

471 POOR KID

Based on its appearance, the dojo was of respectable antiquity and an epitome of traditional Japanese architecture.

Further down the yard was an empty hall that resembled the training place for martial arts. Its floor and door frame were both made of wood. Inside, old-type armor and wooden swords were piled up beside the wall.

Lu Shu walked straight inside. "Is the inherited trade complete?"

"Yes, though it is simpler than that of China and the Conservatives, because it focuses more on the so-called will instead of fighting effectiveness. That is also why it is disadvantaged in actual combat," the maid Taniguchi Bunndai said.

Actually, Taniguchi Bunndai was Chinese. Nonetheless, she had spent years in Japan as a spy. For decades, the Chinese and the Japanese had been engaged in a mutual infiltration process.

Taniguchi Bunndai led Lu Shu to his bedroom. The yard was floored with uncomplicated cyan pebbles, through which ran a path lined with fine bamboo. The leaves rustled, sending every breeze away.

Outside the bedroom door was a wooden corridor, under which rested a small stove. A black iron teapot sat on the stove with grace and exquisiteness. Lu Shu suddenly asked, "Do you miss home?"

Taniguchi had already begun seeing Lu Shu as Kirihara Yousuke due to her professionalism, and also because of the shock she felt when Lu Shu suddenly changed into Kirihara's appearance upon entering the yard. She had no cultivation

background.

"Please rest early today. The Japanese lessons will commence tomorrow. Before you fully master the language, may I request you do not speak in front of your classmates? Actually, you don't have to worry because Kirihara Yousuke was an invisible nobody in school. His body has been disposed of and there is nothing worthy of your concern," Taniguchi Bunndai said. She seemed to have been completely localized and her personality was equally polite as other Japanese people.

In fact, Lu Shu's mind was filled with displeasure at Nie Ting and he was the least bit interested in what Taniguchi had just said.

In the bedroom, he saw a set of uniform that looked like the Chinese tunic suit. Inside the closet hung Kirihara Yousuke's used clothes. As for undergarments, Taniguchi Bunndai had prepared new ones for him.

At this moment, Lu Shu heard a swoosh of wind outside his yard. Then, a black figure leaped into their house...

Taniguchi Bunndai was immediately alerted. She did not expect anyone to come for them so early. Now, Lu Shu had just arrived so the visitor was probably under the Conservatives.

Lu Shu was one of the strongest in the Heavenly Network, only second to the Heavenly Kings in certain aspects. Thus, all information of him, including his level of capabilities, strengths and personality, was restricted to Taniguchi. All that she knew about him was his original appearance.

Now, she only hoped that Lu Shu was able to face the sudden crisis with his

supposedly non-changing cowardliness.

In her speculation, the best use of Kirihara Yousuke's identity was to cause trouble for the Jingoists with the help from the Conservatives.

Yet, before the person could even land on the ground, Lu Shu kicked him out at once.

In the meantime, Taniguchi Bunndai could only gasp in shock as the black figure was tossed over the wall like a garbage bag and fainted outside the yard. He did not even get the chance to speak...

"From Li Wenjing's distress, +666!"

"From Matsuura Haraichiro's distress, +999!"

Li Wenjing was Taniguchi Bunndai's Chinese name and this Matsuura Haraichiro... was just a poor kid.

In a rage, Lu Shu asked softly, "Why are they so fond of breaking into other people's houses? Can't they at least walk in from the front door? So annoying!"

He was almost losing his temper, after being tricked about the inheritance matter and strangers jumping in and out of his yard...

His reaction would not result in much suspicion, though, since Kirihara Yousuke was believed to be strong. Besides this, Lu Shu could not be bothered anymore. Didn't Nie Ting want him to play to the score?

Anyway, he was not forbidden from beating people up. Under the suppression of the

Jingoists, those rats would not dare to cause him any harm.

Taniguchi took a long moment to gather her bearings. "I think they feel that walking in from the front door is unsafe, because some people are currently wanted by the Jingoists..."

"Then why are they still coming here? What if they get me into trouble?!" Lu Shu was unhappy. "I'm not a scapegoat!"

Cautiously Taniguchi flew her kite. "Could I confirm that your mission is to rope in the Conservatives?"

Lu Shu gave her a casual wave. "It was, but not anymore!"

Nie Ting had promised to give him Kirihara Yousuke's inherited properties, but it turned out nothing but a lie and he still had to pay using his own wallet during his stay in Japan!

Lu Shu felt that he had to calm himself down before he could give it careful consideration about his future plans... But he couldn't...

On a bright note, the environment was conducive for cultivation, given its unique aesthetics against a backdrop of peace and simplicity. Perhaps it was high time to resume the practice of his celestial map and swordplay after such a long pause.

Although the opening of his sea of chi seemed improbable at the moment due to the presence of the snow mountain, he saw the glint of hope of slashing the mountain.

Later that night, the poor kid Matsuura Haraichiro slowly regained his consciousness

outside the yard. When he recalled what had just happened...

"From Matsuura Haraichiro's distress, +666!"

By moonlight he hurried to a remote abode in another corner of the city. No sooner had he entered than he knelt down on his limbs in front of an old man, who was playing chess with a young lady across a go chessboard. Both of them were dressed in kimonos and the girl was kneeling on her knees. In fact, few people would wear a kimono nowadays outside festive seasons.

The elder asked as he carried on with his match, "How was it? And why are you back so late?"

"I was... I was kicked by Kirihara Yousuke and fainted on the spot. He is strong indeed, at least much more powerful than me," Matsuura lowered his head in shame.

"As expected. But how did he have the courage to attack you?" the girl asked calmly.

The elder smiled. "His parents' sudden death could probably have had a profound impact on his temperament, given his innate abilities. Isn't this what we want? A pure puppet would have been so boring."

"Then what should we do, master?" the girl put down her chess piece and asked.

"Go approach him, Yaeko. The mind of an adolescent boy who has just experienced a huge twist in disposition is easily swayed."

"Yes, master."

472 THE CONSERVATIVES AND THE JINGOISTS

Early in the morning, Lu Shu got up from his tatami with a stretch. He spent the night before learning by rote a huge pile of materials given by Taniguchi Bunndai about important figures in the Collection of Gods and the remaining forces of the Conservatives.

Now, he had had a more comprehensive understanding about the tragic plight the Conservatives were in. According to the information from the Heavenly Network, as Kiriharas' maid, Taniguchi's knowledge on the Conservatives was comparatively detailed and dependable.

In contrast to a total of over ten thousand Jingoists, the Conservatives only had slightly more than one hundred under its lead...

In the past, Lu Shu had expected better, given the fact that the Conservatives still had the courage to fight with the Jingoists, openly and in secret. Judging from now, it seemed like a downright joke!

Of course, another reason for their feeble yet sustaining existence was the missing high-end Class B fighter that belonged to them. He was their strongest card, but Lu Shu could not be any less interested in a collaboration with them.

After washing up, Lu Shu stood in the yard. The simple wooden design and the pebble path made him feel clean and fresh. The care that the previous owner of the yard had put into it was apparent in every detail.

In the past, Lu Shu found it difficult to understand how the white paper pasted on traditional Japanese wooden frames could be maintained clean. Now he noticed that everything, at least in this yard, was totally unblemished.

Taniguchi Bunndai walked out from another room. She made a gentle bow to Lu Shu and said, "Your breakfast is ready. However, I made Japanese dishes because I am unfamiliar with Chinese-style food. Please let me know if it does not suit your taste. Moreover, I have prepared your lunch bento. So do remember to bring it with you."

Honestly speaking, it was Lu Shu's first time to be served and it felt kind of weird.

Only the night before, Taniguchi had asked him about the lunch box. Lu Shu wanted to cook it himself but then he realized a problem...

It was not his laziness, but that he did not know how to cook Japanese food.

That would result in the following situation. During lunchtime, other people opened their lunch box to see onigiri or unadon.

But for Lu Shu, there would be shredded pork with garlic sauce, sour and hot potato shreds and chicken cubes with peanuts...

Nonsense! His identity would surely be exposed on his first day as an undercover agent...

Taniguchi Bunndai sat straight at his side, her hands resting gently on her knees. Out of curiosity, Lu Shu asked, "How long have you been here?"

Truth be told, she could not be considered pretty and wrinkles had long since crept onto the corner of her eyes. Undeniably, though, she was indeed a demure and composed lady.

Lu Shu asked after some hesitation, "You didn't answer my question yesterday. Do

you miss home?"

"I did." she smiled. "But my friends are all here and I have no family in China. Now, the only thing that gives me the motivation to live is my father's last wish. A few years ago, I would secretly sing our national anthem when I was alone in my room. It might even move me to tears. But, I no longer do that in recent years. I have become used to here. Heavenly King Nie once asked me whether I was willing to go back and live a normal life, but I feel that my current life is normal enough. This is the life I know."

All of a sudden, Lu Shu's heart was filled with awe. This world has never known true peace, and many were born with a certain fate to uphold the order of the world so that the majority can live in tranquility.

Thus, people like Taniguchi Bunndai deserved Lu Shu's respect, though he knew he could never do the same.

After breakfast, Lu Shu changed into Kirihara Yousuke's uniform and went to school with his schoolbag. The education system in Japan was very much different from that in China. Usually school started at 8.30am and ended as early as 3.30pm, followed by co-curricular activities after school. A heavy emphasis was placed on holistic development.

But that did not translate into an easy curriculum. Many students had to attend external tuition classes so as to secure a place in a good university due to the stressful academic competition.

But Lu Shu did not have to worry about that. In any case, he was not here for university and extra lessons would only be an additional burden.

Admittedly, streets in Japan were free from dirt. As Lu Shu walked, girls in short skirt uniforms went past him occasionally. Their cheerful laughter often drew Lu Shu's eyes to their legs...

Although there was no direct link between cheerful laughter and legs... Lu Shu did not really care.

In Nishinokyo, walls closer to the streets were relatively short. Thus, Lu Shu overheard two boys jubilantly discussing about a swordplay club. Speaking of which, the swordplay club of Beika High School was going to have a competition with Shiyoge Girls High School, which had consecutively won over a few swordplay masters from other high schools recently.

Lu Shu listened for a long while before realizing that this match was free of Practitioners.

These students were unable to become Practitioners due to their lack of cultivation aptitude. Yet, the onset of the cultivation era had brought with it renewed popularity of martial arts. In the past, the main themes of Japanese campus festivals had been centered around spectator activities such as art exhibitions, mock trials, concerts, blood donation corners, various model stalls, pharmaceutical or botanic workshops and auctions. At current times, however, student interest had shifted towards martial arts.

In fact, on average as many as 60% of the entire boy population of a school were involved in its swordplay club, which was very impressive. Talented swordsmen and swordswomen were like school celebrities, since those with cultivation aptitude had already been recruited by the Collection of Gods.

But to Lu Shu, Practitioners and commoners belonged to different worlds. So such news was irrelevant to him.

According to the information given, Kirihara Yousuke was awfully quiet. He would not even attend music and physical education lessons, let alone co-curricular activities.

In Japan, music and PE lessons would never be taken away by other subject teachers. Furthermore, students had special sports attires for PE and designated rooms for music classes.

How could this be possible in a normal high school in China? Before the start of the PE lesson, your form teacher would walk in first with a stack of scripts. As for musics lessons? Ha, they did not even exist in Chinese high schools...

473 INCONSISTENT CHARACTER

Lu Shu froze a little when he entered the class. In his impression, classrooms should be packed fully with students until no more space was available for extra seats. But in Japan, there were only around thirty students per class and students would be streamed into different classes every year. It was euphemistically called to train students' social skills.

It seemed that those students had already been accustomed to ignoring Kirihara Yousuke's presence. No one greeted him as he entered the room. When Lu Shu walked past a boy's table, he even teased him by pasting a sticker on Lu Shu's bag. Lu Shu raised his brows in slight annoyance but did not react.

Although he lost his temper the night before, the Conservatives would probably not leak the incident as they pleased. Therefore, Lu Shu could still maintain his current

persona as a coward...

After all, he was an undercover agent now and not he himself.

Without uttering a word, Lu Shu walked straight to his seat, which Taniguchi Bunndai had thoughtfully marked out for him.

In the meantime, some of the students were discussing about the upcoming swordplay match between their school and Shiyoge Girls High School. It was said that one of their opponents, Sakurai Yaeko, was a tough rival.

Suddenly, he felt the sticker on his bag was gently peeled off. Surprised, Lu Shu looked back, and he saw a girl leaning towards him from her seat with the sticker between her fingers. The girl glared at the boy in the front row. "Noguchi Yuki, you've gone too far!"

The boys shrugged their shoulders in disapproval. "Mind your own business, Chiba. You've helped him for two years!"

"As long as he and I are classmates, I will always help him," the girl named Chiba replied.

Lu Shu pondered, what a strange feeling... It seemed that this girl had been Kirihara's classmate for two years despite the class reshuffling and she had always been protecting him.

But Lu Shu could not resonate with his new identity at all. He did not feel a tad grateful even when Chiba upheld justice for him.

Their classroom was located on the first floor. Supporting his chin on his hands, Lu Shu gazed out of the window. Nishinokyo was gorgeous in autumn. Every now and then there were yellow leaves falling to the floor, then swept away by students on duty.

Chiba came up to Lu Shu. "Kiriharakun [1. -kun is a component of Japanese honorific speech], I heard that you fell sick. Are you feeling better now?"

Lu Shu was stunned. Then, he replied in Japanese, "Oh, yes. Much better. Thank you."

Then, he turned to the window again. And then... he fell asleep...

Suddenly the bell woke him up. A spitball hit Lu Shu's head. He wiped his face and looked up, just in time to see a few boys giggling at him. As he looked down, a spitball had just stopped rolling on the floor.

Honestly speaking, Lu Shu was very pragmatic. He had not become a miser for his passion for studies, but because of the fact that he was well aware that good academic results were the fastest way to success and social resources.

His goal was never the ranking in school, but his own future.

Chiba eyed Lu Shu as he bent over his table. Strangely she felt that he had changed, but could not tell why.

Beside her, a girl tidied her hair in her mirror. Then, she said to Chiba, "Don't tell me you've fallen for Kirihara."

"No," Chiba shook her head at once, "Not at all. As classmates, we should care for him, as his parents have just passed away."

Just when she finished her words, another spitball hit Lu Shu's head...

Lu Shu clenched his fist at once... But he... had to correspond with his current image...

Finally it was lunch break and students took out their bento one by one for lunch. At this time, a few boys walked towards Lu Shu, bending their arms over one another's shoulders. They threw their uniform over their shoulders, thinking that it was cool.

One of them gave a pat to Lu Shu and demanded, "Eh, Kirihara. Be a good classmate and share your bento with us."

Lu Shu shot him a look. Before he could respond, a person had already stolen his lunch box from under his table. Once the box was opened, a boy let out a dramatic scream. "Wah, lucky you! Your bento is still so nicely made even though your parents are dead!"

The boy grabbed an onigiri and broke it open. Inside, orange salmon roes were round like pearls, glittering and translucent.

Apparently Taniguchi had put in effort in preparing his meal...

"Hey... How about put the onigiri back?" Lu Shu said calmly. I, I must be consistent with my persona, Lu Shu told himself.

The bullies exchanged a startled look. Then, they burst into laughter. "Haha, did you

hear that? Kirihara rejected us today! Impressive! Eh, Kirihara, will you punch us?"

Touching his forehead, Lu Shu slowly unbuttoned the first button near his collar. Then, in his classmates' astounded stares, Kirihara Yousuke stood up and threw a punch into the boy in front of him, quick as the lightning. But it was not the end yet. Then, like a movie scene, Kirihara Yousuke banged his fists with impressive crispness, putting the seven boys groaning on the floor.

At that instant, everything seemed to have stopped in a freeze-frame. Flipped tables, flying textbooks, and students' dropped jaws.

A ray of afternoon sunlight shone in from outside, providing natural lighting for the fight which was started by the nobody, Kirihara Yousuke.

Then, the light was shattered into pieces by Yousuke's agile figure. The classroom walls were set aglow beautifully with the moving rays.

After merely five minutes, Lu Shu returned to his table with his chopsticks, picking and choosing from seven bentos...

He pointed at a yellow lunch box and asked, "Who's is this?"

"Mine," a tiny-built boy squatting right in front of Lu Shu raised his hand carefully.

"Too salty. Add less salt tomorrow," Lu Shu curled his lips.

"From Noguchi Yuki's distress, +666..."

"Who's stainless-steel box is this? What a shame! How poor are you?!"

"From..."

Then, Lu Shu looked out of the window, distress all over his face. Hell, he had successfully destroyed his public image!

474 SAKURAI YAEKO

In fact, be it the Conservatives or the Jingoists, political factions like these were way too distant from those ordinary high school students. They had no idea about the cause of Yousuke's parents' death, and neither did they know about his cultivation background.

Earlier, Kirihara Yousuke's blood sample was collected by Taniguchi Bunndai and sent to China via special channels. Then, an analysis of the sample conducted by the Heavenly Network soon revealed Yousuke's true powers.

But none of that mattered. The key thing was that Lu Shu had used violence...

All of his classmates found it hard to accept the sudden change in Kirihara's personality. At the moment, Lu Shu was eating and judging the seven bentos in front of him as if no one was around. He behaved like the leader of those gangs next door.

Was it a dream?!

Yet, the transition seemed perfectly normal, though no one could explain why.

The only thing that could be sure was that Kirihara Yousuke was a real fighter...

The seven boys were totally defenseless before him despite their reasonable fighting abilities.

Of course, Lu Shu was no ordinary student either. Others were scared of him even in his previous schools...

As he ate, Lu Shu began the scolding session, "In the past, I couldn't be bothered to make a fuss with you. But who are you, to think that you are good enough to bully your classmates? Plus, I'm not the only victim. You go around pulling girls' ponytails and the straps behind their back. What if you break their straps? Huh? What can they do? You are no longer kids. But you..."

He did not stop until more than half an hour later. The seven boys' legs had already started to go numb from prolonged squatting but Lu Shu was still reluctant to let them go...

When the lessons were about to start, Lu Shu finally concluded by saying, "Alright. That's all for today. In order to show your sincere guilt for causing other students harm, everyone tell me a sad story."

Noguchi Yuki, "???"

What was it with the final show?

"From Noguchi Yuki's distress, +666..."

"From..."

Stunned, Chiba's table partner could not remove her eyes from Lu Shu. She said, "So cool. Kirihara actually fought back today. But why did he remain silent in the past?"

Why did he bear those insults when he was strong enough to stand up for himself?

In fact, Yousuke had been scarred by his stringent upbringing under his father. All he knew was repeated and endless practice day after day.

At the same time, he hated and was afraid of conflicts. It was a conflicting mentality though, as he was frightened of confrontations in which he could have won with his own abilities.

Thus, when strife found its way to him, he committed suicide under the immense pressure.

Not all Practitioners were mentally strong.

It was an early day but Lu Shu decided not to loiter any longer in school. He had no interest in co-curricular activities as he still felt slightly uncomfortable in this foreign environment.

When he reached the school gate, a group of girls entered the campus. Instead of being dressed in Beika High School uniform, a line of prints that read "Shiyoge Girls High School" was visible under their collars.

Lu Shu's eyes absently raked the pairs of fair legs underneath their skirts. Suddenly the foremost pair stopped. They were... so straight...

"Excuse me," said a melodious voice. Then, Lu Shu looked up to meet the eyes of a short-haired girl. Her face was lovely, like that of an anime girl. There was also a sense of crispness around her due to her short hair.

Lu Shu pointed at himself. "Me?"

The girl smiled. "Yes. Nice to meet you. I am Sakurai Yaeko from Shiyoge Girls High School. May I invite you to watch my match?"

A hubbub was immediately stirred up in the crowd behind. Sakurai Yaeko had long since been a celebrity in the region, not only because of her excellent swordplay, but also her charming appearance. Countless boys had fallen for her pretty face...

But now, this girl was extending an invitation to a boy all of a sudden.

"Isn't that Kirihara?"

"Kirihara Yousuke the coward?"

"Why did Sakurai Yaeko choose him out of so many? I don't believe he is her type!"

"Maybe it's just out of courtesy. Don't think too much."

Lu Shu took a long while to recover from the shock. Then, having heard the discussions, he asked, "Why me?"

There was no information about the girl as far as he knew. Thus, she was neither a Conservative nor a Jingoist. Nonetheless, her Class C energy waves could not evade Lu Shu's eyes.

Lu Shu was alerted at once, though his expressions remained as per usual.

Smiling warmly, Sakurai Yaeko cocked her head. "I don't know why but I feel a sense

of familiarity upon seeing you. Can you feel it?"

Actually it was a simple psychological trick. Be it out of courtesy or for her beauty, so long as the other person replied "I feel the same too" or anything around that line, he would feel a stronger connection to her subconsciously.

Many excellent salespersons liked to apply psychological tricks in their business. Yet, as a matter of fact, they were not that magical, but simply important.

It was an art of communication and mental guidance.

This time, Yaeko had come with a mission, which was to approach Lu Shu at all costs. She was her master's secret weapon that had been hidden all along, independent from both the Conservatives and the Jingoists. Thus, she had to be used at the most crucial point.

Other boys around were on the brink of eruption due to jealousy. Their goddess, Sakurai Yaeko, had just confessed to an ordinary boy in their school and it was a love at first sight! Unbelievable!

How lucky was this Kirihara Yousuke?!

After some consideration, Lu Shu mumbled, "But I only feel familiar with one thing..."

Surprised by his response, Sakurai Yaeko asked, "What is it?"

"Money."

"From Sakurai Yaeko's distress, +666..."

"From..."

475 INVITATION AND REJECTION

Lu Shu's response to Sakurai Yaeko's covert confession went contrary to people's expectations. The onlookers burst into an uproar and many boys were exasperated at Lu Shu's failure to seize the opportunity.

But Lu Shu did not care. He knew that this Sakurai Yaeko did not come with good intentions, given her disguise as an ordinary student despite her Class C abilities.

Thus, from Lu Shu's point of view, most likely she had come for Kirihara Yousuke. Besides the Conservatives, there were many others coveting the Kiriharas' complete inherited trade, even including the Jingoists. Skills like this would never become a burden and could always act as the medium to unlock other powers.

However, Lu Shu had not inherited their trade. The last person of the Kirihara family had already been dead by the time he arrived...

Fortunately, though, all students at the dojo had been dismissed after the death of Yousuke's parents. Otherwise, what to teach his students would have become another addition to his worry list.

Although lessons were over, most students chose to stay in school for co-curricular activities out of their own interests.

Now, the swordplay clubroom was surrounded by throngs of people anticipating the match with Shiyoge Girls High School. But Lu Shu was not interested in that. All he wanted to do now was return to his Beika dojo, practice his sword skills and sing "Twinkle Twinkle Little Star" at night to the full content of his heart...

Hence, Lu Shu walked away without hesitation, thinking whether he had to pay Taniguchi Bunndai's salaries with his own money since the Kiriharas did not leave behind any inheritance... Life was so tough...

But others could not understand. How could he leave like this?

"That's so impolite! In any case, their school team is our guest and it won't hurt to accept the invitation."

"I know right. What a disgrace on our Beika High School!"

Their remarks were impertinent because Kirihara Yousuke was famous for being bullied. Yet, Lu Shu decided not to waste his time on them. He only hoped that they would not freak out when he caused some trouble in the Collection of Gods.

Suddenly a person whispered to the crowd, "Just now Kirihara beat seven guys up in the class. And he..."

The listener froze. "Seriously? I thought everyone can bully him?"

"His temperament seems to have changed a lot after his parents' death..."

Amidst the gossip, Sakurai Yaeko eyed Lu Shu's receding figure. As expected, he had changed, though it remained to be seen whether it was a boon or a bane for the Conservatives.

At this moment, Chiba suddenly caught up to Lu Shu and walked out of the school together with him. "Kiriharakun, shall we go home together?"

Lu Shu looked at Chiba, his head tilted. Her short skirt was swaying in the cold breeze, revealing a pair of pretty, fair-skinned legs.

Chiba turned her head, her smile beaming with joy. "I just changed my mind. After all, none of us has cultivation aptitude so it won't make a difference no matter how hard we try."

"True." Certainly Lu Shu knew the importance of aptitude, which was directly related to the efficiency of cultivation for Practitioners.

"Tomorrow is weekend. Let's go watch a movie together, Kiriharakun," Chiba suggested suddenly.

Lu Shu was shocked. But soon, he replied, "I can't. I have other things on."

Then, their conversation plunged into silence. After a few crossings, Chiba turned, smiling. "Kiriharakun, I need to turn here. Then, see you next week."

"Okay," Lu Shu nodded. "See you next week."

Chiba's uniform was a good fit to her slender body with some adjustments at her waist, which made her waistline even slimmer. Looking down, her black socks looked just nice on her fair legs. Suddenly she turned again, smiles blossoming on her lips.

"I'm really glad that Kiriharakun has become stronger. I wish you all the best."

Before Lu Shu could gather his words, Chiba had walked away.

Honestly speaking, Lu Shu still found it difficult to make peace with his new identity.

Chiba was the second girl who had taken the initiative to show her kindness to Lu Shu. The first was Coral.

But she and Coral were fundamentally different, because the latter liked Lu Shu, while the former liked Kirihara Yousuke, not he himself.

Thus, it was a burden to him, instead of something that he should be happy about.

How heartbroken she must be if she knew that her Kiriharakun had committed suicide under pressure, instead of getting stronger as she said.

Boys' hormones and sweat, together with girls' whispers and quiet admirations. They were probably the most beautiful things, like rainbows, in youth and those school days.

Once Lu Shu entered the dojo, he saw Taniguchi Bunndai boiling water with a black iron teapot in the yard. There was an air of ceremonial beauty around her.

Upon his return, Bunndai immediately rose and bowed. "Welcome home. Was your bento stolen today?"

So she knows that Yousuke has always been bullied, Lu Shu realized. Then, he grinned. "Nope. But I took theirs. Truth be told, the bento you made was the best."

Bunndai froze on the spot. Had he really given up in maintaining his supposed persona...

Thus, she asked carefully, "Is it really fine like this?"

"Yes, of course," Lu Shu was not bothered at all. "I'm cooking tonight. Chinese food. It must have been a long time since the last time you ate hometown food."

"Yes. I do miss the taste of our hometown food. Thank you and sorry for the trouble."

"Great. I'll go buy some ingredients," Lu Shu said. He wanted to check out the vicinity as well.

As soon as he left his house, he saw a furtive figure at his door, pretending to be making a call.

Ha, isn't this Matsuura Haraichiro, a man mentioned in Bunndai's information bundle?

Actually, Lu Shu did not even know who he had kicked the night before...

Lu Shu shot him a glimpse and continued walking. He did not want anything to do with the Conservatives. After all, it would be easier to act alone as compared to collaborating with those remaining Conservative forces which would certainly become an easy target for the Jingoists.

Can't you just take a rest with the pathetic number of members left?

476 MURKY TRANSACTIONS

When Matsuura Haraichiro was still on the phone, Lu Shu suddenly turned and walked towards him. Matsuura tried to remain calm and talked to his phone, "Sure. I'm coming back to the office right now."

Then he left at once, but Lu Shu was trailing behind. No matter where he went, Lu Shu followed. Matsuura started to panic...

Wasn't he supposed to be a coward who even gets bullied by normal students in

school? Why is he so different in front of me!

Only a Class D, Matsuura Haraichiro was well aware that Kirihara Yousuke's capabilities were much stronger than his, judging from the speed and strength of the kick at least.

But when he turned to check his distance from Lu Shu, the latter had already been gone.

Matsuura stood still in shock for a long moment. What a shame! He had lost his target himself...

"From Matsuura Haraichiro's distress, +399!"

After visiting a few supermarkets, Lu Shu realized that there were no Chinese condiments for sale.

Surely, he could try his luck at a Chinese market, but it was inappropriate given his current identity.

When he returned home, Bunndai smiled at him and asked, "Is it because you failed to find any condiments?"

"Why didn't you tell me earlier since you knew it..." Lu Shu was confused. Bunndai surely knew the situation after so many years there.

But she led him to the kitchen. "In fact, we do have what we need. In early years Mr. and Mrs. Kirihara settled in China for a period of time. Simply put, they were spies in our country. After they came back, they missed the taste of Chinese cuisines so much

that they made a special trip to buy Chinese condiments. Actually the peace upheld by many Conservative members stems from vested interests, unlike Mr. and Mrs. Kirihara, who genuinely loved our Chinese culture."

Lu Shu did not know how to reply. "What a pity."

Then, he only made two dishes, sour and hot shredded potatoes and tomatoes with scrambled eggs, purely vegetarian. When Bunndai picked up a few potato shreds with great caution and sent them to her mouth, she was moved to tears.

Her tears dropped into her rice bowl, one after another. Then, she stood up and made a deep bow to Lu Shu. "Thank you. It has been a long time and I almost forgot about the taste."

"Have you ever regretted your decision?" Lu Shu asked curiously.

But Bunndai's face instantly turned stern. "Never. My father said that jobs like mine must be done."

Maybe his greatest takeaway of this trip thus far was to get to know Taniguchi Bunndai, who had been toiling for their motherland in silence, Lu Shu thought. Otherwise, probably he would never have known the existence of such people.

Was that the belief of the Heavenly Network...

For example, swings and picks felt more tiring under Li Xianyi's guidance, but the fatigue wore away with practice. Instead, over the course of time, Lu Shu could feel the connection with Nature and his sword skills had become much smoother too.

Back then, Lu Shu did not give it a single thought about the mythical mechanisms behind. Now, it seemed so impressive that the ancestors of the Hall of Swords had actually found their own way of cultivation during the Spirit Qi-deficient era.

During his practice, he heard a melodious voice outside the door. "Excuse me, anybody here?"

Bunndai rose to greet the guest, but Lu Shu thought that the voice sounded familiar.

He walked to the front parlor and saw the girl named Sakurai Yaeko standing elegantly at the yard gate. Her straight and slender legs still caught his attention first.

They were not skinny in a sickly way. Instead, they were beaming with power, perhaps due to her cultivation efforts.

Lu Shu watched in silence as Sakurai Yaeko explained to Bunndai politely, "I am a swordswoman in training and I know that the Kiriharas produce the best swordsmen in Nishinokyo. Thus, I was hoping you would apprentice me."

As though happened to see Lu Shu by chance, Sakurai gasped in surprise. "Fancy meeting you here! You are the one from Beika High School!"

Lu Shu grinned. "I live here. Hi, I'm Kirihara Yousuke, the inheritor of my father's sword skills."

Sakurai Yaeko pretended to know nothing about that. "Really? No wonder you refused to watch our match earlier in the afternoon, because you yourself are a master! Then, could you teach me?"

If not for his sensory abilities, he might have been fooled by her perfect acting, Lu Shu thought.

But he did not have a good disposition towards her. He would not mind if she was an ordinary girl that showed kindness to him.

But now, with concrete evidence, Lu Shu was sure that Sakurai Yaeko had intentionally concealed her cultivation powers. Therefore, it was irrefutable that she came with a purpose.

Meanwhile, Bunndai was shocked too, about Lu Shu's good command of Japanese!

Lu Shu smiled. "Dojo is a place for teaching. We welcome any students, but there's a fee..."

That did not seem to bother Sakurai. She replied respectfully, "I am willing to devote my EVERYTHING for the true swordplay."

She stressed on the word "everything", which made Bunndai frown with unease. She shot a glance at the girl, and at Lu Shu again...

"That won't be necessary. Well... 20,000 per lesson." 20,000 yen is equivalent to around 1,200 yuan, which is US\$180. Honestly it was not cheap...

Sakurai froze. Immediately a smile returned to her face. "No problem! Please teach me!"

"Then do you have money now? Actually we can start the lesson immediately..."

"So soon?" Sakurai was startled.

"Are you really keen on learning?" Lu Shu replied, displeased.

"Of course. Certainly, yes..."

"From Sakurai Yaeko's distress, +199!"

It was then that Lu Shu understood the dojo was the so-called inheritance left to him by the Heavenly Network. Without a doubt, he would not impart his true skills, as strictly speaking he was not a descendant of the Hall of Swords and he was in no position to leak their cultivation techniques.

However, he would still earn quite a fortune from those coveting the Kiriharas' swordplay, even if they only fell for his trick once...

Two hours later, Lu Shu sipped on a cup of tea as he watched Sakurai swinging her sword over and over again. Truth be told, she was rather admirable, since she abided by his order to start from the basics without any complaint.

Despite the fact that her incessant distress points still gave her away...

"Okay. That's all for today," Lu Shu decided to ask her to leave. He had earned his living expenses for the upcoming days, so it would not matter whether Sakurai was still coming next time.

Tired, Sakurai Yaeko sat on the wooden floor, her skirt barely covering what was underneath. Moreover, drenched in sweat, she looked pretty attractive at the moment...

She smiled and asked casually, "Sensei, tomorrow's Saturday. Where are you going?"

Lu Shu's face went straight. "Sakurai, we should stick to our murky transactions of money. There's no need for over-familiarity."

"From Sakurai Yaeko's distress, +666!"

477 THE CHESS AND THE GAME

Sakurai Yaeko did not know that Lu Shu was of the sensory type as this ability was such a rarity. There were only fewer than five in the entire Heavenly Network.

Thus, she was utterly bewildered. How could a teenage boy like him be totally uninterested in girls?

Sensei had taught her that no male creatures in the world could refuse an attractive female. Could he be wrong?

No, sensei could never be wrong. Kirihara Yousuke must be putting on a good pretense!

"Kiriharakun, it's time for me to leave now. I will come back for another lesson tomorrow," Sakurai said with due respect.

"Sure. Remember to bring your fees tomorrow," Lu Shu smiled cheerfully. 1,200 yuan per day per student and he only had to teach 2 hours. So what if he could recruit more than ten students...

Kirihara Yousuke appeared to be in some beautiful fantasy before Sakurai even stepped out of his house. Now, she was even more confused...

At night, dressed in kimono, Sakurai Yaeko knelt in front of the chess board to play chess with her teacher. Her black chess pieces suddenly broke free from the encirclement of white pieces from the bottom right corner of the board like a sharp blade, but were soon overshadowed by their opponents as the white pieces collaborated with one another across the entire board.

The elder smiled gently. "Brute force may not secure you the victory all the time, so use an open strategy."

"Then what is your view, sensei?" Sakurai asked calmly.

"The young man's response to you today seems simple, but he has deep intentions. Neither close nor distant. His comment on sticking to the murky transactions of money appears to be a joke, but also clearly conveys his stand," the elder commended, "Surprisingly, the Kiriharas have produced a talent of independence, abilities and own opinions."

That did not help Sakurai to clarify her bewilderment. "Is he really so scheming?"

The elder's face went serious. "Do not ever underestimate anybody, Yaeko."

"Yes, sensei," abashed, Sakurai lowered her head, "Never again."

"I'm afraid he is very cautious at the moment. With the recent passing of his parents and the direct encounter with the conflicts between two parties, I would also keep my distance from everybody if I were him. As the sole inheritor of the Kiriharas' trade, he refuses to join the battle. In order not to risk disgracing themselves, no one would force him to do anything. But, we need him, for the high reputation of the Kirihara family," the elder exclaimed. Then, he smiled. "It is totally unexpected that this young

man can actually remain calm in Sakurai's charm. Boys like him are hard to come by. So? Are you willing to continue getting in touch with him?"

Sakurai went serious. "I am willing to do anything for my master, including yielding myself to him."

"No rush," the elder smiled, "Not for now."

But as a 17-year-old girl, her experience was too limited.

The elder pondered for a long while before replying, "Let me pay him a visit."

Sakurai wanted to object at once. "Sensei, it will be inappropriate for you to make a public appearance now."

The elder stood up slowly, exuding great confidence from his gestures. "No one in Nishinokyo can stop me if I want to go."

...

When Lu Shu practiced his swordplay taught by Li Xianyi, Taniguchi Bunndai sat at the side of the yard, smiling, as she sipped on tea. She saw the future of their motherland in Lu Shu's vibrancy.

Many geniuses like him had emerged in China in the recent years.

Pride welled up from the bottom of her heart, though she lived across the vast sea. However, she found it hard to understand why the Network was willing to send such a brilliant young man to be a spy.

As Lu Shu thrust his sword forward, a line of bamboo leaves was slit open neatly in the not so far distance, as though being struck by a sharp blade.

Even Lu Shu himself was stunned. The thrust had triggered in him a faint connection with his sea of chi and snow mountain. Could he have stimulated his sword energy unintentionally?

But when he gave it another try, the feeling was gone. Strange.

Yet, the power of his sword energy motivated Lu Shu even further to scrape down his snow mountain as soon as possible. Certainly he would be much more powerful once his sea of chi was unlocked.

A warm smile appeared on Bunndai's face. "You must be tired. Come and have some tea."

Lu Shu gulped the small cup of tea in one swallow, putting in no effort to savor its taste. But Bunndai did not seem upset.

"Don't you mind me drinking tea like this?" he asked curiously.

"Isn't tea supposed to be drunk?" she smiled in reply.

"How true..." Lu Shu said after a pause to process her meanings.

At this moment, there came another visitor. An old but composed voice sounded at the door, "Excuse me, anyone home?"

"Who's visiting so late? Were there so many visitors here last time?" Lu Shu whispered.

"The Kiriharas were the leaders of the Conservatives. Thus, understandably, they had quite a number of visitors. But few had come since their passing. I'm guessing they are here for you," Bunndai replied softly. She wondered what Lu Shu had actually done to attract so many people to their doorstep.

"You may stay here. I will go and take a look." Then Lu Shu left for the door. Immediately he froze at the sight of the visitor's face. Wasn't that Oda Tokuma, the new leader of the Conservatives as stated in the information file?

The Class B expert who had yet to be killed by the Jingoists even until today.

Yet, Lu Shu did not panic, thanks to his rich experience and self-assurance gained from the many fights.

He made a quick analysis of the situation, which concluded in great confidence of escaping unharmed should the man come in malice. Besides, he would not dare to chase Lu Shu around the streets in Nishinokyo...

"Glad to see you, Uncle Oda." Lu Shu greeted him. Oda Tokuma had been an acquaintance of the Kiriharas and Bunndai had reminded him that Kirihara Yousuke used to address Oda Tokuma as his uncle. Thus, if Lu Shu acted as if he did not know him, he had to cover for his lie by saying that he had had an amnesia...

Smiling, Oda Tokuma showed his chess board and chess pieces. "Your father always mentioned that you are good at chess, but we never had a chance to play. So? Want to have a round with your uncle?"

"20,000 per game."

478 FIVE STONES IN ONE LINE

20,000 yen per game. That would only be logical if someone wanted to invite Oda Tokuma, a renowned chess player, for a round of chess. Unexpectedly, though, this kid had actually quoted a price...

What kind of inheritor had the Kiriharas produced?!

But Oda was good at maintaining emotional stability. He said, "Sure. I can give you as much as you want."

He was actually implying that the Conservatives were very rich, in spite of their humble powers...

Lu Shu's eyes lit up in excitement. "Let's have ten rounds then. You may pay one round's fee as a deposit and three rounds' fee in advance."

Oda Tokuma took a long moment to react. Did he think he was renting houses?

Then, without a word, he walked into the hall and knelt down in front of a wooden table, upon which he placed his chess board. Lu Shu did not hesitate any further. Seated, he suddenly asked, "Where have you been, Uncle Oda?"

Oda Tokuma shot him a cautious glance. Was he trying to coax the information of my secret base out of me?

Thus, he asked another question in reply, "Kirihara, how are you feeling after your parents' passing? Sad? You have changed and, honestly speaking, you are cuter than

before. You didn't even dare to look into my eyes last time."

"Right, I've changed," Lu Shu pretended to be in deep thought, "My parents' death has left a great impact on me."

"Can I ask what future plans you have? Or any wishes?" Oda asked slowly and casually. Kirihara Yousuke would certainly need help from the Conservatives if he was thinking of revenge.

"Wishes? I aim for world peace..."

"Be serious..."

"From Oda Tokuma's distress, +66."

He now realized that this kid was as cunning as he had expected. He was not even willing to answer his questions. How cautious.

"Are we still playing chess?" Lu Shu asked.

"You first. Take the black piece," Oda decided to finish the game first.

He had always told Sakurai Yaeko that one's personality could be easily seen from a game of chess, and his or her life from the playing style. A decisive girl, Sakurai tended to exploit bold moves during chess, like a sword, quick and sharp. But as a result of her young age, she lacked a certain degree of flexibility sometimes.

Despite this, Oda decided to be more tolerant towards her and gave her time to learn.

This time, his decision to play chess with Kirihara Yousuke stemmed from the same reason as well. He wanted to have a peek into Kirihara's inner world through chess, since an open conversation would probably be impossible.

Oda took the game seriously. The young man would be an indispensable addition to the Conservatives. Hence, he could not take any chances.

Oda picked up a white stone and landed it in the bottom right corner. It was known as the large knight's move, so as to defend his corner. Its weakness lay in restricted movements, but with good coordination Oda could surround his opponent from other routes as well.

The message hidden therein was that, I'm interested in responding to you, but will you do the same?

Lu Shu was surprised by his move. Then, he paused and took his time to think.

That gave Oda a glint of hope. Apparently the young man had read his mind! Now that he was thinking, he was clearly willing to give a thought to their potential collaboration. So long as the possibility was not ruled out completely, Oda had the confidence to roll the boy into their organization. After all, given his young age and limited experience, how could he be Oda's rival, under Oda's numerous diplomatic tricks?

However, in the next instant, Lu Shu placed another black stone beside his first, closely together.

A bad hunch rose up in Oda's heart...

Third, forth, and fifth...

Lu Shu's black stones quickly formed into a straight line with no obstacles at all. Five stones in one line!

Lu Shu let out a sigh of relief, yet looking serious. "Please pardon me..."

"From Oda Tokuma's distress, +666!"

"So, you hesitated just now because you were wondering why I did not block your stone?" Oda realized suddenly.

"How did you know?" Lu Shu's face was beaming with admiration.

"From Oda Tokuma's distress, +66..."

Oda calmed himself down. He should remain composed and unmoved in front of a young man... But what's wrong with you?! Looking dead serious after putting down five bloody stones?!

"Goodbye," Oda Tokuma packed up his chess board and stones and was about to leave. He had lost all hope in sounding out anything more from Lu Shu.

Then, he heard Lu Shu's shout from behind. "You haven't paid!"

Oda took out 20,000 yen and left it on the table. Lu Shu requested, "Why not play two more rounds? It's been a long time since the last time I had such an enjoyable game..."

In the past, chess games with Lu Xiaoyu were literally a crossfire and it was extremely hard to win.

But now, he could win effortlessly and, even better, there was money!

Certainly he knew that the elder had come for a Go game. But, as a poor Go player, he would rather act dumb in refusal of the visitor's covert probing than arousing suspicions with his pathetic skills.

With 20,000 yen in his hands, Lu Shu returned to the inner room. Bunndai asked, "Did Oda Tokuma really come for you?"

"Yes. He came for a game of chess," Lu Shu nodded.

"Was it Go? He did come here frequently last time to play Go. But how did you finish one round so fast?" In her impression, one round would usually take a long time.

Lu Shu replied, "His skills can't be compared to mine. Thus, I won easily. I wanted to have another round with him but he refused to. Here, 20,000 yen that he lost to me. It should be enough for our recent expenses... Nie Ting, is so unreliable..."

Bunndai was dumbstruck. So there was a bet now and he had won it? Besides, Oda Tokuma was a famous chess player in Nishinokyo and few could defeat him. How could Lu Shu actually win the game so fast?!

Was Lu Shu really so damn powerful?

Then Lu Shu asked a question she was not expecting at all, "Are you sure there's no inheritance?!"

Bunndai smiled, covering her mouth. "You are so greedy for money."

"Who doesn't like money..."

...

When Oda returned to his secret base, Sakurai was still practicing in the yard. Surprised by his fast return, she asked, "How are you back so soon, sensei? Did you win?"

Oda froze mid step for a second. Then, he replied, "No. I lost. You may continue getting in touch with him like what we have agreed earlier. Try to get him to our side before he knows your identity."

"Okay." Sakurai made a respectful bow, but her heart was overwhelmed with shock. How could her master have possibly lost to that young man?!

479 THE OPENING OF DOJO TRAINING SESSIONS

Early in the morning, Bunndai heard sharp air-splitting sounds outside when she was still in her bed. Thus, she dressed herself and pulled open the door to see Lu Shu practicing his swordplay in the yard.

Lu Shu asked apologetically, "Did I wake you up?"

Bunndai shook her head, smiling. "No worries. Please carry on. I'm going to make breakfast for you."

She checked the time. It was only 3am!

At the very beginning of Lu Shu's cultivation journey, he woke up at 3am everyday to

practice swordplay with Li Xianyi. Every stroke had to be performed to the fullest.

Yet, with the stagnation in his progress on sea of chi and snow mountain, it had been a long time since he had trained like that. Hence, a sense of disorientation struck him amidst his rapid growth in strength, and his original purpose in cultivation seemed to be drifting further away.

Li Xianyi once said that one should never forget how to handle a physical sword even when they had reached the level of utilizing everything as their swords.

Maybe one day everyone would reach the end of the road. By then, the sword that one held in their hand would be the only weapon to protect them from harm.

Lu Shu had suddenly found his inner peace upon his arrival in Nishinokyo. There was no need to be concerned about his chives nor the relic, and even the enmity between the Conservatives and the Jingoists did not appear that urgent due to the drastic difference in their strengths...

At the moment, Lu Shu ground his Corpseudog and Concealed Arrow day and night. Li Xianyi once told him that the snow mountain was meant for him to sharpen the intent of his sword, whose meaning remained unclear even till that day.

But honestly speaking, Lu Shu enjoyed peaceful days like this. They were soothing.

After breakfast, Lu Shu saw a slender figure at his door, Sakurai Yaeko.

He drew a startled breath. "You are so early!"

Sakurai smiled. "I'm free on weekends anyways, so I decided to train under you,

sensei. I believe my hard work will definitely pay off eventually."

Lu Shu mused. "Then you'll need to pay me more."

"From Sakurai Yaeko's distress, +199!"

20,000 yen was only the lesson fee for two hours. Besides, Lu Shu had wanted to recruit more students. So wasn't it sensible that she had to pay more for longer hours of lessons?

Sakurai took a long while to consider her response. "Sure. No problem, sensei."

She had no shortage of small change like that. Furthermore, the investment would be worthwhile so long as she could get close to Kirihara Yousuke and roll him into their plan.

But disappointment set in after one day of practice, which comprised solely of basic moves like hacks and splits, nothing related to cultivation at all.

Sakurai felt relieved. She planned on getting another step closer.

Before she left at night, Sakurai suddenly asked, "Sensei, can I be your live-in student? I can take care of you or anything you want me to."

That was the usual way adopted before the passing on of true skills. It would be more convenient for the teacher to teach and observe a student's character when they stayed together.

Yet, Lu Shu rejected at once without any room for negotiation. "No."

Sakurai was stunned for a long moment, racking her brains for a possible reason for this straightforward rejection. Her identity was definitely safe as of now, so was it because she was not pretty enough? Nonsense!

Meanwhile, Lu Shu was calculating too. Not to mention the girl's hidden identity, her addition to the household would mean a higher budget on food.

Clearly she had wanted to take advantage of him!

Then, he asked, "Sakurai, would you mind me telling others that you are my student?"

Puzzled, Sakurai guessed he might be probing her sincerity. Hence, she smiled at once. "Why would I? It's my honor to be your student."

"Good." Lu Shu nodded.

...

At night, Sakurai sought help from her teacher after she returned to the base. "I think he is too wary. He's neither willing to teach me real things nor let me get close."

"Normal," Oda replied calmly, "Do you not remember your greatest advantage? Go. No more hesitation."

When this moment had finally come, Sakurai Yaeko felt sorry for herself. In any case, she was like a goddess in so many boys' hearts and her face and body were almost flawless. However, in the end, such a perfect body had to be sacrificed.

Despite her great efforts in cultivation, it turned out that in her teacher's eyes, her looks and body were a greater strength of hers than her capabilities.

Oda cast her a glimpse. "Do you feel undeserving?"

Sakurai knelt down on the tatami, her forehead touching her knees. "No. Not at all."

"Then go. Actually, the Kirihara Yousuke now is not a bad boy. Maybe he will be a good lifelong partner for you."

"Understood."

Now thinking about it, Sakurai suddenly felt that in spite of Kirihara's mediocre appearance and occasional annoyance, she felt comfortable by his side.

Generally speaking, it felt... natural.

Almost the antonym of pretentiousness, he would dig his nose when he felt like it, totally disregarding her presence...

The next morning, Sakurai was so shocked that she felt like being struck by lightning as she arrived at the door of Beika dojo.

There was a gigantic hand-drawn poster pasted outside the dojo and went, "Sakurai Yaeko's swordplay. Do you want to be as superb as Sakurai Yaeko in swords? Attend the lesson now at only 20,000 yen per session. Open on Saturdays and Sundays!"

Lu Shu walked out when she was struggling to gather her thoughts.

"So... this is why you asked me yesterday whether I minded you telling others that I'm your student?!" Sakurai could not help but ask.

Feeling a bit guilty, Lu Shu replied, "Rest assured that I won't pocket all the money. I'll give you 2,000 yen per student!"

Even though he had gained her approval, he felt a little guilty for using her reputation in Nishinokyo high schools for free.

"From Sakurai Yaeko's distress, +999!"

What the heck? So now she had a new identity, the publicity person for a dojo?!

At this moment, a young student walked out from the dojo. She was overjoyed upon meeting Sakurai. "Sakurai senpai! You are really learning swordplay here!"

Sakurai replied absently, "Yea..."

Then the student took out her phone from her pocket and shouted excitedly, "I really met Sakurai senpai! Come! Quick! Yes, it's true!"

"From Sakurai Yaeko's distress, +999!"

Now she realized that perhaps her teacher was right. She was no rival to Kirihara Yousuke in terms of cunningness...

480 TANIGUCHI BUNNDAI'S BACKUP PLAN

Standing at the yard gate, Lu Shu put on a sophisticated look and eyed the crowd of students gathering in front of his dojo. In fact, he did have a great master's mien when he wanted to.

What was a great master's mien? Absolute confidence, of course.

When someone wanted to pick a fight with the dojo, a great master would dismiss him with ease because he knew he was unbeatable.

Now, the same went for Lu Shu. Anything could be the essence of swordplay if he insisted so, because no high school students could defeat him.

In only an hour, there were already dozens of students sitting in the hall with their legs crossed. They were ecstatic to have lessons with Sakurai Yaeko...

Although honestly Lu Shu did not want to draw a percentage from his earnings to be given to Sakurai, it was a long-term strategy.

Sakurai Yaeko walked to Lu Shu and made a bow. "I suppose there are no more students for today. Shall we begin our lessons now?"

Right, thought Lu Shu, it was unrealistic to expect every Nishinokyo high school student to come due to the fees. But he was surprised to see a handful of girls in the group.

Seriously? Japanese girls are into THAT?!

"Alright. Sakurai, you'll be the teacher for today. You can practice what you have learned through guiding others as well," Lu Shu said, acting as if it was totally sensible. Then he returned to the backyard for a rest.

Those students did not mind at all. After all, they had come for Sakurai Yaeko. They would be more than happy if she could teach them herself!

But Sakurai was on the brink of frustration. So it turned out that you simply wanted to keep me busy?!

"From Sakurai Yaeko's distress, +666!"

At the moment, the front hall was filled with laughter. Lu Shu liked this kind of teaching mode, because everyone was happy about it, except Sakurai Yaeko.

Bunndai smiled, covering her mouth. "You are so interesting. I can see that young lady likes you, yet you are making things difficult for her. Actually the Kiriharas had never hosted so many students concurrently before. It reminds me of those old days. So boisterous."

"She has approached me with hidden agendas. She is a Class C, yet pretends to be an ordinary student. Besides, she came right after Kirihara Yousuke's parents' passing. It can't be so coincidental," Lu Shu said. He did not think it was necessary to keep it a secret from Bunndai, since they were on the same team.

Bunndai did not seem surprised. "Things like this are actually quite normal, though I haven't noticed anything unusual about her. Be careful, though."

A question suddenly struck Lu Shu, and he thought aloud, "If I'm exposed, you will surely be in trouble. Has the Heavenly Network prepared any backup plan for you?"

Thus, if Lu Shu's mission failed, Bunndai would start a new life with another identity.

In fact, she felt happy and touched by Lu Shu's concern. No one would be willing to team up with a cold-blooded reptile anyway.

In the meantime, Chiba stopped in front of the lively dojo.

Down about her studies, she decided to go for a walk, though she could not explain why she had ended up outside Kirihara's house. Mixed feelings welled up in her heart at the sight of the dojo. No wonder Kiriharakun had rejected her invitation to a movie, it was because he was busy with reviving his family's martial arts business.

Immediately her depression from the rejection was swept away. You are the best, Kiriharakun! She thought.

In the next instant, however, the poster caught her attention. "Sakurai Yaeko's swordplay"!

She took a long moment to straighten out her thoughts. Had Sakurai Yaeko been practicing swordplay with Kiriharakun all along?

The phrasing of the poster was indeed misleading. It seemed to suggest that all of Sakurai's sword skills were learned from the Kiriharas.

Chiba felt a sharp prick in her heart. Distress crossed her face as she realized that Kiriharakun's refusal to watch Sakurai's sword match was not because of a lack of interest. Furthermore, Sakurai's confession was not a pure coincidence either.

Could it be that she had developed admiration for Kiriharakun during their long-term practice? It was highly likely.

Chiba was pretty too, but her body could not be compared to Sakurai Yaeko's at all. As a matter of fact, many Japanese girls were not blessed with an attractive body

shape from birth. But Sakurai was an exception.

Thinking of that, Chiba's heart was plunged into gloom again.

She turned and continued to walk forward. Then, she heard something landing on the ground in the lane next to the Kiriharas' yard. Out of curiosity, she looked in that direction, only to see Lu Shu walking out after just having climbed over the wall.

"Kiriharakun?!" Chiba gasped in shock, and shot another look at the dojo. "I thought you were teaching inside!"

Lu Shu was stunned too, not expecting to see Chiba there. "Err... Why are you here?"

Nervous, Chiba immediately pulled an excuse. "I'm going to buy groceries and happened to walk past here."

"Oh." Lu Shu gave a nod and decided to leave, with no intention to justify his suspicious actions...

Before he walked far, he turned and whispered. "Don't tell anyone that I climbed out. It's a secret!"

Chiba nodded, but did not extend any invitation to Lu Shu again. She needed time to muster her courage after the rejection.