their gaping throats, their mouths were muffled tightly by Ling Lan as they died. They did not have any chance to sound a warning, to tell their companions that a death god was approaching from their backs.

Frankly, Ling Lan's throat-slashing technique was a learning space exclusive method — when she had cut the lifeline in their throats, she had also cut off their ability to speak. However, just to make sure there were no mistakes, Ling Lan still decided to cover their mouths.

The young man who was facing Ling Lan was the only one who could see all this clearly. His eyes bulged, and his expression turned to one of stunned disbelief, and even his initially struggling body abruptly stilled.

This strange reaction caused all the observing killers to pause in astonishment. Subconsciously, they prepared to turn and look, to see what exactly was going on behind them to elicit such a reaction from the young man, to the point that he would forget about his own imminent death ...

What a dumb pig of a teammate!

Ling Lan decisively labelled the young man as 'dumb'. Luckily, he hadn't revealed any joy or excitement on his face, otherwise these killers would certainly have their guards up in a flash. Right now, they were just curious about what the young man had seen.

Ling Lan knew there was no more time. She needed to eliminate all these killers before they figured out what was going on, or else they might become an even bigger problem.

This time, Ling Lan no longer controlled herself; she unleashed every bit of her strength and speed. Like an ephemeral shadow, Ling Lan swept across the scene, the tri-edge trench knife and the dagger in her hands swiping interchangeably in a deadly dance. Everywhere she went, the unprepared killers found a weapon piercing one of their vital spots unerringly, sending countless blossoms of blood blooming into the air.

Ling Lan's path was a straight line — while this wasn't a good path for killing enemies, it was the best path for the rescue. Although the enemies at the fringes of both sides may be able to escape, this would prevent the young man from being used as a hostage.

As predicted, Ling Lan managed to stay one step ahead, killing the two men immobilising the young man before they could react. At the same time, she sent the young man behind her with a kick. There wasn't a single killer left there, so it was the safest place.

By this time, quite a few of the killers had finally gotten a hold of themselves. Ling Lan had originally been afraid that they would scatter and run, depriving her of the chance of killing them all, but unexpectedly, the men just raised up their weapons and charged at her with dreadful bellows.

How nice! So the opponents were also dumb as pigs — this made both sides even then.

Ling Lan did not give these people any chances. Within several blinks of an eye, all of the men had been eliminated. Meanwhile, there wasn't a single speck of blood on Ling Lan's body, other than the dust which had been thrown up into the air during the fight.

On this desolate plain, countless corpses had been added once more, but this time, the bodies were those of the merciless killers.

Ling Lan stood up straight and coolly stowed away her weapons. She looked down at the head's head on the floor, whose frozen features still held that crazed smile with a trace of fear, unimaginably creepy. Ling Lan nodded to herself, and mumbled under her breath, "As expected, after a head leaves the body, it doesn't die straight away. There's a delay of one to two seconds, or perhaps even longer ..."

Ling Lan did not spare a look for those unsettled survivors, but prepared to leave.

Ling Lan had just taken several steps forward when that young man shouted, "Wait!"

Because the young man had been silly enough to try and trade his life for hers, Ling Lan decided to give him a chance. "Hm?"

"Are you alone? If you have nowhere to go, why don't you come back with me to my village?" The young man worked hard to squeeze out a smile — he had just been saved from the brink of death after all; even the calmest of people would be unable to keep their cool, not to mention that he wasn't a calm person to begin with.

Was this the next hint of the mission? Ling Lan thought it over, and decided that she should go take a look at the village. After all, right now, she was completely clueless about this so-called evolution pathway and had no idea what she was supposed to do next anyway.

Seeing Ling Lan nod, the young man was thrilled. And just like that, Ling Lan prepared to follow the young man back to his village.

Before they left, the people recovered some of the possessions they had had to discard while running, so everyone had a large bundle on their back as they prepared to set out. However, a majority of their companions were to remain here forever, never able to return. The survivors were unsure how they were supposed to face the relatives of those people who were eagerly awaiting their return.

On the road, Ling Lan found out that these people were all from the same village. Their excursion this time was to procure some necessities at a small town about 30 li¹ away. They had never expected such a terrible thing to happen.

Ling Lan followed them as they made their way around a small hillside, and the desolation was noticeably clearing up as they progressed, with more and more greenery becoming visible. The young man told Ling Lan that their village was built around a natural heaven-blessed spring, which was the site of the green lung of this wasteland, allowing all the people in their village to survive in this arid land.

After traversing another distance of road, a green abundance of grass came into view. But when the young man turned excitedly to tell Ling Lan that they were about to arrive at the village, Ling Lan's expression changed dramatically.

She signalled for everyone to hide, while she quietly crept ahead. Luckily, this wasn't a boundless expanse of flat grassland, but was a hilly area with plenty of erratic ups and downs.

Soon, Ling Lan had followed the curve of the mountain to arrive at the mouth of the village. However, one look at the scene before her eyes and Ling Lan understood that the young man's village was also facing the tragic outcome of being massacred.

On several large trees by the village gates, a significant number of strapping young men were already bound and hung on the branches, some still alive. Meanwhile, around them, the elderly, the women, and the children were all tied together. They were kneeling on the ground and struggling desperately, crying and screaming as they tried to crawl closer to their loved ones. Laughing uproariously, the killers watching over them used their weapons to knock down anyone who tried to resist, and made them watch on helplessly as their sons, husbands, and fathers had their bowels cut open and their hearts torn out, dying before their very eyes.

"Scumbags!" The rage in Ling Lan's heart flared into a furious flame. This scene had thoroughly crossed over the line of Ling Lan's 'forbidden territory'. If at the start Ling Lan could be said to be hesitant to intervene because she hated troublesome matters, right now, Ling Lan just really wanted to kill every single one of these scumbags that definitely could not be considered human anymore.

However, Ling Lan wasn't someone who would let rage get to her head. She wasn't going to allow a moment of recklessness to cause her to fail to rescue these people and lose her life instead.

Ling Lan still remembered that phrasal hint given by the system. An exclusive mission ... it was likely that she wasn't permitted to die in this mission. The moment she died, the mission would end, never to repeat.

After dealing with the learning space for almost a full six years, Ling Lan was very familiar with the learning space's mission reward mechanism. The stranger and more unique the mission was, the more generous the reward. With regards to the exclusive mission, just based off the word 'exclusive' alone,

Ling Lan could confirm that the mission reward would definitely be generous to the point where she would regret it if she didn't manage to get it.

Therefore, from the very beginning, Ling Lan had never even considered giving up. No matter how great the difficulty, she must complete this mission.

Chapter 93: The Resurrected Demon in the Heart!

Ling Lan closely observed the situation, and found that there were only 17 men watching over the villagers. However, Ling Lan suspected that there were more men around than this group of killers, otherwise the hundred or so strong young men of the village would not have been rounded up so easily. There were probably more killers within the village proper.

Killing off these 17 men was actually not that difficult, but the true difficulty lay in how she could kill all of them before they could sound the alert and regroup. And like before, she needed to prevent a hostage situation from happening.

After considering it for a moment, Ling Lan snuck back to where the young man and the others were hiding, and relayed what was happening at the village entrance to them.

Just as everyone was panicking, with some even suggesting that they should just abandon the village and run, the young man once again offered a differing opinion. He felt that they should go back and save their relatives, otherwise their lives would be meaningless.

The young man's tenacity and passion moved the others, so everyone ultimately decided to go to the village entrance to try and rescue people. Of course, they were also well aware that everything was moot without Ling Lan's help — involuntarily, all of their gazes fell on Ling Lan, but only the young man's gaze was filled with apology. He had only invited the solitary Ling Lan to follow them out of good intentions, hoping that he could put down roots in their village and stop having to wander. Never had he expected that he would cause Ling Lan to be dragged into danger once again.

Ling Lan's original plan was to coordinate with these people anyway, to draw away some of the guards from the village entrance. So, she did not rebuff them, but instead presented them with a straightforward account of her plan.

Perhaps everyone had things they wanted to protect at all costs, for although Ling Lan's plan could very well cost them their lives, at that moment, not a single person backed down, or voiced any objection. With faces filled with determination, the villagers agreed to execute Ling Lan's plan.

Seeing these people whose mental states were completely different from how they were initially, Ling Lan realised that humans, despite having countless faults, when placed in a situation where they had to protect something they just couldn't live without, their decisions may very likely astound. Take the situation right now for example, these people no longer displayed any of the selfishness they had at the start.

Ling Lan led them to a hidden col¹ by the village entrance, and then she sneakily dashed closer to the village entrance to lie flat on the ground. Luckily, Ling Lan was now a child with a small body, so even

though there wasn't much cover near the village entrance, a slightly larger rock still managed to conceal most of Ling Lan's body.

Once in position, Ling Lan turned to the col and gave the others the hand signal to begin.

Those people abruptly stood up, lifted the wooden staffs and rocks they had found lying about, and rushed out of the col.

"Bastards! I'm gonna kill you all!" All of them shouted in unison.

The commotion startled those men at the village entrance, but when they saw the ragtag group with their makeshift weapons, they burst into wild laughter. In fact, there even was some element of pleasant surprise in their reactions, gleeful that more prey had decided to serve themselves up for their amusement.

In contrast, some of the women and elders tied up there started yelling in shock and terror, "Run away! Don't come!" At this point, they considered their lives forfeit, so those who were still free should just stay away. Every saved life counted.

Among the 17 people, there was a small head. He signalled for ten men from the group to go capture those suicidal people.

Ling Lan calmly watched as the ten men passed by her side and rushed towards the col. Meanwhile, the group led by the young men faltered and started to pull back amidst the cries of their relatives, actually turning tail to run. These actions naturally made the ten men chasing after them laugh even harder.

As this was happening, the remaining seven men did not stop their killing games. The head let his subordinate pull out one of the women who had yelled for the others to run, but their chosen target was not the woman herself, but was the little girl child of three to four years of age clinging to her.

Another two subordinates came out and savagely ripped the little girl away from her mother. They paid no heed to the little girl's terrified wails, tying her hands together securely, preparing to hang her on one of the large trees of the village entrance. The tree that they chose was already filled with countless other murdered villagers.

Seeing this, the woman went berserk. Without any hesitation, she lunged at the man holding her daughter — although her hands were tied behind her back, she still sunk her teeth into his wrist, trying to make him let go of her daughter. In order for her own daughter to have a chance of survival, she didn't care if she had to give up her life. The woman portrayed the selflessness of maternal love to the max, causing Ling Lan's heart to clench, aching in sympathy.

This detestable learning space, why did it have to show her such a scene? Ling Lan almost lost her cool, almost wanting to just rush out and kill every single one of those scumbags right then and there.

But Number Five's crazy torments had not been in vain — Ling Lan's spirit wouldn't waver just because of this scene. Still, even so, both of Ling Lan's hands were clenched tightly over the weapons in her hands, almost as if she were going to crush them with her grip.

The woman actually knew that what she was doing was useless — her daughter still wouldn't be able to escape death in the end. Still, she refused to give up, desperately holding onto her bite on the killer's wrist.

Even though her head was being pummelled fiercely by the man, even though blood had already coated her entire face, even though she was likely to die in the very next second ... she did not let up from start till end. Because she knew that the moment she loosened her teeth, her daughter's life would really be lost. And she absolutely did not want to see her own daughter die right before her eyes.

Seeing her mother being hit till her whole head was drenched with blood, the small little girl could only wail in shock and terror, "Mama, mama ..."

That killer's awkward situation caused all the other men to laugh at him. There wasn't much comradery among them, so no one even thought of coming over to help him escape from the woman's savage bite. Even the head himself was guffawing. Seeing a companion make a fool of themselves was also part of their entertainment.

Meanwhile, Ling Lan took the chance to slip behind them, finally baring her eager fangs.

"I've gotten sick of killing women, perhaps this little brat can excite me a little more." The head indicated for another subordinate to tie up the little girl.

Just then, Ling Lan pounced, leaping towards the thug still beating on the little girl's mother. At the same time, she sent a pebble flying with a kick, aimed straight for the killer who was just about to hang the little girl up.

A muffled whump, and the head of the killer who was tying up the little girl burst open. A reddish white liquid sprayed out, some of it staining the little girl's body.

Meanwhile, on Ling Lan's end, there was just a cold flash, and the thug's throat had been slashed open. A stream of warm blood spurted out to splash on the mother's head, mingling with her own blood on her face.

The thug's expression was a stunned one; till the very end, he had no idea why liquid would be spouting from his throat ... he slowly fell over, slumping to the ground alongside the mother.

After dispatching the thug, Ling Lan did not stop. Before the other killers could understand what was going on, she unleashed her greatest speed and strength.

The remaining few killers didn't even see anything, or if they had sharp eyes, all they saw was a passing shadow — in the blink of an eye, Ling Lan had efficiently finished off the four small fry, and then she immediately leapt at the head.

The small head was undoubtedly the strongest of the bunch. Seeing what had happened, he instantly knew they had hit a steel plate²; he knew he should shout, so the master killers inside the village could come quickly ...

The head instinctively defended his neck — his above average eyesight had allowed him to see that all his subordinates had died from a slash of the throat.

He thought that as long as he could hold out for a while, he would be able to yell and inform his boss inside the village that an enemy had come ... perhaps then he'd still have a chance of surviving.

Well, dreams were beautiful, but reality was cruel. How could Ling Lan give him such a chance? Otherwise she wouldn't have used bait to lure away a large portion of his subordinates; she had done that specifically to avoid giving them the chance to notify their compatriots in the village.

Just as the head was about to yell, he suddenly felt as if his palm had been pierced by something, and then the same sensation was at his throat. Due to the unimaginable speed, he actually didn't feel any pain. He had thought that it would hurt, but he felt nothing till the moment he died.

Ling Lan's tri-edge trench knife stabbed mercilessly into the opponent's throat, sealing his intended alert within his throat. She could even hear the faint clicking coming from deep within the opponent's throat as he tried to speak.

"You all have no more chances," said Ling Lan coldly as she pulled out the trench knife. The head's eyes were wide as he fell face first to the ground. In fact, even before Ling Lan had removed the trench knife, the other was already fully dead.

Ling Lan did not hesitate, but immediately rushed towards the col outside the village entrance. She still remembered that there were other people waiting for her rescue, and ten more killers for her to dispatch.

Ling Lan hadn't moved far from the village entrance when she caught sight of the group of killers chasing after the young man's company. The time Ling Lan had used to kill the seven men at the village entrance had really been very short, so these people hadn't had time to get very far.

At this time, Ling Lan had no more concerns, so these ten killers were summarily dispatched by her. Meanwhile, the villagers who had played bait were all fine, with only one person spraining their ankle while running, but it wasn't serious and wouldn't affect his mobility.

The young man and the others followed Ling Lan back to the village entrance, and helped to untie and release the bound villagers there. Upon questioning, they found out that the village had been set upon by bandits and that this group was just the first batch of captured villagers. There were more villagers within the village whose fates were uncertain, though the odds weren't in their favour.

Once again, Ling Lan became the focus of attention. Ling Lan simply instructed the young man to find a place to hide with all of the villagers, while she herself went deeper into the village to scout.

Under the grateful stares of all the villagers, Ling Lan slipped into the village. She wasn't doing this for the villagers, but rather to vent the righteous aggression she had bottled up inside. She just wanted to kill all those inhumane beasts, but of course saving some of the villagers along the way was a welcome plus.

Ling Lan did not have a so-called hero-complex; she just didn't want this sort of inhumane beasts to exist in this world. Perhaps the history of the invasion of China, so hated by the Chinese people, in her past world had left a deeply embedded wound within the hearts of all the impassioned descendants of China. Thus, when faced with such a similar scene, this banked rage was triggered.

"I am me. I only live to follow my heart." Ling Lan had temporarily forgotten the mission, only wanting to go wild without reservations for once, and let out that demon imprisoned within her heart.

Indeed, under Number Five's insane torments, Ling Lan, who had once lost control of herself, was just like a demon who would cut people down like grass. And right now, facing this group of beasts wearing human skins, was the best time for the demon within her heart to resurrect.

A trace of madness bloomed in Ling Lan's eyes, but this madness was very restrained, so honed and focused in its intensity that it presented as calm.

Chapter 94: The Test of Dao

Ling Lan secretly snuck into the village. By now, the inside of the village was a sea of blood, a true hell on earth. Quite a number of the villagers had died on the roads or in their doorways, every one of them with their eyes wide open, staring sightlessly at their ruined village, unable to be at peace. Their facial expressions differed — there was fear, despair, and even some with a sort of speechless grief and indignation ... perhaps they were filled with bitter hate, wondering why this catastrophe would befall them when they had just been peacefully living out their lives ...

Along her way, Ling Lan crouched down, silently closing the eyes of one of the villagers who had died a traumatic death. Right then, there was not a speck of emotion in Ling Lan's gaze. It was as calm as water, and a rush of terrifyingly cold air was emanating from her body.

As she walked, whenever she saw any killers alone or in small groups, Ling Lan would decisively dispose of them before silently leaving. If she saw a large group of thugs together, she would go around them. Perhaps these killers were too engrossed in their killing frenzy, for they did not notice at all that their companions were being slowly picked off little by little.

Then, at one point, when Ling Lan had once again gotten rid of another batch of thugs, she accidentally missed one who had been relieving himself in a hidden corner, out of sight.

Ling Lan noticed her mistake swiftly and sent a dagger flying through the air to pierce through the other's throat, but it was still a step too late. A sharp whistle rent the blood-stenched air of the village.

Ling Lan couldn't help but make a soft sound of regret. Just as she had feared, the thugs really had a way to pass on a message instantly. Without a doubt, the other thugs would now be wary and on the defensive, which would make Ling Lan's hunt a little more difficult.

Still, it was just a little more difficult ... a cold smile appeared on Ling Lan's lips. The hunting game would not end just because of this.

Ling Lan's figure slowly disappeared from her present location. By the time the other killers rushed to the scene, all they could see was their companions' corpses lying on the ground, without any sign of the one who killed them.

This incident was quickly reported to the main leader of this particular massacre, who immediately gave the order for his subordinates to gather, naturally not forgetting to ask them to bring hostages along with them. He highly suspected that this master killer may have ties with the village people.

As they gathered, Ling Lan managed to kill off yet a few more groups of thugs, saving a significant number of villagers in the process. But Ling Lan did not stop to talk to any of them, only continuing on her hurried way after killing the thugs.

The villagers had no idea where Ling Lan came from, but this did not prevent them from being grateful for her help. Moreover, Ling Lan did not know that, some of the rescued villagers didn't just leave — some of the strapping young men found some weapons and made their own rescue teams, silently making their way in different directions, hoping to save even more of their loved ones and other village folk.

Meanwhile, outside the village entrance, the young man — after finding a relatively safe location for the younger kids, the weak and infirm old folk, and the fragile women, as well as some injured men who could not fight — led the remaining villagers who could still put up a fight to pick up the weapons of the killers Ling Lan had killed, and rushed over too.

Along the way, many bloody battles broke out. The villagers went head to head with small groups of killers, and paid a bloody price to overwhelm these killers stained with the blood of their relatives, saving their own relatives who were still alive.

Only when all of the killers had gathered before the main leader did the leader discover that this place which, in his eyes, was a place where they could kill and indulge in their perverse interests, had actually cost him around two-thirds of his men, leaving behind only about a hundred men.

“D*mn it! Who is it? Show yourself!” The main leader was enraged by this drastic loss of men. He signalled for one of his men to bring out one of the hostages, and then bellowed, “If you don't show yourself, I'll kill him.”

Since the hidden attacker had come for the sake of this village, then they must certainly care about the lives of these ants. As long as the other showed themselves, the leader believed that he and his men would definitely be able to hack the attacker into a thousand pieces.

After waiting for a minute, the surroundings still remained silent as a tomb. With vehemence, the leader shouted, “Kill him.”

The villager was summarily executed by his subordinate, and blood coated the ground, drawing the terrified screams of the other villagers.

“I'm not a saintly matron, or a benevolent hero, all I know is, only keeping calm will give me the chance to accomplish my goals.” Ling Lan held on tightly to the weapons in her hands, her eyes coolly observing the bloody scene before her.

Indeed, her goal was to kill every one of these beastly scumbags and save as many villagers as she could. As such, she could not give in to irrational ardour.

The leader saw that his first threat was ineffective, and signalled for a subordinate to bring out three more villagers. This time, one of the villagers was a tiny baby still in its swaddling clothes.

Ling Lan's irises contracted, and she shut her eyes in anguish. Did she have to continue tolerating this? *Do I really have to wait until they become tired of killing and become distracted, and a chance presents itself, for me to make a move? Goddammit! My heart tells me — no, I don't want it to be like this.*

Instructor Number Five, your so-called insane-level training didn't work after all, otherwise, why can't I become truly cold-blooded? Why can't I turn a blind eye to an innocent child dying before me? Could this be my forbidden ground? Does this count as a human weakness?

According to my instructor's words, I should restrain this tendency towards mercy to become stronger, and not yield to my soft heart and compassion. I should restrain it, but ...

Within Ling Lan's heart, a dilemma occurred for the first time. Her initially steady heart started showing subtle signs of uncertainty ...

Within the learning space, Number Five and Number Nine barged into Number One's space unannounced.

Number One, who had been standing alone in the virtual space deep in thought, saw the uninvited guests and was rather displeased. Coldly, he said, "What did you two come here for?"

"I would like to know, what Dao Ling Lan will choose in the end." Number Nine's face was full of worry. If Ling Lan selected a Dao unsuited for her in her evolution, she may very well end up doing double the work for half the results.

In contrast, Number Five smirked evilly. "I hope she walks the path of the Heartless Dao, or maybe the Killing Dao." This was a type of shortcut — although the barriers she would face in the later stages with these Daos would be a little more difficult than other Daos, that was after all a consideration for the future. Number Five believed that there would be ways to resolve it then, and it was overall worth it since she would be able to raise herself to the level of a master within a short period of time.

For this purpose, his training in the period preceding this had intentionally been steering Ling Lan's personality and way of handling things towards the direction of these two Dao. If Ling Lan held fast to her memories of this time, it was highly possible that she would end up walking one of these two Dao.

"I disagree!" raged Number Nine. "Ling Lan may look like she has a hard heart, and she may do things with resolution, and have an extraordinarily high tolerance — but I know, Ling Lan's true self is passionate, and gentle ... she is compassionate, so the path suited for her should be the Fellowship Dao or the Benevolence Dao."

"I only know that the test she entered is for the Sovereign Dao," Number One told them about Ling Lan's current situation.

"What?!" yelled Number Five and Number Nine simultaneously in shock. They had never considered that Ling Lan would enter the test for the Sovereign Dao. Ling Lan had no sovereign-like thoughts at all — how could it be possible for her to pass this test?

Seeing the shock-pale faces of the two and their flustered appearance, Number One harrumphed coldly and said, "Entering the test for the Sovereign Dao, doesn't mean that she must definitely walk this Dao."

"But, it is typically very hard for anyone to jump out of the boundaries of the test and forge their own Dao." Number Nine had no confidence at all on this matter. Based off what she knew, there has not been a single child that had managed to make this step.

Number Nine's words caused Number One and Number Five to fall silent. They too knew that this was extremely difficult, and that Number One's words were mostly self-consolation.

"Perhaps, Ling Lan really can walk the path of the Sovereign Dao. It's not like every person who walks it has sovereign-like thoughts to begin with ... hehehe!" Number Five rambled on for a bit before he couldn't continue to lie to himself and the others anymore, and could only use fake laughter to fend off Number One and Number Nine's unimpressed cold stares.

It was true that sovereign thinking wasn't something innate, but a child would still have to have some instinctive greed on this front. For example, liking from young to be stronger by a head, taller by an inch, liking to show off, or even liking to take on leadership roles ... Ling Lan was truly lacking in this respect.

"I believe Ling Lan is not a typical person," said Number One finally after a long moment of silence. He believed that no matter if the Sovereign Dao suited Ling Lan or not, Ling Lan would definitely complete this test and find the Dao that truly belonged to her.

Ling Lan, who was still within the test mission, closed her eyes in silent contemplation. She heard the leader's countdown, and knew that if she didn't show herself, three lives would end right there, one of which was a babe who had not been long in this world.

"Kill them!" The leader's cry woke Ling Lan up, and she subconsciously took a step forward, revealing her silhouette.

"You finally appeared ..." Amidst the leader's wild laughter, his three subordinates who were holding onto the hostages firmly swung their sharp blades down ...

"Impulsiveness is a demon; the results are not nice." Ling Lan's gaze no longer wavered. Her split second falter had shown her the truth, making her realise that being soft-hearted was indeed a mistake. "But, holding back was an even bigger mistake. I might as well have just chosen to battle it out in blood from the start — exchanging a tooth for a tooth, and blood for blood was what I should have done."

Why did she have to control herself? Why did she have to worry so much? If she hadn't shown up, these villagers would still have died at the hands of these killers. In that case, she might as well have killed off all of these killers as soon as possible, and saved as many people as she could that way.

The choice was actually very simple. She didn't have to be a saintly matron or a benevolent hero — under the condition that her life was safe, she only needed to do whatever she could do with resolve. Hesitation would only cause her to sink deeper into more troublesome plights, just like what was happening now.

The main leader saw Ling Lan rushing forwards with an icy expression, and signalled for his subordinates to pull out five or six villagers, shouting, "Don't move, or else I'll kill them!"

"Do it. I will avenge them." Ling Lan's speed became even faster, and she lunged fiercely at the killer closest to her, blades swinging.

Seeing that the attacker wasn't fazed at all by his threats, the leader screamed in crazed anger, "Kill them! Kill them all!"

"Do it. I will also do the same and kill you all." The current Ling Lan had eyes like ice, and everywhere her hands fluttered by, a corpse was left behind amidst a spray of blood. Ling Lan did not dodge these blood splatters, and soon her sweet little face had been stained crimson with blood, which slowly fell from her face drip by drip. She looked just like a ghoul that had crawled out from hell, here to collect all the living souls from the area.

"Who the hell are you?" Finding that the villagers' lives were no deterrent to Ling Lan's slaughter, the leader was a little panicked. Ling Lan's killing method was quick and decisive, extremely efficient. Every swing of her arm took away yet another of his subordinates' lives — in short order, ten or so men had already died by her hand.

Chapter 95: Cracking the Mission!

"A debt collector." Ling Lan's trench knife stabbed mercilessly into the heart of one of the subordinates, and blood once again stained her hair. As she leapt away to lunge at another, she didn't forget to leave this response behind.

Ling Lan's savagery caused the killers to have no time to bother with the villagers. They all lifted their weapons and charged at Ling Lan, preparing to surround her and attack her from all sides.

"I've wounded him!" shouted one of the thugs suddenly. There was still a trace of blood clinging to his weapon, but this was also his final achievement, for Ling Lan's dagger cut through his throat the next second.

"After striving for so long, I still couldn't avoid getting injured." Ling Lan looked at the cut on her shoulder area impassively. Though it was still bleeding sluggishly, Ling Lan did not retreat at all, seemingly not feeling any pain from the wound. She decisively swung her weapons around and thrust them at the next foe.

She had no wild hopes of killing all of these beastly scumbags without any injury to herself ... although she had considered at one point to complete the mission perfectly in such a way, which was why she had chosen to tolerate so much at the start. But that sort of toleration had made her feel unbearably frustrated and irritable, deeply uncomfortable. In contrast, though she had gotten injured, her current mood was extraordinarily light. She relished this sort of battle, this sensation of freedom.

This is the kind of battle I yearn for! No suppression or holding back, free to do whatever I want to do!

Yes, freedom is what I want!

Humans were resilient. As long as they were given a slim thread of survival, they would be able to unleash unimaginable power ... and the villagers who had been held captive here were no exception.

The tools the thugs had used to threaten them had finally been turned back against the thugs themselves, and Ling Lan's overwhelming strength and ferocity stoked the villagers' courage. Everyone there knew that if they didn't fight back, all that awaited them was death, and now that they had the hope of survival ...

For the sake of their husbands and wives, for the sake of their parents and relatives, and also for themselves, everyone in the village — whether male or female, young or old — took up weapons, determined to engage these criminals who had destroyed their happy homes in a battle to the death.

It was very difficult for regular people with low combat ability, like the villagers, to finish off these exceptionally strong killers. However, the villagers had already decided to risk everything, determined to die honourably even if they couldn't succeed. Just think about how many villagers there were — if one wasn't enough, then try two; if two wasn't enough, then try three.

This was no longer a game where the strong butchered the weak, but was now a horrific melee fight. Beside the body of every despicable killer, you could basically see a villager tangled up with him, almost inseparable.

This was how the villagers fought. Very simply, the elderly entrusted their hopes to the younger generation, rushing forward to pull a random killer into a death embrace — then, even if their chests were hacked into paste, they wouldn't let go. It had to be said that the latent reserves of humans were truly unfathomable — the strength of these old people before death became inexplicably horrifying, capable of rendering the killers completely immobile. Then, the second villager would rush forward, followed by the third, the fourth and so on ... until the opponent was dead.

The villagers' sudden fearlessness in the face of death shocked the killers; following the death of one killer after another, the remaining killers actually began to panic. In particular, once their greatest leader was successfully killed by Ling Lan, they could no longer control the fear in their hearts, and began fleeing like beaten dogs towards the outsides of the village.

Though Ling Lan tried her best, a few killers still managed to escape, making her feel a little disappointed. She had really wanted to end every single one of them here.

Although the killers were dead, this village was pretty much destroyed. Only 30% of the villagers had survived, with a majority being women and children, as well as a small number of young men. Almost all of the elderly had perished in that final clash.

Ling Lan didn't linger; she felt that it was inappropriate for her to remain in this village which needed to be rebuilt. The villagers were still in a stupor from their grief, and so did not notice when Ling Lan left.

"Benefactor, don't go," shouted the young man suddenly, rushing over with the rest of the villagers his team had rescued.

This shout seemed to awaken the villagers from their grief, and they all gathered around her, begging Ling Lan not to leave them.

Ling Lan did not look back, only replying coolly, "I ... am not your benefactor."

“No, you are. If you hadn’t killed most of the killers, we wouldn’t have been able to survive.” Of course, the villagers didn’t believe Ling Lan’s words — if Ling Lan hadn’t intervened, they wouldn’t have been able to oppose the killers no matter how hard they tried.

“You’ve saved us. We are willing to acknowledge you as master.” Perhaps the villagers were grateful, or perhaps they just needed the protection of someone strong, for the young man’s suggestion was unequivocally approved — they were all willing to become Ling Lan’s servants.

The villagers’ words led Ling Lan to recall the image within the third panel of the mural. That protagonist had possessed countless subordinates — perhaps this was where he had started to amass power. According to the mission itinerary, she should just agree and continue to experience all the images within those six panels of the mural — perhaps then she would complete the mission.

Ling Lan fell into a contemplative silence, and then, just as she was about to speak up and agree, she abruptly remembered her mission description — to find the right evolution pathway for herself. If she just blindly followed the contents of the mural, would that be ‘right’?

Ling Lan felt as if she had hit upon a key point. Back then, it was because she had noticed the difference between the protagonist’s smile in the first panel and the sixth panel that she had been sucked into the mural ... in that case, could she take it as the protagonist’s path of becoming a king and total domination being a mistake? So the main point of this mission was the term ‘right’?

Ling Lan had the strong feeling that the answer was right before her, but there just happened to be a thin layer of paper still in the way ... the more she thought about it, the more confused she became, until she reached a point where she felt that her thoughts were a bit of a mess.

Ling Lan habitually sat down in a meditative pose and began circulating her Qi. After one circuit, the stray thoughts in her mind all disappeared, and things became clearer.

Ling Lan once again thought back to the earlier question, but this time she started chasing the thought from the beginning. It had all started because she had noticed that the smile in the first panel and the sixth panel were different ...

The smile in the first panel was sincere, innocent, and passionate, while the smile in the final panel had become fake, affected, and cold. This indicated that after the protagonist had gone through the experiences of the mural, he had changed from a pure-hearted youth into a dark and deceitful ruler. As he grew up, he had also lost his innocence ...

The right evolution pathway? A notion sparked through Ling Lan’s mind. She suddenly thought — could it be that the learning space felt that the protagonist’s choice to become a ruler was wrong?

No, no, no ... Ling Lan felt that there was something wrong with this assumption; perhaps there was still some deeper meaning ... Ling Lan thought back to the countless other murals she had seen in the tunnel. Although they all depicted different things, with different forms and different content, they all had one point in common — their protagonists were all strong in a particular aspect.

This fit perfectly with the learning space’s reason for existing. Cultivating its host to become strong was the only calling of the learning space, so regardless of which path of strength the host decided to pursue, the learning space would not restrict its host, but was rather happy to provide support. Thus,

there was absolutely nothing wrong if the protagonist in the mural decided to become a king who liked to expand his territory.

Then, the problem might be with the protagonist's mental state — could the loss of self be what the learning space really disapproved of?

At this thought, Ling Lan felt as if she had opened a door that had originally been sealed up tight, bringing in a sea of light. All the conundrums she had before had been answered.

Ling Lan thought to herself: *although the protagonist managed to become a king, he lost the sincerity and passion he had in the beginning, losing his true self. The mission this time may very well be for me to understand my true self, and figure out what my true thoughts are ...*

I want to possess a healthy body, I want to live freely, I want to do whatever I want to do without worry. I don't want to see any sinister plots, and I don't want to be controlled. I want to make a few close friends and bosom buddies, and raise an exceptional baby. Yes, I hate troublesome things, and I don't want to be tied down ...

Ling Lan abruptly opened her eyes, stood up to face the young man waiting patiently by her side and said firmly, "I refuse!"

"Why?" cried the young man sadly. His entire expression actually twisted, and his gaze was resentful.

"Your fates rest in your own hands. What does it have to do with me?" Ling Lan said impassively. This was truly spoken from her heart. "Why should I take care of you all? Why should I bear your responsibilities? No one can force me to do what I don't want to do, no one."

"Then why did you save us? You might as well have let us die at the hands of those people." The young man burst into tears, and all the villagers also started crying. Even the sky started to weep rain, as if unsatisfied with Ling Lan's heartlessness.

"To save or not to save is my choice, to die or not to die is yours ..." Ling Lan threw down this final statement, and then immediately turned to walk away, no hesitation at all in her demeanour.

In that moment, Ling Lan had made her decision. She wanted to be a free spirit, and do whatever she wanted to do. She didn't want to live according to the world's rules of right and wrong, and restrict her own movements that way.

Gradually, Ling Lan left that blood-stained village further and further behind, coming to a desolate hillside of yellow soil. Ling Lan didn't know if her choice was the right one, but she regretted nothing. Instead, her heart was light, because the mission this time had let her reaffirm the path she wanted to walk. So that she wouldn't be tied down, so that she could live freely, so that she could give birth to an absolutely exceptional baby — she needed to become much stronger!

Just as Ling Lan was about to unleash a scream to vent the pent up emotions in her heart, a black vortex suddenly appeared once again before her eyes, pulling her inside it in an instant.

F*ck, again?! Ling Lan only had enough time to say that before she was entirely devoured by the black vortex.

The tall slope of yellow soil once more subsided into silence, just as if Ling Lan had never been there.

Alone in his space, Number One was sitting cross-legged in contemplation when his mind flickered, and then he abruptly disappeared. At the same time, with joyful faces, Number Five and Number Nine also disappeared from within their own spaces, and the three of them appeared together before the gates of the test of Dao.

Very quickly, a black vortex appeared before them, and then a small figure dropped out from it.

Ling Lan calmly adjusted her posture in the air, and then landed safely on her feet.

“Ling Lan, congratulations, you have passed,” said Instructor Number One coolly.

Number Five and Number Nine shared a glance, subtle knowing smiles on the corners of their lips. Number One’s true emotions were not as calm as his appearance would suggest.

Chapter 96: The Dominance Dao!

Ling Lan blinked at the three instructors before her in bemusement. She hadn’t expected this mission to involve all three of her instructors at the same time — the fact that even the usually aloof Number One had appeared made her feel rather touched.

“What’s going on, instructors?” asked Ling Lan.

Number Nine was the most anxious; she immediately opened her mouth to ask, “Ling Lan, what Dao did you choose?”

“Dao?” Ling Lan was taken aback, but understood right after and replied quickly, “I didn’t choose any of those Daos.”

“How could that be possible?” Number Nine’s face was filled with disbelief. Passing meant that the testee had found the Dao that belonged to them — why did Ling Lan have to say that she hadn’t chosen a Dao? Number Nine wasn’t the only one who didn’t believe her; even the typically contrary Number Five also didn’t believe her. Only Number One had an unfathomable look of deep thought on his face.

“Well, I can’t really say I didn’t choose ...” said Ling Lan bashfully as she rubbed her head and smiled. “I chose to walk my own Dao, and then the system said I passed and just let me out.”

Number One’s eyes brightened, flaring with an intense light, while Number Five and Number Nine’s faces were filled with shock, which quickly turned into triumphant joy ... how lucky were they, to be able to raise a pupil who could forge her own Dao — this sort of person would undoubtedly become a historic figure.

Ling Lan said somewhat regretfully, “Unfortunately, I’m not sure whether I can complete it. The development of this Dao is all up to me to figure out.”

After Ling Lan had been sucked in by the black vortex from the scene of the second panel, she hadn’t appeared in a new scene, but had entered an expanse of nothingness instead. Everything had been a

grey blankness around her, not a single thing in existence, while Ling Lan herself had just been suspended in mid-air within this nothingness.

Just as Ling Lan was getting restless, the grey blankness suddenly twisted and actually turned into an enormous grey dragon to pounce at the suspended Ling Lan.

Back then, Ling Lan had been terrified, but finding that she had been robbed of the ability to move, she could only watch helplessly as this enormous grey dragon swallowed her whole.

Within that split second, countless images flashed before Ling Lan's eyes. The countless Daos which existed in the world were displayed before her, and she experienced all the trials and epiphanies associated with the Daos along with the images ... when Ling Lan woke up once more, she found that she was still suspended within the nothingness, unharmed, as if all that had just happened had just been a passing dream.

An extremely wispy voice came from a distance: "Of these countless Daos, one of them belongs to you. Which one will you choose?"

"Dao? Is that the evolution pathway I want?" asked Ling Lan pensively.

"Those paths earlier, didn't you see them all?" replied the wispy voice.

"Hate, frenzy, tolerance, control, ties, responsibility, and even kindness and murder ... every person had to abandon some part of themselves ... is this the cost for evolution?" This sort of choice greatly displeased Ling Lan. Was it really necessary to make sacrifices to become stronger?

"Gain and loss, has always been fair; to sacrifice or not, is up to the individual." The wispy voice was cold and emotionless, but it also spoke the truth. In the end, everything was up to personal choice.

"Is it fair?" Ling Lan closed her eyes, once again immersing herself in the grief and epiphanies brought on by those images. It was true that all those people had become the top of their fields, standing at the pinnacle of human achievement, but they also lost some very important things in the meantime. Even those people who had chosen the Fellowship Dao still lost their family — when one's love was all-encompassing, and all men were equal in one's eyes, what significance did family have?

She did not believe that those people had chosen the Fellowship Dao purely for themselves to begin with — it was likely that they had chosen it also for the sake of their families, but in the end, the outcome was distinctly different from their original intentions. In that case, what purpose was there in becoming strong this way?

It was true that Ling Lan wanted to become strong because she didn't want to live a restrained life. If she was strong enough, her father's military benefits wouldn't be coveted by others, and she eventually wouldn't have to keep pretending to be a man to hold onto them.

She really wanted to give birth to an exceptional baby, but her identity now meant she needed to be strong enough to push down a man she liked in order to get the other half of the genetic material needed for her child.

Moreover, she wanted her child to be able to live openly without having to sneak around, growing up honestly under the care of her boundless love ... she wanted to live this life without any regrets, looking

down upon the whole world with a smile ... all of this required her to become even stronger, perhaps even strong enough to stand at the very top.

However, this didn't mean that she was willing to sacrifice certain things in the process. For instance, she didn't want to become a madman or a villain, scorned by the world, so the Demonic Dao, Ghoul Dao, or Killing Dao were all unsuitable for her. She also didn't want to become a saint, a benevolent figure, or a king, to become some sort of leader, for this would force her children to have to be on their guard from a young age, losing the childish innocence and joy they should have. Thus, the Sage Dao, Sovereign Dao, and Benevolence Dao were all not the Dao she needed either. Whatever emotionless-type Dao or relationship-centred Dao were all nonsense, Heart's Dao, Literary Dao, Martial Dao ... all these evolutionary Daos with their multitude of restrictions and conditions were not at all pathways that Ling Lan wanted to walk ...

After analysing each and every one of the Daos, Ling Lan still couldn't find a Dao that suited her. Dissatisfied, she said, "Didn't you say that there would be a Dao suitable for me among all these Daos? Why is there none that catches my eye?"

The wispy voice rang out once more, "There are hundreds and thousands of Dao in the world, how do you know that there is no Dao that is suitable for you?"

Ling Lan's response was quick. "In other words, the Daos I've seen are only a portion? Then isn't that strange? Why won't you let me see them all?"

The wispy voice rang out again, but it no longer sounded cool and unaffected; this time, there was a trace of dissatisfaction in its tone as it said, "Due to coincidence and serendipity, you've been given the blessing of several Daos. Don't be too greedy now."

Ling Lan cared not for the voice's dissatisfaction, but rather found the answer she sought from its response. "In that case, I won't choose any of those Daos you've shown me."

Ling Lan's reply stunned the wispy voice. "Why?" Previously, anyone faced with this situation would always joyfully choose one of the Daos offered; why would this person before it now bear to give up such a great opportunity? It was finding this a little hard to accept.

"Didn't you say that there were hundreds and thousands of Dao in this world? Then I need to find the one that suits me best!" Ling Lan used its own words against it, the teasing tone in her voice obvious.

The wispy voice was instantly aggravated, "All these Daos I've given you are Daos which have been tried and tested, created and developed by those who have succeeded, capable of helping you grow strong quickly. Anything else would have to depend on your own capabilities, leaving you stumbling in the dark — you may end up accomplishing nothing in your life, unable to become strong ... are you stupid?"

"Hehe, not faking it anymore?" Ling Lan poked fun at the voice.

The voice went silent, and Ling Lan continued to say, "You're the system of the learning space, aren't you? Stop pretending to be some mysterious master and just tell me straight, what exactly is this?"

"Choosing the right evolutionary Dao, refers to your path of evolution." This time, the voice was no longer wispy, but was the usual system's voice Ling Lan was familiar with.

Only then did Ling Lan nod contentedly. There we go — acting all high and mighty like some deity, beating around the bush with mysticism and riddles; these were all things she wasn't used to. "Isn't this just taking on training step by step?" asked Ling Lan curiously. She still hadn't wrapped her mind around the appearance of this mysterious concept of Dao.

"Dao is a sort of enlightenment, a plane of thought, a realm ... not just regimented numbers and training." The system's reply was airy, but Ling Lan still understood and nodded somewhat thoughtfully. This was thanks to Ling Lan having read way too many novels in the past — some Chinese Buddhist scriptures and teachings would often appear in novels, so this sort of words with deep zen flavour was no problem for her.

"All those Daos I saw were a type of extreme. In other words, when someone walks to a particular extreme, he may be able to realise some profound secret of that extreme ..." There were many things to do with humans which cannot be explained by technology. For instance, the Qi cultivation exercises she had learned was one of these miraculous things.

This time, the learning space's system did not respond, for these things needed to be discovered by the host themselves.

After another few minutes, the learning space's system asked again, "You really don't want to choose those Daos? They're really a shortcut, you know."

But Ling Lan recalled those cultivation-type novels she had read — it's been said that the experience of others can only be referenced but not imitated blindly, because everyone is different. Only those things which one has realised on one's own are truly suited for oneself, so perhaps Dao is the same ...

Ling Lan had her answer. She shook her head once more, "I don't want them."

"Is it that you don't want to become strong anymore?" The system's voice was somewhat disappointed; its host Ling Lan was exceptional on so many fronts, so it just couldn't understand why Ling Lan would give up this obvious chance to become strong.

"Of course I want to, but like you said earlier, only one Dao of the hundreds and thousands in this world will be suitable for me — and I really want to walk that Dao," said Ling Lan firmly.

"Even if you end up a complete failure, you mustn't regret this," cautioned the system once more.

"No regrets." Ling Lan was a greedy person — she wasn't willing to cast away her feelings. Perhaps this avarice would ultimately cause her to lose the chance to grasp Dao, but she believed that even if she never found the Dao that belonged to her, she could still become strong.

"In that case, shutting down the learning space's legacy system ..." Since the host had no need of it, then there was no need for the existence of the learning space's legacy system.

Following this announcement, Ling Lan felt all the miscellaneous images of Dao within her mind being extracted, along with all the accompanying epiphanies. At the end, a thundering voice crashed down, "What is Dao?"

The answer spilled forth from within Ling Lan, "A human's true heart!"

Her reply echoed throughout the space, and the light in Ling Lan's eyes grew brighter and brighter. She said firmly once more, "Yes, a human's true heart."

"And what is your Dao?"

"Freedom, an existence without shackles, so my Dao should also be free, not limited to the boundaries of any Dao ... it is the existence of any possible Dao."

Ling Lan abruptly lifted her head, and the light in her eyes was so bright it could almost illuminate this entire virtual space. "So, I shall name my Dao as the Dominance Dao."

"Congratulations, you have passed." The voice of the system rang out once more, telling Ling Lan the good news. Before Ling Lan could continue to ask any questions, she had been whisked away again by a black vortex, and when she was spat out once more, she had already arrived at where Instructor Number One and the others were at.

"The Dominance Dao, is it?" Number One peered intently at Ling Lan, and a momentary trace of satisfaction flit through his eyes. This was truly the dominant air his disciple should have; he was very pleased with Ling Lan's choice.

Chapter 97: Logging Into the Virtual World!

Mission completed, Ling Lan was sent back to the great hall of the learning space by Number One and the others. Little Four was sitting in a corner, nodding off. When Ling Lan appeared, Little Four was immediately shocked awake, and opening his eyes to see Ling Lan, he quickly pounced and hugged her tight.

The sudden extraction of Ling Lan's awareness while she was scheduled for combat had thoroughly frightened Little Four. Although Little Four was also a member of the learning space, he was a support intelligence-entity responsible for helping the host to handle general affairs and had no control over the actions of the learning space. Still, he secretly made a resolution — he would make himself evolve further so that he could help Ling Lan bring the entire learning system under her control, so that the learning space would no longer be able to extract Ling Lan's consciousness as it liked.

This incident led both Ling Lan and Little Four to find their respective objectives for becoming stronger. The two of them no longer just went with the flow, but began working purposefully for the future.

By the time Ling Lan woke up, the arena battles were already all over — Ling Lan ended the ranking battles this time in second place. Ling Lan wasn't all too bothered by this, for Ling Lan's current goal was already not something this small little scout academy could satisfy. She wished even more for even more powerful people to fight.

Ever since Ling Lan came out from the learning space, she had already vaguely gained some insight on the existence of Dao; although she still couldn't borrow any of its energy, this was enough to imbue her body with a trace essence of Dao. In other words, if Ling Lan exposed just a little of this Dao essence, even a tenth grade student would be unable to resist its influence and would become unable to perform

at full capacity. This was what made Dao so terrifying — it had the ability to limit and weaken the opponent.

Ling Lan believed that this wasn't all there was to Dao, but she had only just learned of it and was still unclear about what Dao truly was. At the same time, she was also unsure as to the limits of this essence. How strong did an opponent have to be before this Dao essence would lose its effectiveness? All of this still awaited her exploration and research.

However, right now, Ling Lan wasn't ready to delve into this yet. Her entire concentration had been captured by the virtual world. That's right, Ling Lan and the others had finally been approved to enter the virtual space that could stand as a self-contained world of its own. The catch was that they still couldn't freely access and explore the whole virtual world of the Federation, but were restricted to hanging out in the virtual world of the Central Scout Academy.

In Ling Lan's words, this was obviously the 'newbie village' of the game world — only when one's level was high enough would one be able to go out into the big bad world out there.

Still, just this was enough on its own to thrill Ling Lan and the others. Before entering, they promised to meet up at the login point inside. Subsequently, they all went back to their own dorms, and lied down in their respective personal login pods.

The current virtual world was not like that of Ling Lan's previous world. The Federation was extremely strict with the management of the virtual world — the rules and regulations associated with it were no less than that of the real world, and was in fact significantly stricter. It should be known that over the millenniums, there had been over dozens of cases where the anarchy within the virtual world had spilled over to cause catastrophes in real world society. All these incidences caused the federal government to start taking the virtual world seriously, and to come up with various laws specifically targeted towards the regulation of the virtual world, which had also come to be known as humanity's second world.

Of course, the emergence of these regulations caused this second world to become very organised, which in turn led to this second world's rapid development, becoming unbelievably prosperous. It should be known that the Federation's mainframe used a human's brainwaves as the condition for logging in, and that every person's brainwaves were one of a kind, never-changing. Think about it. Every person could only have one ID and one image, no alternate accounts — if someone were caught committing some crime or breaking some law, they would be stripped of their right to log into the virtual world, and may even have to go to jail.

Current humans had already gotten used to existing within a virtual world, living a second life within this secondary world. This made people care very much about their own IDs, taking care with their virtual selves, obeying the law. Of course, if you weren't afraid of the federal government stripping away your right to enter this second world, you could just cause as much trouble as you want.

Naturally, this wasn't foolproof — as technology continued to develop, humans were also continuing to evolve. Black-hat hackers who existed tens of thousands of years ago still existed tens of thousands of years later; but now they were called under one umbrella term — hacker.

This was not because hackers had become weaker, but rather, hackers as a collective had a higher entry point now. Only those whose minds had mutated in a way that allowed them to hide their true self within the virtual world could become a hacker.

Of course, among the hacker collective, there was still a side branch. That was a group of hackers who had the power to harm the electrical brainwaves of other humans, thus being able to commit murder within the virtual world — they were known by the people of the Federation as ‘virtual spectres’! A scary existence capable of ‘eating’ the souls of humans.

Of course, all this had nothing to do with the present Ling Lan. It was impossible for Ling Lan, who could only hang around the virtual world of the Central Scout Academy, to bump into these fearsome beings; she was currently excitedly waiting for the connection from her login pod to go through.

Very quickly, Ling Lan had arrived at a large hall. It looked very familiar, actually being the exact replica of the Central Scout Academy’s great hall. This caused Ling Lan to sweatdrop — who knew the academy would be so shameless as to set the login screen of the login pods to be the school’s great hall.

Ling Lan looked left and right, but didn’t notice any selection icons of any kind. However, in the near distance, a glimmering pillar of light could be seen slowly rotating.

Just as she was puzzling over the situation, Ling Lan suddenly heard a familiar voice ring out inside her mind, “Boss, do you want to change your name and appearance?”

“Little Four? How did you get here?” Hadn’t she been brought here by her brainwaves? How had Little Four been brought along?

Little Four said smugly, “Who do you think I am? I am the god of the virtual world — as long as there is a login signal, is there anywhere I can’t go?” Before Ling Lan could ask any other questions, he asked again, “Boss, do you want to change your name and appearance?”

“I was just wondering why there wasn’t the option to change my appearance ... where is it? Quickly, tell me,” said Ling Lan happily. This was her first time encountering the virtual world, so she was truly clueless how to go about doing things.

At these words, Little Four’s expression turned scornful as he said, “Please Boss, what option to change your appearance? There’s no such thing. Once the mainframe has confirmed your brainwaves, it’ll automatically model your virtual self after your real world name and appearance — and this is also the only ID you can use to enter the virtual world.”

Ling Lan said glumly, “Then there wouldn’t be any sense of being in a virtual world! Isn’t that just like reality?”

“Otherwise, how would the government here be able to control this virtual world?” Little Four wasn’t at all surprised.

Ling Lan sighed deeply, feeling rather disillusioned, but she abruptly perked up and asked, “Little Four, what did you say earlier?”

Little Four cast a scornful look at Ling Lan, wondering if Ling Lan had gotten dementia so young. “I asked if Boss wanted to change your name and appearance.”

Ling Lan clapped her hands together loudly, “Yes, that.” Confused, she asked, “Little Four, if the mainframe generates name and appearance automatically after confirming my brainwaves, then how can you help me change my appearance and ID? And if you help me to change them, will I be stuck that way from now on?”

Little Four glared at Ling Lan, miffed that Ling Lan thought so little of him. He sniffed and said, “Am I that lame? Who do you think I am? God! I can change your brainwave information every time you login to the mainframe, and let you have a different appearance and ID every single time.”

Ling Lan was moved, “Doesn’t that mean that ... I can have countless alternate accounts?”

Little Four said smugly, “That’s right, but I recommend you start out with just your real account and just one alternate account for now. Making too many would also be a waste.”

“Why would I use an alternate account?” Ling Lan didn’t think that she needed to do anything illegal or unconscionable, so she really didn’t see the need for an alternate account.

Little Four looked at her as if she were an idiot. “Don’t you want to go out and look around? With the appearance of an adult?”

Ling Lan blinked, startled, but was then overwhelmed with joy, “I can go out? Not just stay confined here in the Central Scout Academy?”

Unhappily, Little Four reminded her once more, “Boss, I already told you, I am a god-like existence. All the restrictions of the virtual world doesn’t exist for me. Yup, it’s like what you mentioned before — all tofu walls¹.”

Ling Lan felt dizzy with joy. She thought that she would still be trapped within the scout academy for another few years before she could come into contact with the greater world outside, but unexpectedly, because of Little Four, she could enter mainstream society right now, to get a true understanding of this world.

However, Ling Lan quickly calmed herself — six years of training within the learning space ensured that Ling Lan would never remain in an abnormal mental state for long. Once again, she refused Little Four’s offer, because she needed to log in with her real ID and image for today, for this was the day she would be meeting up with her other companions in the virtual world for the first time.

Still, Ling Lan also told Little Four that the next time they had the chance, she would use a fake adult appearance to explore the outside world, to get a better understanding of this virtual world.

Under Little Four’s nudging, Ling Lan walked to stand before that pillar of light, which was actually the teleportation tunnel to enter the virtual world. Ling Lan only hesitated for a moment before stepping resolutely into the light.

Ling Lan’s entry point was a large plaza, which vaguely resembled the plaza of the Central Scout Academy, except it was bigger and wider. This was also the first entry point for all the students. Ling Lan could already see several familiar figures sitting on one of the long benches in the plaza not too far away, waiting for her to arrive.

Ling Lan walked over, smiling as she said, “You all sure move fast, all of you actually arriving before me.”

Seated on the bench, Han Xuya pouted and said somewhat sulkily, “Boss, you are the last one. What took you so long? We’ve been waiting for almost half a day.”

Beside Han Xuya, Luo Chao smiled shyly at Ling Lan, face filled with a quiet joy. For the past few days, because she was afraid that she would affect Ling Lan and the other boys during their fights, she had not gone to the hall to cheer them on, and this had caused Luo Chao’s spirits to become a little low. When she saw Ling Lan once more, Luo Chao’s mood immediately brightened immensely.

Qi Long, who had become slightly impatient due to the long wait, hurriedly said, “I’ve asked those NPCs ². There are a lot of missions here, which can give us cash, or even let us learn some combat moves.”

Qi Long, with his passion for fighting, was completely helpless against this temptation, almost ready to abandon his boss and run off to seek the true path of combat.

Seeing how eager and restless everyone was, Ling Lan said, “Why don’t we first exchange contact information, and then just go our own ways for a bit? We can just contact each other if we need any help.”

“Okay!” Ling Lan’s suggestion was unanimously approved; they all also believed that it was much more convenient to move separately. Just like that, each of them recorded down the others’ contact information, and then they all went their separate ways.

Chapter 98: Legacy Mission?

After everyone had left, Little Four asked listlessly, “Boss, *what should we do now?*” Little Four, who had already been to the real virtual world, just couldn’t muster up any enthusiasm for this enclosed little world.

“*Let us just explore this newbie village a little ...*” In contrast, Ling Lan was very interested, for this was the very first time she was encountering the virtual world. She never expected that it would be so realistic — when she had first seen Qi Long and the others, she had almost thought that they were still in the real world.

Newbie village? What does that mean? Little Four was troubled; why couldn’t he understand what his boss was saying?

However, for the sake of not cracking his image of ‘smartest intelligence-entity’, he didn’t dare ask Ling Lan what it was, but instead secretly went to trawl through his own databases. Very quickly, in some random web novel, Little Four found the term, and when he took a look at the context of the term, he finally understood.

Little Four looked around at this closeted little world, compared it with the meaning of ‘newbie village’ in net-gaming, and found that his boss’s description was just perfect. Once more, Little Four was awed by Ling Lan’s deep knowledge — Boss sure is Boss, alright — able to use such concise and simple terms or sentences to describe a complicated thing in its entirety. Just look here ... to ensure that those children who have yet to properly establish their values and world views were not led astray, the

academy chose to protect them within an enclosure. Wasn't this exactly like the newbie villages which had been established in net-gaming 10000 years ago to protect the rights of new players?

Setting aside Little Four's current adulation towards Ling Lan which was surging like the waters of the Huang He ¹ and threatening to overflow ... Ling Lan spent a whole day satisfying her curiosity, roughly exploring the entire area of this small enclosed world and getting a rough idea of the conditions within this enclosed city.

The city was very large, over a hundred times larger than the scout academy in reality. By Ling Lan's estimations, it was impossible to learn all the nooks and crannies of this city without spending several years' time. This vastness was probably also for the sake of keeping the scout academy students at bay. After all, they had to stay put here in this patch of virtual reality for over 10 years while they remained in the academy — if they conquered this city within a few days, the students would definitely riot.

Time in the virtual world wasn't extended like Ling Lan imagined it to be, but moved at the same pace as real-world time. In other words, a day in the virtual world was equal to one real day.

Ling Lan wandered the city shops for a while and found that there weren't any strange or incomprehensible products — everything in the shops were items that also existed in reality. Then, when she asked, she found out that the things one bought in this virtual world were actually things being bought in reality. The moment you made an order and paid, the seller would send out the goods in the real world. Oh, right. A gentle reminder — things bought in the virtual world were non-refundable.

Of course, all sorts of learning halls were still the most common in the city. Within them were countless recordings of lessons for various courses — as long as you could complete certain preset missions, you would be able to receive one of the course videos for free. Of course, you could also choose to buy the lessons outright, but the cost in gold was enough to blind you ... Hells, it was just too expensive.

If it were possible to transfer some credits in from the real world to exchange for currency, perhaps the students would not be so resentful, but unfortunately, to push the students to become independent quicker, the academy banned this trading function. Even more unreasonable was that every student who first entered wouldn't be given any money at all by the miserly academy, not even a single cent.

Want to buy something in the virtual world? That's fine, students. Please accept a mission and use your own two hands to build your fortune. All the NPCs will smilingly parrot this sentence, completely unmoved by the children's tantrums or wailing complaints.

Of course, the academy wasn't truly that heartless — they set up countless easy small missions within the virtual world. Naturally, the money one could earn from these missions wasn't much, but as long as one completed the mission, one could obtain the associated gold or redeem particular course instructions for free.

Rumour had it that there were also some legacy missions and ultimate combat moves available which caused the students eyes to burn with want, for these missions could let an average child rise meteorically overnight.

Of course, it wasn't easy to get this type of high-level mission, which was dependent on luck and circumstance. Moreover, even if you received this kind of mission, whether you could complete it was

still uncertain — ultimate moves and legacies weren't that easy to obtain. These hidden details were still completely unknown to Ling Lan and the other new students who had just gained access to the virtual world. They could only begin from the small missions, and learn more about this 'second world' of humanity as they earned some pocket money.

As Ling Lan had the ultimate cheating device in the form of Little Four, she truly took to the virtual world like a fish to water. Facing the tens of thousands of content produced daily, Little Four carefully helped Ling Lan to pick out those missions which had the best cost-benefit ratio, allowing Ling Lan to accumulate gold at the fastest possible speed.

If necessary, Little Four could also directly bypass the lock on the virtual space and exchange credits for virtual currency to bring to Ling Lan. But this suggestion was immediately refused by Ling Lan. Ling Lan felt that she already had too much of an advantage presently because of Little Four. If she pushed it even more, she would really draw the wrath of the heavens and the grudge of the people ... Ling Lan decided it would be better to keep a lower profile.

Of course, Ling Lan also refused Little Four because she still had one great advantage — the battle points she had gained in the ranking tournament were actually valid for changing into virtual currency. Ling Lan guessed that this was a reward mechanism put in place by the academy for the top talents, a covert form of encouragement. It could be expected that these exceptional children would be able to rely on this additional wealth from reality to pick up useful skills a step earlier, which was in line with the educational compass of the scout academy.

Just like that, Ling Lan busily passed a year between the scout academy and the virtual world. Within this period, she went through two more ranking tournaments, and for both times, she maintained her ranking at 4th place. The first time, she met Luo Lang in the semi-finals and chose to give up; while the second time, she met Qi Long in the semi-finals and also chose to give up.

Don't blame Ling Lan for not having any fighting spirit — the difference between their strengths was just too wide. Asking Ling Lan to fight with them was really just like asking her to bully children, and there was really no benefit for either side. If not to guarantee that she would be able to get the best education and the best cultivation resources, Ling Lan would have no desire to fight at all.

This move also caused Ling Lan's reputation to only circulate within her grade; the upper grade seniors had still had some interest in Ling Lan at the beginning, but in the end, seeing Ling Lan consecutively get held back in the top 4, they gradually lost interest.

Ling Lan didn't care about any of this — the scout academy was just a place for her to learn, not a place for her to show off. Besides, she was very busy every day. She had lessons of the scout academy to learn, missions of the learning space to do, and she still had to make some time to research the Dao she wanted to walk. Of course, she also didn't forget to go complete several small missions in the virtual world with the highest returns as selected by Little Four every day.

On this day, Ling Lan logged in to the virtual world as usual to do her missions, but the moment she entered the virtual world, she was immediately bombarded by the countless alerts of her companions

trying to contact her. She opened her flashing communicator, and found that Qi Long and the others were desperately trying to get hold of her.

“What’s up?” Ling Lan was extremely curious — although the others would contact her every once in a while, they had never tried to contact her all at once like this before. Something big must have happened.

“Boss, where are you?” Qi Long’s loud voice almost shattered Ling Lan’s eardrums.

Ling Lan took a look at the familiar buildings around her and replied, “100 metres in front of the Electrodynamics building.”

This time, Ling Lan was preparing to complete a particular Physics instructor’s mission, and obtain instruction from said instructor in Physics topics. This wasn’t in the form of a video, but was a personal one-on-one instruction. Furthermore, the instruction time awarded depended on how well the mission was completed. In other words, the better Ling Lan did in the mission, the longer the instruction time she would get ... This was also why she was willing to take on this mission.

“Hehehe ... Boss really likes to joke ... you can even measure out 100 metres just like that,” said Qi Long amidst silly laughter. He had of course picked up on Ling Lan’s dissatisfaction in her tone — it must be because of his overly loud volume earlier, but he was really just too excited and just couldn’t control it.

“Don’t accept that mission right now!” Qi Long suddenly thought of why Boss would be there, and hurried to stop him. Although the reward of that mission was tantalising, the mission contents were truly rage-inducing.

It was an examination mission, involving two solid hours of examination time. Of course, this wasn’t the reason why the children would be driven wild — were there any dumb children who could enter the Central Scout Academy? They weren’t at all afraid of tests. But, as a mission from a Physics instructor, why were the contents being tested from all subjects?! Even the smartest child would have one or two weaker subjects; thus, a majority of the children had all failed, with only a few all-rounded abnormals who managed to scrape by.

Among Qi Long and the others in the group, only Han Jijyun had managed to pass the test and receive a month of face-to-face instruction. This caused Han Jijyun’s knowledge in Electrodynamics to improve in leaps and bounds — according to Han Jijyun, he didn’t have to worry about anyone chasing up to him in this subject for the next 5 years now — it was truly fantastic.

“Reason?” asked Ling Lan calmly. She wasn’t someone who would easily give up on her objective. Qi Long would have to give her a convincing reason, otherwise she would still choose to proceed with the mission.

“Come quickly to Mecha Street, a legacy mission has appeared here.” Qi Long tried to lower his voice, but he couldn’t hold back his excitement. He was so moved that he was on the verge of frenzy.

“Legacy mission? Really?” Ling Lan was startled by this news. Within this year, she had gradually come to understand some of the secrets of the virtual world, finding out that it was possible that there were some legacy missions here just waiting for the right person to come along and find it. Still, that was just

a rumour after all — she had yet to hear of any student who actually obtained a legacy mission, but of course this didn't include any students who may have obtained a legacy and then kept it a secret.

“Of course really! This mission has already been verified by the academy. Now everyone is preparing to go give it a try, but I hear from the students who've tried that the test of this mission is really weird. They all lost without knowing why, and was sent directly back out. But no one really believes what they say, and are all waiting to go try it once for themselves. Boss, that's a legacy mission. *Legacy*,” Qi Long spilled all that he knew in a flood, shouting in his enthusiasm.

Qi Long just couldn't contain his excitement. The term 'legacy' could not be used lightly in this world — only those strong enough to reach the level of an imperial operator and beyond had the right to bequeath their life's learnings through a legacy method to a disciple. And a legacy mission was a type of test set by an imperial-level and above fighter to choose a disciple.

Chapter 99: Walk One's Own Path

“It can't be ... aren't legacy missions the type that can only be stumbled upon by luck? Why would they have an open test this time?” Ling Lan's first reflex was to think that this was a joke, but then, considering Qi Long's straightforward personality, he would never joke about something as major as this. So, she started asking for more information.

“I'm not sure about that myself. Maybe the one who set the legacy mission just likes to use this kind of wide-scale elimination method to choose a disciple. Still, I like it,” said Qi Long, grinning happily. He felt that he would have very little luck with those legacies which depended on chance, so he was ecstatic to see this type of publicly accessible legacy mission. Plus, he felt that this sort of legacy was fairer.

Qi Long would think this way due to his personality — being someone who favoured the direct approach, just looking at the convoluted twists and turns of some things gave him a headache.

“So it's a sea-selection¹!” Ling Lan exclaimed in realisation. Of course, Ling Lan's words made Qi Long on the other end of the communicator gasp out in repeated admiration once more, for he felt that this descriptor was truly perfect for the situation.

The skin on Ling Lan's face had gotten exceptionally thick by now, having gotten used to taking credit for all those net-terminology or modern slang so popular in her previous world. Thus, she just calmly took it in stride and told Qi Long that she would hurry over immediately.

Although Ling Lan wasn't particularly keen about this public legacy mission, this was still Ling Lan's first encounter with a so-called legacy mission after all. She was very curious, and so decided to hold off on her current mission and go take a look at Qi Long's area first.

Little Four fully supported this plan; he was very annoyed at himself for overlooking this legacy mission, and so decided that he would analyse this sort of legacy mission closely to avoid missing them in the future. He would make sure to find all the legacy missions and present them to his boss ... It had to be said that Little Four was really very greedy, actually planning to round up all the legacy missions within the virtual network. Luckily Ling Lan didn't notice what Little Four was thinking right now, otherwise she

would certainly be rendered speechless — legacies weren't like the Chinese cabbages they could eat every day!

As its name implied, Mecha Street was a street filled with mecha shops. However, in the newbie village, er ... no, the enclosed city of the scout academy, what the shops sold were all kinds of mecha figurines of different sizes, readily available for the students to peruse to better understand this world's strongest solo weaponry. Whether they were male or female, as long as they had money, they would definitely buy one of the mecha models they liked.

The mecha models were very realistic — the materials used to make them were actually of the same alloy type as real mecha. That said, real mecha were made with the highest grade materials, while the models were made with secondary level materials, along with some miscellaneous junk materials. Still, every part of the mecha was made perfectly, just like on a real mecha. All movable and removable parts worked exactly like a real mecha, and even the controls and operational instruments within the mecha's cockpit were all present and accounted for. This made them perfect for letting the children learn about the internal structure of mecha and some of its basic operations.

The moment Ling Lan arrived at Mecha Street, she could see countless students surging in a particular direction. So, without even having to ask Qi Long for directions, Ling Lan knew exactly where she should go. It was very likely that these students had all rushed over after hearing the news.

Moving with the crowd, Ling Lan finally arrived at her destination. Seeing the human blockade spanning 100 metres long, Ling Lan couldn't help but frown deeply. Just at a glance, there were probably about almost ten thousand students gathered here.

Ling Lan could only contact Qi Long once again to find out where they were. Because they had arrived early, they were now stuck about 60 to 70 metres to the front. They had never expected that within a few short minutes, over ten thousand students would have rushed over. Now, they were stuck with no way to move forward or backward, and so could only stay put and wait for their turn to take the test.

Seeing this, Ling Lan decisively turned around, prepared to go back to her earlier mission. So many people ... who knows when it'll be before it's her turn? Ling Lan didn't have that much time to waste; in fact, her time had been tight to start with.

But Little Four stopped her, asking her to wait a while, before disappearing in a hurry.

Ling Lan thought of Little Four's abilities and so decided to be patient and wait. However, she didn't like to be surrounded by people, so Ling Lan looked around to her left and right ...

The shops on mecha street were basically all three-storey buildings, with the lowest level being taller than the floors of a regular building by about a half-storey because the model mecha on the first floor were all very big and tall, some even reaching a height of up to three metres high. These models could allow a person to sit in the mecha's cockpit to experience first-hand how it really felt to operate one, but of course, the price of this type of mecha wasn't cheap. Without external financial support, relying solely on the students' own efforts to gather money, it would be impossible to purchase these mecha without investing up to seven or eight years of time. Of course, if Ling Lan wanted, with Little Four's assistance, she would be able to purchase it after two years at max.

The second storey of the shops were where the well-crafted miniature model mecha were displayed, available for perusal and purchase by students who liked collecting them. Meanwhile, the third storey was where the cashier was located, and where one could go to pre-order some model mecha. After all, some mecha were extremely expensive, so the shops didn't want to tie up too much of their cash flow in stock.

Every mecha seller's shopfront was decorated uniquely and with personal flair — there were those which drew inspiration from sci-fi and fantasy, while others were simple, some traditional, and even more in line with modern trends ... Ling Lan's attention had been drawn by a shop roughly three metres in front of her. A canvas sign full of vintage flavour hung from its walls, and a string of small red lanterns trailed down from the roof of the third storey.

Ling Lan's eyes flashed; perhaps she could make use of this.

Before she could be surrounded by people, Ling Lan took advantage of the little space she had around her to take two small quick steps, and then, with a spring of her toes, she leapt off the ground.

"Owie, who stepped on my head?!" A small student whose attention had been absorbed by the front suddenly felt someone stepping on his head. He quickly looked up and saw a small nimble figure flying by.

"Someone is jumping on top!" Quite a few other people had also noticed Ling Lan's actions, and they all began making a racket.

Ling Lan could be seen flying to land on the side of the wall of the shop, where she tugged on the string of lanterns with one hand to send herself flying upwards once again. Ling Lan's body was extremely agile; she managed to flip up onto the roof in an instant like a nimble monkey.

"F*ck, so that's also a way of doing things." Those observing abruptly realised that it wasn't absolutely necessary to walk on the ground to move to the front. Those with fast reflexes immediately copied Ling Lan and began climbing up the shop. However, it wasn't long before everyone else gathered their wits and leapt towards that string of lanterns. The result was tragic but predictable — how could this small string of lanterns bear the weight of so many people? — it snapped from the middle, causing many of the students on the lower half to fall down.

It would have been fine if things ended there, but at that moment, everyone was still rushing towards that shop, thus resulting in a disastrous stampede. It was said later that countless students had been evicted right out of the virtual world because of this stampede incident. When those students tried logging in once more, they were warned that their virtual bodies had been destroyed by unbearable pressure, and that they would have to wait till three days later before they could log in again.

This caused the students to beat their chests in frustration, full of bitter regret. If they had known this would be the outcome ... why did they have to try and follow that despicable person's shortcut? If they had just obediently kept their place in line, they were likely to have gotten their turn after just a full day and night of waiting.

Ling Lan had no idea that her spontaneous movements had actually sparked such a tragedy within the virtual world. She sped over the rooftops, and it wasn't long before she saw Qi Long and the others

hemmed in on all sides by people. One, two, three, four, five ... nine — yup, every one of them was there, all stuck within the crowd.

Making a direct call to Qi Long's communicator, Ling Lan said smugly, "Lil' boy Qi Long, I see you ~" It was rare that she had the urge to tease them. Ling Lan sat on the edge of a rooftop and looked down at her friends peering around trying to find her when they heard the news.

"Boss, where are you? Why can't I see you?" Qi Long was very surprised. He was barricaded on all sides, stuck, so how in the world had Boss come to find them from over 100 metres away?

Han Jijyun lowered his head in thought, when suddenly an idea popped into his head. He looked up and immediately saw Ling Lan grinning and waving at them.

What an intelligent child, being able to find the key point so quickly. Ling Lan confirmed once more that Han Jijyun was very smart; as long as he was given a tiny hint, he could immediately hone in on the most important points.

Under Han Jijyun's prompting, Qi Long and the others also looked up to see Ling Lan smirking at them. With some frustration, Qi Long said, "Now why didn't I think of that?" Since this virtual world was known to be almost 100% realistic, of course it would be possible to also travel over the rooftops. Unfortunately, it was already too late now. They were squeezed within the crowd, unable to find any space to sprint towards a shop wall.

In the end, they could only regretfully let Ling Lan help them to go ahead and find out about the contents of the mission. Ling Lan naturally did not object. She waved a casual farewell to them and then disappeared.

Han Jijyun sighed and said, "Boss Ling Lan is truly the boss, always able to think of things we'd never think of. Compared to him, we're just too weak." Rather than martial prowess, Han Jijyun was more admiring of Ling Lan's intellect — this was a natural focal point for intelligent people.

Qi Long nodded in agreement, and said somewhat dejectedly, "Yeah, we all learned combat arts together, but in the end, while we can still only use them as sparring stances, Boss can apply them as killing tools already."

Qi Long would still pester Ling Lan to spar with him every once in a while, and Ling Lan would accept if she was in a good mood. Both of them would only use those common combat arts taught by the school during those spars. However, for the exact same move, while Qi Long was still just replicating it as taught, Ling Lan was already simplifying it and absorbing it, making it truly part of her own personal combat arts.

Those observing from the side-lines may not have been able to see the situation clearly, but Qi Long who was in the thick of it knew very well that Ling Lan was truly very scary. His combat ability had already surpassed them by too much. At times, he would even get the illusion that the pressure Ling Lan exerted was as formidable as his father's.

Because every time they crossed moves, Ling Lan would always pull back right before he would hit his fatal spots. To an outsider, it would seem as if they were fighting evenly, but in fact, Ling Lan was just

holding back. Sometimes, his moves even had a trace of mentoring embedded within them, pushing Qi Long's understanding of how to fight better.

However, even though Ling Lan was already holding back that much, Qi Long could still feel the force of the wind behind Ling Lan's fists. It scraped over his body so sharply that it felt as if it could split his skin — this force was a terrifying one, and he knew he would have no chance of surviving even just one hit. It would be a total GAME OVER.

This truly displayed the resilience of Qi Long's personality. He did not become sullen and depressed in the face of Ling Lan's fearsome strength, but instead respected Ling Lan even more. At the same time, he also pushed himself to train harder, refusing to allow himself to be too much weaker than the boss he had acknowledged. This, was his pride as a follower.

Chapter 100: The Case of the Glass Window!

It wasn't long before Ling Lan arrived at the mission location. Frankly, if you didn't look closely, it would be impossible to see where it was, because the entire Mecha Street was filled with people. The ground wasn't visible no matter which end you looked at. However, Ling Lan's eyes were sharp. She noticed that at the entrance of one particular shop, the children were lined up and entering one at a time, and so she knew she had found the right place.

Ling Lan did not choose to jump down, for she suspected that if she tried to cut the line right then, it would definitely incite the rage of the crowd. If that happened, no matter how adept she was at fighting, she would still be beaten up by all the students like a rat crossing the street ¹. So she laid flat on the roof, and peeked over the eaves to look down. As she expected, the third storey had windows.

That being so, she positioned herself, and then, hanging down with her feet hooked on the eaves, she managed to touch the windows of the third storey. Right now, Ling Lan only hoped that the glass wouldn't be anything insane like bulletproof glass or tempered glass.

She tapped on the panes lightly, and the glass produced a crisp and clear sound — it should just be regular glass. Ling Lan decisively clenched her fist and threw a heavy punch. A crisp 'bang!' rang out, and there was now a hole in the glass. Ling Lan continued to rain several more blows at the window until all the glass had been shattered.

Ling Lan's savage method was noticed by the students below, and a furor broke out among the students waiting on the street. They had never even considered such a violent way of entering a shophouse. Quite a few of the students were mentally chiding themselves — if they had only known of this method earlier, then they wouldn't have had to wait so patiently in line for so long.

Ling Lan paid no mind to the envy-jealousy-hate of the students below. She loosened the grip of her legs, both hands grabbing on tightly to the window frame, and nimbly flipped herself from outside the window into the shop.

But when Ling Lan got a better look at the scene inside the shop, she was instantly depressed. Because, of all the places she could enter from, she had coincidentally entered the room where the portal to the

test was located. As a result, she was immediately caught red-handed by the instructors posted there to maintain order.

An elderly instructor with a white beard pointed a trembling finger at her and raged, “Who are you? From which grade? How can you be so disrespectful?!” Ling Lan was wearing the red uniform specific to the special classes, so it went without saying that he was one of those prideful princes. The only question was which grade he was from.

Ling Lan swiftly took a look around the room, and found that other than the one angry old teacher in front of her, the other teachers, especially those of the younger generation, weren’t as angry as she would have expected. Some were even smiling slightly with a trace of approval in their gazes.

Eh? This action of hers was obviously going against the established order of things, and may even create chaos and confusion — why weren’t the instructors offended? Why would they even *approve*? Ling Lan abruptly remembered that this was a world where the strongest survive, where everything was decided through strength. Was intelligence also considered a type of strength? Did the academy openly announce this legacy mission, but never really intended for the children to enter the test under normal pathways? So, this method of hers which would seem so rebellious and off the beaten track in her previous world ... was actually considered a display of intelligence here?

Ling Lan did not linger on the idea, letting it sweep by without thinking any more of it. This was because she needed to respond properly to the instructor; the academy placed top priority in respecting one’s teachers and honouring the truth, and Ling Lan had no intentions of flouting this tradition.

“Good day, teacher. I am Ling Lan of grade 2 Class-A.” Ling Lan’s calm self-introduction caused some of the teachers to break out into laughter. This child showed no hint of shame for being caught doing something wrong — his expression was closer to that of an innocent babe’s.

“Even if you are a child from Class-A, one of the most excellent of students within the academy, I will submit a complaint to the school administration on your horrible behaviour and make them take away your right to be in Class-A.” Ling Lan’s easy attitude without any sign of repentance had thoroughly enraged the already angry old teacher.

The old teacher’s words made the younger teachers around him smile bitterly, silently shaking their heads. This elderly teacher was infamous within the academy for being mule-headed. Right was right, wrong was wrong, no ifs and buts about it — he was a stubborn old fogey who would show no mercy. It was for this very reason that the academy administration had put him in charge of keeping order here. They were hoping he would be able to frighten some of the academy’s more unruly students with his sternness and keep them in check. Who knew that before he could have a chance to frighten those naughty students, he would already clash with an intelligent child with unorthodox thinking?

The younger instructors were all glum — if this old teacher weren’t here, they would have just let Ling Lan go ahead and take the test already! It couldn’t be helped. They just really liked this sort of student who was willing to leap out of the box, and who was filled with limitless potential.

Ling Lan was also extremely troubled. She kneaded her forehead, thinking about how she could solve this problem. It wasn’t that she was really afraid that the elderly teacher would complain, but rather, she felt that it would be wrong to make this old man with a head full of white hair angry.

After a beat of silence, Ling Lan opened her mouth to ask, “May I know who is the owner of this shop?”

A young man was sitting on a sofa by the side talking quietly with another young man in military uniform as they watched events unfold. Hearing the question of the child who broke the window, he hurriedly raised his hand and said, “That’s me. I’m over here.” With a smile on his face, he waited with interest to see what Ling Lan would do next.

Seeing the young man’s intrigued expression, Ling Lan’s heart settled. With a slight bow of her head, she said sincerely, “I’m sorry I broke your shop’s window pane! May I know how much it would cost to install a new one? I will pay for it.”

“It’s fine, it’s fine, it’s just a small glass pane,” said the young man, still smiling, casually refusing Ling Lan’s offer.

But Ling Lan insisted, “I did it, so I will take responsibility. The academy has taught us before that we should not run away from our responsibilities.”

Ling Lan’s words caused all the teachers present to nod their heads silently — even the angered elderly instructor was stroking his white beard in gratification, and the harsh expression on his face gentled considerably.

An impressive child! A sharp glint flashed through the eyes of the young soldier beside the young man. Defusing the elderly instructor’s rage with just a few short sentences; he could already predict that this case would end peacefully.

“Haha, what if this piece of glass is very expensive? I know well that you scout academy students don’t have much money here,” said the young man with a mischievous smirk. It seemed like the young man just wanted to mess around with Ling Lan on purpose. At the same time, he was subtly reminding Ling Lan that she shouldn’t make promises so quickly before she had all the information.

With a shake of her wrist, Ling Lan sent the small item in her hand flying through the air straight towards the young man. This movement was extremely sudden, but the young man was not at all flustered. He calmly reached out his right hand and easily caught the item.

This sharp and clean catch caused Ling Lan’s brows to lift up slightly; looks like the owner of this shop was more than he seemed. Ling Lan kept her surprise lidded as a smirk appeared on her face. “This is a fragment of that glass of yours. It would be easy enough to find a device to assess its components. We students of the scout academy are protected by the scout academy ... I believe that Big Brother wouldn’t want to offend the scout academy, right?”

Every student who studied at the scout academy would receive the academy’s protection. Any adult who tried to cheat or deceive the students would certainly draw the frenzied vengeance of the scout academy.

The way Ling Lan looked at the young man, just as if he were an idiot, made the young soldier beside him chuckle, while the young man couldn’t help but hide his face behind a hand, speechless. He just hadn’t been able to stop himself from teasing this cute little boy a little — did the boy have to retaliate so fiercely? Actually being looked down upon by a 7 year old child ... Boo hoo hoo, he didn’t want to live anymore.

The elderly instructor's face, which had already gentled completely by this time, actually smiled a little at this speech of Ling Lan's, nodding all the while. So this child wasn't an unruly and naughty child — he was very clear on what was right and wrong in the bigger picture, and was also a responsible child. He really wasn't a bad child at all ... looks like he couldn't treat him too harshly now, to avoid hurting the child's development ...

Unknowingly, the elderly instructor's thoughts had been changed by Ling Lan's performance.

"Alright, just giving me 500 Federation virtual coins will do." The young man could only give an amount that was lower than the market rate by 30%. Ling Lan naturally didn't refuse the other's kind intentions and stupidly insist on paying the so-called correct price just to prove how noble she was.

That done, Ling Lan packed away her contempt, her expression turning earnest as she thanked the young man. This caused the young man's spirits to brighten instantly, and he once again felt like this child before him was just too adorable.

Boo hoo hoo, he must definitely propose to his girlfriend as soon as possible so they could consummate their marriage and have a plump little baby next year as cute as this child before him ...

Ling Lan swiftly transferred the requested gold coins to the young man, and the case of the broken window was settled just like that. Then, she walked over to stand in front of the elderly instructor and said seriously, "Thank you, teacher, for your guidance."

These words of Ling Lan finally moved the old instructor. The children these days were all very rebellious, and would usually hold a grudge against their teachers when rebuked, rather than be grateful for it. Yet, the elderly instructor could see very clearly that Ling Lan was sincere when she thanked him. Ling Lan's current demeanour made the old instructor unable to maintain his initial sternness, so he only said gruffly, "Remember, there's no next time."

Eh?! Was this still that merciless stubborn old fogey they all knew? All of the other instructors were extremely surprised that the elderly instructor would let Ling Lan off so easily². They had initially thought that the elderly instructor would personally go all the way to the disciplinary department to make a complaint. Who would have guessed that the end of the matter would be this 'all thunder but no rain' type of result?

A smile hung on the corners of the young soldier's lips as he looked at Ling Lan's face which was dripping with sincerity. What a perfect finishing blow! Who knew that after leaving the academy for over a decade, another aberrantly exceptional child would appear ... Lin Lan ... Lin³? Linn⁴? Ling⁵? The child's surname and that of the prodigy of his time actually sounded the same. What a coincidence ... could it be that it was the same Ling?

At this thought, the young soldier's expression dimmed. When he looked at Ling Lan once more, his gaze carried a trace of prayer, hoping that this stunningly intelligent child would be able to grow up safely. He hoped that the child would not end up like his old classmate, who had lost his wings to some sinister plot eight years ago before he could fully shine his brightest ...

The old instructor ignored the shock on the other instructors' faces. He scoffed in his heart: "*Did you all really think I was senile and blinded by old age? That I wouldn't be able to see this child's brilliance? Being hard on him would have just been to prevent him from walking down the wrong path due to his*

overwhelming intellect. But this child really handled this matter well. He completely captured my weak points, making me unable to continue being stern. Oh, how perfectly he did it ...”

A trace of worry appeared on the elderly instructor’s face, along with some quiet satisfaction; his feelings were mixed. This child would either grow up to become a hero, or an outlaw — who knew what path he would choose in the future ...

Seeing that the case of the broken window had been settled favourably, the teacher in charge of calling the students to enter the test did not continue to call on the next student. Instead, he indicated for Ling Lan to come over and gave him some time to prepare as he waited to be transported through the portal for the test.