

## Chapter 81: Su Lingyue's Performance

At this moment, the exhibition match on-stage had already ended. The two sides left the stage after the announcer notified their departure. Very soon, new people appeared.

After two consecutive rounds, the quarter-finals finished their exhibition matches. Next was the semi-finals.

After the semi-finals, it was the champion exhibition match.

The champion exhibition match started from the first years, with the third years being the finale.

When the sun set and the sky above the stadium completely darkened, the champion exhibition match began.

When the announcer declared the beginning of the champion exhibition match for the first years, Su Ping, who was dozing off, woke up immediately. His interest was piqued when he thought about that proud sister of his who was about to show up.

To be honest, he had never seen Su Lingyue in real combat.

As for Su Lingyue's Phantom Flame Beast, it had already reached the mid-tier of the fourth rank. It could even rank in the top eight amongst the third years, much less the first years. Although this fellow was usually arrogant, she did have the right to act the part.

In one of the first grade classes, a few girls were surrounding a girl with black, straight, long hair. When they heard the announcer present the final match, one of the girls reminded the black-haired girl in the middle, "Yueyue, it's your turn."

Su Lingyue nodded slightly, her expression cold.

This was her usual behavior in school. The people around her didn't find it strange and were already used to it.

"All the best, Yueyue. Defeat him with your most beautiful pet skills!" Another round-faced girl clenched her fists and cheered.

Su Lingyue nodded.

At this moment, the announcer presented her name and the other person's. At the same time, a beam of light shone over, enveloping Su Lingyue in the crowd, attracting everyone's attention.

"All the best!"

"All the best!"

The girls cheered her on.

Su Lingyue stood up. When she passed the mentor in front of her class, the mentor said to her earnestly, "Don't be careless. Even if it's an exhibition match, it won't look good if you lose."

Su Lingyue nodded and walked onto the competition stage.

Her opponent was already standing on the other side of the stage. He was waving at a certain part of the stadium, as if someone he knew was there.

Many students brought their families to watch the exhibition match.

When Su Lingyue saw the other party's actions, she thought of the admission ticket she had given in the morning. Her heart skipped a beat. *I wonder if he's here yet?* She subconsciously glanced at a particular place of the audience stands; it was the area for the admission ticket she gave.

There was a sea of people there, but she had excellent eyesight. After a sweep, she didn't see that familiar and detestable face.

After that, his face became even more detestable in her heart.

*As expected, he didn't come... Humph, it's good that he didn't. I don't care for him.* Su Lingyue was fuming in her heart. She gritted her teeth. If she had known earlier, she wouldn't have given him the ticket. *It would have been better to throw it in the trash can!*

She looked away and casually glanced at other places. It was the area for the upperclassmen. Suddenly, she saw something familiar... To be precise, it was a person. She looked carefully and her eyes widened.

*It's him?*

*Is it really him?!*

Our little Ne Zha<sup>1</sup>... Pui! Pui! Pui!

*It's that bastard?!*

*How did he get into the upperclassmen area?*

*Wait a minute. Isn't that the owner of the Lightning Rat next to him?!*

Su Lingyue was a little surprised. After double checking, she realized that she wasn't mistaken. Not only was he there, but he was also sitting in the front row, surrounded by famous people from the school.

*What... is going on?!*

The referee at the side of the stage was also speechless. *What is going on? I've already called out to her three times, but she still doesn't hear me?!*

"Su Lingyue?" the referee shouted again.

Su Lingyue heard this and came back to her senses. She looked at the referee.

"The match has begun," the referee reminded.

Only then did Su Lingyue react. She looked at her opponent, and noticed how his originally smiling face had turned into a furious one... feeling that he had been despised?

Su Lingyue felt a little wronged, but there was no way to explain it. Besides, it was fine if he was angered. She was not afraid. Her thoughts had returned to the match. Thinking of the despicable fellow below the stage, she raised her chin slightly. *Hmph, I'll show you how powerful I am!*

She directly let the Phantom Flame Beast reveal its true form and enter a battle state.

Howl!

The Phantom Flame Beast jumped down from her shoulder and landed on the ground with a baby-like roar. However, after it roared, its body was instantly enlarged, turning into a ferocious tiger that was nearly two meters tall. Black wings grew out from its back.

The advanced pets of the demon family had three abilities—flight, illusion, and fire!

Also, their close combat skills were not bad. They were the most popular among the advanced pets. Even in their young state, their prices were very expensive.

Her opponent also summoned his pet. It was the most popular dragon-type pet, the Silver-Winged Dragon!

This was a dragon hybrid, but it had extraordinary combat strength. It had a ninth-rank bloodline, but it was still in its growing stages. Its body was only five meters long, and its combat strength was around the fourth-rank.

“Attack!” Su Lingyue raised her hand, and four amplification skills were instantly applied to the Phantom Flame Beast. She was a first-year student, but her amplification skills were all level two. Judging from her casting speed, she was extremely skilled; it wouldn't be very long for her to reach level three.

If a strong pet could be bought with the wealth of a family, most students would still be unconvinced, but this augmentation skill was enough to show Su Lingyue's skills and hard work. This was not something that could be achieved with money.

Her opponent was also using an amplification skill, but he was clearly slower than her. Furthermore, the increase in strength was actually at level one.

For first years, a first-level augmentation was the passing mark for the year-end examination.

However, the speed of the opponent's casting was also very fast. It wouldn't take long for her opponent to reach level two.

As soon as the Phantom Flame Beast went on stage, it unleashed the familiar spiritual intrusion and interfered using illusions. This illusion not only affected pets, but also their owners.

The moment the Silver-Winged Dragon was affected by the illusion, it suddenly let out a dragon's roar. The spiritual power of a dragon-type pet was extremely strong. Considering the pride of the dragon species, it was unwilling to bow its head so easily. With the dragon roar's dispelling, the illusion that had invaded its master's mind was also cleared.

However, the effect of the illusion was still effective. It had stalled for time.

The Phantom Flame Beast flew out at a rapid speed, spewing flames.

Flames surged out like a sea, and the scorching temperature was swept out. The entire stadium was rising in temperature.

The Silver-Winged Dragon roared and blasted out cold air. It also flew up and clashed with the Phantom Flame Beast.

The collision between flames and ice, the roar of a dragon, and the intense battle made the crowd cheer even louder.

Su Ping nodded slightly. It was a good show.

“The first-year students nowadays are very strong.” Lan Lele and Su Yanying sighed. They had not been as strong when they were first-years. This was truly the era of a new generation!

The battle continued, and it was extremely intense. Not long after, an unexpected illusion interfered. Su Lingyue’s opponent was suddenly distracted, and the Silver-Winged Dragon, who didn’t receive any instructions, suddenly became a little rigid. It was caught by the Phantom Flame Beast, and a huge fireball blasted it out of the stage, causing the front row to tremble like an earthquake.

The cheers erupted again.

Su Lingyue looked at the Phantom Flame Beast that was slowly descending and a smile appeared on her face. From the corner of her eye, she saw that hateful face was smiling. Just like the people around him, he was clapping for her.

She was slightly taken aback as she stole a glance with a smug look in her eyes before she looked away. She turned around and bowed to thank the crowd before turning to leave the stage.

At this moment, the girl’s back was facing the lights of the entire stadium. Only her silhouette was left. However, the illuminated corner of her mouth was slightly curved upwards.

## **Chapter 82: Impressive Appearance**

Several people with overwhelming, yet restrained presence were seated on the rows closer to the stage, both male and female; precious fruits were placed on the desks in front of them. Each of the fruits could be sold at several hundred coins but none of these people darted a single glance at them.

“The girl that used the Phantom Flame Beast has a fast reaction. She is worth training.”

“I see two good students here. I believe I must pay this place another visit in two years.”

“Well, why bother? I think you like to sign contracts in private. Why don’t you go and sign them now?”

“Right. We agreed that we must compete fairly. It turns out that a certain shameless person went and used contracts to confuse the kids. How despicable!”

Several people were sneering and anger was visible in their eyes. Only two in the group were smiling as if they couldn’t understand what the others meant. One of the two even had the guts to say with a laugh, “The view tonight is stunning.”

Vice Principal Dong Mingsong was sitting on the side with those guests. His face was smiling while his heart was beaming with pride. Usually, the school had to try hard to make those top-tier teams select their outstanding students, and to ask those teams to take care of and train those students. But the tables had turned. It was the teams' turn to beg him. This made Dong Mingsong feel so good!

Someone noticed how this old, sly fox was grinning. Pulling a long face, that person asked, "Vice Principal Dong, tell me honestly. How much money have they paid you?"

Dong Mingsong was taken aback. With confusion, he answered with more questions, "Money? What money?"

"Hmm! Still lying!"

"Vice Principal Dong, this is unfair of you. The Principal never did such things. Are you going to hold the scales evenly or not?"

Filled with anger, several people turned their looks to Dong Mingsong. They were all from top-tier teams. While they couldn't do anything to the two shameless people, they could be less polite toward Dong Mingsong.

Dong Mingsong replied with an innocent tone, "I don't know about that. By the time I found out, they had already signed the contracts. There's nothing I can do."

"How could you possibly not know? I will tell this to the Principal. Believe me," someone claimed in rage.

Dong Mingsong said, upset, "I don't have anything else to say even if you tell the Principal. I honestly did not know."

Since he was sticking to his story, the others were enraged and yet helpless. They were at a loss when they tried to figure out what to do with the two shameless people and one old fox. Secretly, those people were regretting not coming up with such shameless moves themselves. Why did they have to be so noble and pure in their thoughts?

That was a sin!

On the spectators' seats, Su Yanying said to Su Ping as she looked at the champion of grade two who had come to the stage for the match, "It'll be our turn soon."

Su Ping sat on his seat and looked around, bored. Now and then, he would gaze at the seats in the distance by the stage. He saw several people there. They had to be the most powerful few in the entire stadium.

"Are those top-tier teams that have come to the school to recruit students?" Su Ping's eyes glowed. The top-tier explorer's teams would only pick students with both potential and strength from amongst the famous students. The second and third-tier teams could only pick students out of average Astral Pet universities.

There were seven famous schools in the Longjiang Base City, and Phoenix Peak Academy was one of them.

Fan Yujing's sister, Fan Xiaoyu, was studying in another famous school as well, one that was in the upper town area. Even amongst the seven famous schools, that school was at the top; it had a well-established fame that went beyond the Longjiang Base City.

Su Yanying noticed that Su Ping's mind was wandering. She whispered to alert him, "Sir?"

Su Ping came back to his senses and threw her a glance. "What is it?"

"It'll be our turn soon," Su Yanying repeated.

Su Ping replied, "Oh, I heard you."

Su Yanying was surprised. "Aren't you going to get prepared?"

"Prepare?" Su Ping gave her a look of confusion. "Prepare what?"

"Eh..." Su Yanying didn't know how to answer when Su Ping had such a nonchalant attitude. It was the exhibition match and winning or losing would not change anything. That being said, if she were to suffer a huge loss, that could still exert some influence and she would be embarrassed.

Besides, she had signed a contract with a team; she knew that the team she was going to join after the vacation was there that day. They could see her performance.

Even if it was only an exhibition match, she was not less nervous than when she was in a formal competition.

"Nothing." Su Yanying shook her head. She supposed Su Ping just wanted to step on the stage and advocate his Lightning Rat. She was the main character. The splendor of the match was going to be up to her. She closed her eyes at once to adjust herself and relax her body first.

Then, she began to go through the possible scenarios of the match in her head. After all, she had fought against the Thunder Basilisk. She knew what skills that pet had mastered. This time around, the Thunder Basilisk had improved and progressed, which gave her more pressure. She could not make any mistakes. Otherwise, she would lose with shame!

Time zipped by.

The exhibition match between the champion and the runner-up of the second years had come to an end. The combat was more intense compared to that of the first years. The atmosphere was heated and everyone was more excited than ever.

With much anticipation, the commentator presented Su Yanying and Ye Hao's names. Another wave of passionate cheers came from the audience. Many families of the students present were inspired by this lively scene. At the same time, they felt a bit jealous and pitiful. After all, those two were not their kids.

"Brother, it's our turn now!"

Ye Hao sat amongst the crowd of the third year's class six. He was radiating like the sun and people could pick him out from the crowd immediately. Sitting next to him was a girl about 16 or 17 years old. She dressed in a pretty and fashionable way, wearing a coffee-colored knitted hat, and her earlobes were shining because of two delicate crystal ear studs.

Noticing that the atmosphere had been ignited because of Ye Hao's name, her face was covered with excitement. Ever since she was a kid, her brother had been her idol. He had always been the best whether considering his powers as a battle pet warrior or his strength in other studies.

"Yin, let's go." Ye Hao smiled and stood up. His classmates applauded him and cheered for him. Ye Hao was the monitor of his class. He was handsome and wealthy, as well as gentle and humble. The girls in his class adored him and... so did the boys.

Ye Qingyin stood up, giggling.

The two of them walked in the corridor. Many contract runes began to emerge in the air. The Thunder Basilisk stuck its head out from the space. Ye Hao held his sister's hand and hopped onto the head of the Thunder Basilisk. The next moment, its more than ten meter long body also came out from the contract space. The Thunder Basilisk flapped its wings, creating turbulent currents for those who sat by the corridor.

Some boys had spent a long time getting their fangs ready but were left in a mess after the crazy wind surge. They weren't looking good in front of their muse. Angry, those boys said some swear words in their hearts.

At the same time, Ye Hao had already mounted onto the dragon and taken flight. He caught the attention of all those present. The dragon roared as he neared the stage.

This kind of appearance was undoubtedly impressive and arrogant; adding his handsome looks, many girls began to cheer in a frenzy. Some of them almost fainted due to the excitement.

### **Chapter 83: Frightened Lighting Rat**

Su Yanying was ready as well. She could feel how excited people were. She took a deep breath and said to Su Ping, "Let's go."

"Of course." Su Ping nodded.

"Yingying, good luck." Lan Lele cheered for her.

Su Yanying nodded. She walked to the corridor with Su Ping following her. Many people noticed the two and there was a small-scale cheer for them.

Su Yanying presented herself with a low-key attitude; most of the audience was still focusing their attention on the handsome man standing on top of the soaring dragon. In comparison, Su Yanying's glow was subdued and she received little attention.

Ye Hao slowly descended to the stage. By then, those that had been paying attention to him finally noticed Su Yanying on the other side of the stage. There was another round of cheers.

Ye Hao was lofty and out of reach. On the other hand, people were more curious about the mysteries hidden by Su Yanying.

People not only regarded Su Yanying as a talent. They thought she was a geek, since no normal person would devote so much energy to a Lightning Rat.

“There’s something off about this Thunder Basilisk, right?”

“It is just huge!”

“This size... the Thunder Basilisk is not in his growth stage anymore. Right?”

Many outstanding students and teachers present were shocked the moment the Thunder Basilisk emerged. Most likely, the Thunder Basilisk had reached adulthood given its sheer size. Which rank was an adult Thunder Basilisk at? At least the seventh rank!

This was a pet that had reached the advanced level, not to mention that the Thunder Basilisk was of the dragon family, the most fierce of all advanced pets!

Amongst pets of the same rank, pets of the dragon family were the strongest of all in combat, far superior to the other pets. Only a few pets of the demon family could compete against those of the dragon family.

“A Thunder Basilisk that has just reached adulthood?” On the spectator’s seats, some of the powerful warriors from top-tier teams were taken aback. A pet of the dragon family of the seventh rank? The master had to be at the fifth rank as a minimum to summon such a pet. If the master was at the fourth rank, the master’s astral power would be sucked out and the pet would escape the constraints that came with the contract. The pet would lose control and even hurt its master.

“A student with a fifth-rank astral power.” Some among the powerful people pulled long faces and only one of them was wearing a smile with excitement and pride. He had signed a contract with Ye Hao to later join his team. As for the fact that the Thunder Basilisk had achieved a breakthrough, he had found out at the contract signing. Because of this, the team gave Ye Hao excellent benefits. Ye Hao could become an official explorer directly.

Besides, Ye Hao could have access to Class B uncultivated areas and train there. This was a great start for him. Not long in the future, Ye Hao was very likely to become a gold medal explorer. He was a talent that had the potential to become a team captain!

The other people then understood what had happened. They cast a look at this smiling man, all with awful looks on their faces.

Previously, they were just sorry that they couldn’t sign a contract with this talent. At the moment, they were furious.

They would be scolded by their captains if they found out that such a talent had been snatched away by others. More importantly, they felt sorry that such a talent would empower another team. This was just a huge loss!

Since the talent was unattainable, people would be prone to pick bones. Several of them glared at Dong Mingsong and one of them snorted. “Vice Principal Dong, this Thunder Basilisk has reached the seventh rank. Even among the explorers, such a level can be considered formidable. I don’t think this exhibition match must go on. Miss Su’s Lightning Rat is strong. That being said, it is a low-rank pet, not a match to



the Thunder Basilisk at all. Besides, if you ask me, this Thunder Basilisk is beginning to show the dragon's deterrence trait. I'm afraid the combat will come to an end before it even begins."

He was the one that signed a contract with Su Yanying. She was currently on his team. That was why he would address her as "Miss Su," and why he couldn't accept this seemingly unfair match. Not only would she serve as a prop to Ye Hao, but her opponent would also be able to make a show of authority.

Besides, the Lightning Rat was a rat. People would normally say "as timid as a mouse" for a reason. The Lightning Rat was timid and it would be frightened when coming across a pet of the dragon family. If some psychological trauma was caused, then this genius Lightning Rat would be broken!

Hearing his words, the other people sneered. The dog-eat-dog fight had begun.

The others just sat on the side and looked on with a detachment.

Dong Mingsong hurried to calm that man down, "I have told their teachers and Ye Hao promised he would alert Miss Su as well and ask her to send out the Fallen Phoenix. He will pull his punches. After all, the Fallen Phoenix is also an advanced pet. Although the Fallen Phoenix has yet to reach adulthood, it does have its pride and will not be overwhelmed by the dragon's deterrence. Her defeat will not be embarrassing."

However, this man was unhappy. "Is it an exhibition match when one side enjoys a land sliding advantage?"

"Well, the exhibition match is just for people to enjoy a show. Only a match where you can win and you can show up is called a fair game, right?" The young man that signed a contract with Ye Hao sneered. "If you have true abilities, just win with your strength. We have made compromises. What more do you want? This is a place where strength rules. Will you have a debate with the monsters and beasts about what is 'fair' when you are exploring uncharted lands?"

"You!"

Dong Mingsong mediated between the two quarreling parties. "The match is about to begin. Let us watch it for now."

The two pulled long faces and snorted out of contempt, but neither continued the verbal fight.

On the stage, Ye Hao and his sister had landed on the ground. He said to his sister, "Stay within my Astral Shield and do not come out."

"Sure. Good luck, brother," Ye Qingyin said with a chuckle.

Many people recognized Ye Qingyin when they saw her. Someone exclaimed, "Isn't she a new trainee of Star Entertainment Media?"

"Is that so? The singer who made the song 'The Snow Sings and the Star Dances' popular?"

"Oh my god. I'm a huge fan of hers. She's Ye Hao's sister? God, their family is awesome. They're so good looking! Please save some grace for us!"

Ye Qingyin's presence caused some minor disturbances. As opposed to her brother Ye Hao's interests, she liked music. Therefore, she didn't go down the path of becoming a battle pet warrior. Instead, she became a singer. She had gone to the exhibition match to cheer for her brother, and at the same time boost her popularity with the exposure.

She believed that she would be the highlight of the base city's entertainment news the next day.

Su Yanying noticed Ye Qingyin by Ye Hao's side as well and this took her by surprise. Su Yanying had once heard Ye Qingyin's song by chance and knew her. But Su Yanying had no idea that she, the star, was Ye Hao's younger sister.

In this era, battle pet warriors were the mainstream in society. However, battle pet warriors did watch TV and listen to music. Therefore, those singers and actors had their markets and they were supported by their fans as well.

#### COMMENT

Su Ping noticed the look on Su Yanying's face and asked, "What is it?"

Su Yanying came back to her senses and shook her head. "Nothing." The look in her eyes became more serious as she focused her mind. Astral powers surged within her when she opened up the pet space and summoned both the Lightning Rat and the Fallen Phoenix.

She trusted Su Ping when he said that the Lightning Rat could withstand the dragon's deterrence. Still, just to make sure, she summoned the Fallen Phoenix as well.

The match didn't stipulate that no two pets could be summoned at the same time. It was just that the demand for the master's control when two pets were called out was much stricter. Just by applying the augmentation skills on the two pets would exhaust one-third of her astral power, not to mention that she had to multitask.

If she did well, the outcome would be stunning. But if she couldn't handle it, she would be in a muddle and it could backfire on her.

"Why did she take out the Lightning Rat?" Off the stage, Su Yanying's mentor and Dong Mingsong were both shocked. Previously, her mentor had found a chance to tell her. She agreed at the time, but it was clear that she didn't accept it.

"Hmm." Ye Hao's eyes glistened with coldness when he saw Su Yanying call out the Lightning Rat. She was incorrigible. He warned her out of goodwill but she was ungrateful.

The Lightning Rat that had just hopped out from the contract space caught the attention of everyone present. As soon as the Lightning Rat landed on the ground, it felt a threat, something that was familiar and unforgettable.

In an instant, all of its hair stood on its roots. A reflection of someone standing on the side was visible in the Lightning Rat's eyes.

1“Hmm.” Noticing how the Lightning Rat was behaving, the contempt in Ye Hao’s eyes deepened. What was the use of having talents and a strong comprehending power? Nothing like this would be of any use when a truly powerful being was there. The Lightning Rat didn’t even dare to stand in front of a pet of the dragon family!

## **Chapter 84: Decisive Failure**

Su Ping saw the Lightning Rat looking quite stressed and couldn’t help but smile. “Hey, little guy. Miss me?”

The creature immediately hid behind Su Yanying’s leg and trembled upon seeing Su Ping’s wicked grin, one that had been imprinted deep inside its memory. Its recent life was quite enjoyable because Su Yanying always made sure there was enough food, care and rest. But as soon as it saw Su Ping again, it was reminded of all the nightmarish training it received a while back.

Su Yanying, on the other hand, was glad that she brought her Fallen Phoenix as a back-up plan. Still, she wondered why her Lightning Rat was afraid of Su Ping, instead of the Thunder Basilisk on the other side of the stage.

Unfortunately, she couldn’t read her pet’s mind with more accuracy yet.

Wait, why is HE up there? Su Lingyue saw his brother showing up together with the “runner up” of the third year and failed to believe her eyes.

She had always seen Su Ping as a sluggish and useless failure who knew nothing other than bullying the weak. How could he even stand together with Su Yanying?

More importantly, what was he doing on stage? Was he going to play a grandiose prank in public?

Knowing him, Su Lingyue knew she almost had the right answer.

Curse him. So that’s why he was in the seniors’ area. To hook up with a girl! Su Lingyue felt her good mood was instantly replaced by sudden fury.

“Get ready, you two!” On the stage, the judge was already announcing the start of the match. In fact, he felt more stressed than the participants because he was responsible for ensuring their safety; he wasn’t so sure he could stop a Thunder Basilisk, who had just been promoted to the seventh rank.

Su Yanying nodded to the judge and gave her Fallen Phoenix the order to move. The bird leaped into the sky while covered in intense flames; the entire stadium became hotter.

“Blazing Ray!” Su Yanying told it to use its strongest move when they still had the chance.

The audience exclaimed in awe when they saw the fourth-rank Fallen Phoenix using an eighth-rank skill. Blazing Ray was not an inheritable skill, which meant Su Yanying put a lot of effort in training her pet.

Ye Hao saw how the crowd was reacting and smiled widely. This was just what he wanted—the better Su Yanying performed, the more glorious he would look after defeating her.

Upon receiving his order, the Thunder Basilisk unleashed a deafening howl toward the sky, causing everyone watching to flinch under its absolute might.

The Fallen Phoenix, too, had its actions interrupted. Its Blazing Ray rapidly shrank until it disappeared.

“It cut off an eighth-rank skill using its roar! So that’s the true power of a high-rank battle pet...” some among the audience uttered.

Su Yanying grimaced as she realized that her opponent never intended to give her a chance to “exhibit”, just like Lan Lele mentioned.

The Fallen Phoenix felt the rage of its master and responded by gathering its flame again.

“Still unwilling to give up? Good. Let’s play some more.” Ye Hao smirked.

The Thunder Basilisk didn’t attempt to stop the attack this time. It patiently waited until the scorching fire beam approached and struck its wing.

Bang!

The main screen in the stadium showed a close-up picture of the attack. There, people saw a finger-sized white scar left behind on the Thunder Basilisk’s wing, which didn’t look like a serious injury at all. Before the camera was pulled away, the scar was already disappearing.

A Thunder Basilisk was also believed to be a dragon-type. Such creatures usually possessed superior resistance as well as self-regeneration properties. It was rare to see a dragon-type Astral Pet bleed to death.

Once again, the spectators called out in surprise.

Even if the Fallen Phoenix was below the fifth rank, that beam attack still packed a punch. A pet of the same rank would have already been killed by it. And yet, the Thunder Basilisk shrugged it off!

Su Yanying was then too shocked to act. That was indeed her Fallen Phoenix’s best skill. At this rate, she would be unable to get through the Thunder Basilisk defense at all, even if it stood there and let her pet do its worst.

The gap between them was way too big!

Ye Hao smiled in satisfaction when he looked at Su Yanying’s face, before he told his basilisk to unleash a combination of showy attacks—Dragon Breath, Frigid Brine, Thunderstorm and Leer, all of which were high-rank skills.

The first three were meant to show off the well-balanced potential of the creature, while the last one was for intimidating the Fallen Phoenix. Anything with an inferior bloodline would only tremble under the basilisk’s gaze.

The first three skills went off somewhere in the sky without hitting the phoenix, which was what Ye Hao tried to do. Still, their deadly power did a number to the stage below as if some kind of brutal battle had just destroyed everything.

If he wanted, Ye Hao could absolutely ask the basilisk to burn the stadium down.

The Fallen Phoenix stopped moving as soon as it was affected by the Leer skill. It tumbled down and slammed into the floor while still trembling badly.

It lost, hands-down.

The stadium remained quiet for a while at the end of the game because people at least expected some kind of exciting clash between those two brilliant pets. However, as it turned out, Su Yanying was nothing when fighting against Ye Hao. All she did was amplify Ye Hao's dominance.

It couldn't be helped, though. A seventh-rank Thunder Basilisk was just too powerful.

"I... I..." Su Yanying was overwhelmed by both rage and despair.

"Come on, where's your Lightning Rat?"

Su Yanying looked up and saw Su Ping giving her an odd look.

"But my rat is—"

"Your rat is braver than you think."

On second thought, Su Ping decided not to let the girl continue as it was. In such a state, she would just lose another match miserably.

"Fine, let me handle it." Su Ping sighed and looked at the small creature still shuddering beside Su Yanying's feet. "Hey, little one, come here already, if you don't want to embarrass both me and your master to death."

The rat blinked and pretended with an "I don't know what you're talking about" look.

Su Ping rolled his eyes and sent a spiritual order that way. "Do as I say or I'll take you to another training trip."

The rat understood the evil will hidden behind those words. In order not to go through all those nightmares again, it slowly joined Su Ping, after giving its master a pleading look.

"See that guy over there? Beat it up, and I'll leave you alone."

The Lightning Rat looked at the Thunder Basilisk with excitement clearly shown in its tiny eyes. Earning more vacations was more than enough reason for it to follow Su Ping's order through.

It puffed up its body, sharpened its claws and displayed the unstoppable will to fight.

Su Yanying almost fell agape when looking at her pet so obedient when Su Ping didn't even have a pet contract with it. She heard how experienced battle pet warriors could communicate with other pets using their spirits, but... She never thought Su Ping could do such a thing with her rat.

And I never told my Lightning Rat would listen to him!

## **Chapter 85: Intense Battle**

Su Yanying didn't have the time to worry about her pet having another master because the creature had already made a move.

Thunder Rush!

By covering its limbs in electricity, it bolted away like a missile, while people could only see a flashy trail left behind.

Thunder Rush allowed the rat to move at almost Mach 2 and instantly reach its opponent. Next, it created a blade made out of electricity and slashed at the Thunder Basilisk's neck.

Several scales were knocked off, leaving a shallow cut behind.

Roar!

The Thunder Basilisk furiously gazed at the smaller enemy annoyingly hopping about.

"What was that??"

"The Lightning Rat!"

Once again, the onlookers didn't know how they should react after witnessing such a reversal. They all recognized the Lightning Rat, but nobody expected it to actually hurt a seventh-rank Thunder Basilisk who had just reached adulthood.

As they believed, the Thunder Basilisk could scare off weaker opponents by simply standing there, or greatly intimidate stronger ones. How could the Lightning Rat make the first move?

Rats were supposed to be cowards!

All the people in the stadium, including the invited settlers, thought that the match had ended when the Fallen Phoenix fell. Yet they were proven wrong by a Lightning Rat they had been ignoring for a moment.

A Lightning Rat bold enough to challenge a basilisk. What kind of rat was that?

"What the..." Ye Hao also checked the new enemy in astonishment. When he looked further, he saw Su Yanying similarly shocked.

And he felt displeased. If his Thunder Basilisk failed to suppress the rat, he would be helping the rat look better instead.

"Heh, I see." He took a deep breath and sent his killing intent to the basilisk.

He had decided to utterly destroy the little nuisance. No matter what happened during the match, people would only remember the winner.

Roar!

Affected by both its master's emotions and its challenged ego, the Thunder Basilisk shrieked madly. The sound, combined with the natural aura of a mighty basilisk, echoed in the stadium, making all those present shudder in fear.

This was how people usually felt when going up against dragon-type Astral Pets. They'd lose their will to resist at the very beginning.

The participants of the tournament grew exceptionally restless. Since the Thunder Basilisk easily knocked them out before breaking through to the seventh-rank. They wondered what would happen if they were to repeat the matches right then. They'd forfeit beforehand, probably.

"Sh\*t! That's what you get for playing jokes on such an occasion!" Su Lingyue clenched her fists while looking at the miserable image of his brother. She was ready to go to his rescue at a moment's notice because that basilisk could make short work of him anytime.

"Frigid Brine!"

Under Ye Hao's command, the Thunder Basilisk unleashed freezing air that immediately expanded to freeze up the stage. Apart from causing a slippery footing, the basilisk could further increase the effect and freeze the Lightning Rat into an ice sculpture, unless the rat knew how to fly.

"Oh Gods..." The dropping temperature woke Su Yanying up from her shocked state as she realized what Ye Hao was trying to do.

Su Ping saw the Lightning Rat still gathering the gray energy of death and rolled his eyes. "Stop it. Your enemy won't give you time to summon a powerful Undead. Use your brain!"

Hearing Su Ping's spiritual order, the rat quickly canceled the skill it was casting. It didn't like being around Su Ping, but it knew how to trust his decisions.

The rat tried to use Undead Calling because the best shot it used at the beginning failed to knock out the basilisk, and it felt anxious about finishing the job in time.

It assessed the battlefield more carefully and began retreating toward the edge of the stage yet to be covered in ice. Meanwhile, it used All-round Thunder Prison to destroy the approaching ice so it had a safe spot to stand on.

Using the same trick, it opened up a small path on the icy stage and slowly approached the Thunder Basilisk.

Ye Hao frowned and changed his tactic.

The silver eyes of the basilisk glowed as the creature Leered at the Lightning Rat to send the invasive spiritual energy that way.

"Thunder Roar!" Su Ping ordered.

Ordering the rat without a contract wasn't as convenient, though the rat had spent enough time with him to efficiently heed his order.

Another deafening roar boomed inside the stadium despite the rat's size, causing everyone to flinch yet again.

Su Yanying, being so close to the rat, almost jumped in fear.

Thunder Roar was a simple intimidation tactic amplified by the power of lightning. It had little effect against the Thunder Basilisk. But at the same time, the Lightning Rat was also moving freely without slowing down by the Leer skill.

“Did it fail??” Ye Hao widened his eyes. “Do it again!”

Roar!

The Lightning Rat kept breaking through the ice, unaffected.

Ye Hao had realized that the rat had something to counter the basilisk’s Leer. Though he couldn’t understand how Thunder Roar had played a part in this.

Without much time to think of a plan, he simply told the Thunder Basilisk to use Thunderstorm.

Su Ping saw several miniature thunderbolts swirling on the basilisk’s wings; checking the Lightning Rat’s position, he noticed that the skill would go off before the rat could reach the basilisk.

Damn it. It has a tiny brain after all.

Su Ping couldn’t complain. The Thunder Basilisk was a genuine high-rank pet that should not be underestimated, or the match would have ended after the first move. He just had to give more specific orders.

“Use Shadow Image and go in three different directions. Cast All-round Thunder Prison as bait, while your true body shall flank it from the side. Tell the other shadows to prepare Thunder Slash and Thunder Rush to get closer. Aim for its vital points and eyes, then send something into its mouth. Now move!”

The basilisk’s attacks were both flashy and deadly. Su Ping was worried that the Lightning Rat would lose for real if the fight was dragged for too long. He had to seize the best possible chance to end everything.

## **Chapter 86: Fall**

The Lightning Rat received Su Ping’s orders and felt the old experiences of going through all the hellish lessons coming back. In the next second, it coated its fur under lightning bolts and entered full concentration.

Thunder Shadow Image!

After another flash of blinding light, two more Lightning Rats joined the battle.

The All-round Thunder Prison they unleashed had its range tripled and almost covered the entire stage. A large thunder strike came down upon the Thunder Basilisk and swallowed it up.

Infuriated, the basilisk spat out a fire beam to fend off the lightning bolt. The conflicting attacks created quite a beautiful sight to behold.

2Whoosh!



As Su Ping instructed, three Lightning Rats dashed toward the basilisk from three directions while preparing different skills.

Ye Hao grinned and silently applied an astral rune onto the basilisk's body. This one was meant to speed up the creature's energy output.

The basilisk aimed its whip-like tail at the closest Lightning Rat. With a "poof," the shadow was destroyed. The energy brought by the Thunder Rush and the Thunder Armor was also detonated like a bomb. Still, such energy was not enough to break through the basilisk's hide.

Next, the basilisk shot out another fire beam which overwhelmed another fast-approaching shadow. The attack melted all the ice in its way and made the whole area look blurry.

The Lightning Rat was quickly losing control of the shadows it created. It was expected that the shadows would get hit that soon.

"This is too easy." Ye Hao humphed in disdain. He knew those rats were fake, but he'd get rid of them nonetheless so his opponent wouldn't hide smart tricks in them.

*Wait, where's the real one?*

The Lightning Rat was occasionally blinking out of existence as it used Thunder Flash to move, preventing everyone from knowing its exact location.

Thunder Flash was one of the ten most powerful secret arts available to the thunder family, which was said to allow its user to almost unpredictably teleport around. A pet unable to catch the rat could only bear its rapid assault like a stationary practice dummy.

But in this case, the Thunder Basilisk was extremely tough thanks to its superior dragon blood. Maybe the rat could knock off more of its scales, which wouldn't hurt at all.

"Petty tricks are nothing compared to true strength!" Ye Hao smirked again.

The Lightning Rat appeared right above the basilisk's head and made another "flashbang" before the basilisk had time to react. When the basilisk was too blinded to defend itself, the rat clawed at its opened maw.

People heard another thunderous roar from the basilisk. But this time, it sounded in pain.

Ye Hao regained his sight and saw a large gash almost splitting one side of the basilisk's mouth. If the wound was any deeper and reached all the way to its neck, the basilisk's jaw would have come off.

The Lightning Rat reappeared several meters away and gazed at the basilisk carefully. There was blood and the residue of some gray energy lingering on its claw. What the rat used was not a lightning attack, but Claw of the Undead. This energy-enhanced attack was enough to harm the basilisk where its defense was weak.

"Got you." Su Ping smiled in satisfaction.

Everything happened within five seconds so nobody knew how the seemingly losing Lightning Rat suddenly gained the upper hand. It was the turn for the Thunder Basilisk to look pitiful.

“What just—”

The settlers were just as dumbstruck as the students. They saw the Lightning Rat using the same moves as before, but in a completely different way. Such an ingenious tactic had improved the effect of Thunder Rush several times.

Su Yanying just couldn't believe that the battle could turn out to be this easy for the Lightning Rat. She only saw her partner rushing there and using its claw in a direct attack, and everything was done.

Ye Hao spent a moment looking at his wounded pet and suddenly showed a cruel look.

Roar!

The Thunder Basilisk screeched hysterically and floated in the sky. It gathered the intense power of lightning until its entire body became a shining globe.

Then the creature aimed its attack at the place where Su Yanying and Su Ping were standing.

“No—”

Su Yanying immediately knew what Ye Hao was trying to do. He was forcing the Lightning Rat to protect its master from the attack. As an offensive pet bad at defense, the rat would get into serious trouble at this rate.

To make it worse, the effect of Frigid Brine had locked up Su Yanying's feet. The basilisk could have frozen her to death if its master instructed it to.

“You asked for it.” Su Ping frowned. He had more than one way to kill the basilisk back there but didn't find that necessary. But then...

He sent another order to the Lightning Rat, who responded by showing a bloodthirsty look.

Ye Hao asked the Thunder Basilisk to go into the sky so the Lightning Rat couldn't reach it. But this was no longer helpful when the rat could use Thunder Flash to freely and rapidly go where it wanted.

The rat reached the basilisk's bleeding mouth in a millisecond and unleashed several attacks at the same time.

Bloodthirst Bite, Claw of the Undead, and finally, Thunder Slash.

Boom.

The “healthy side” of the basilisk's mouth exploded.

Losing focus, it had its skill interjected and allowed the Lightning Rat to see another opportunity to attack.

The rat jumped onto its back and used Thunder Rush.

The basilisk was hurled toward the ground as if it were being knocked away by a hammer. The falling momentum made a large crater on the stage floor and caused the entire stadium to quake.

As the clouds of dust settled, people saw its tail helplessly slumped over the edge of the crater, while its body was further below.

For a moment, the stadium stayed deathly quiet.

### **Chapter 87: An Uncrowned King**

The Thunder Basilisk lost the match!

At this very moment, the once majestic creature had collapsed inside the pit in an extremely unpleasant way. Most of its scales had cracked up and blood came out from all over its body. It didn't move at all; it was probably unconscious.

Nobody made a sound because they couldn't accept the sight before their eyes. Their previous belief was that a seventh-rank Thunder Basilisk making a debut in the academy's tournament was illegitimate by itself, because it would squash all the other pets with ease. In the end, another pet had been against such an outcome. A Lightning Rat, who had recently lost a match against the basilisk, at that.

How in the world did the Thunder Basilisk lose after it just broke through to another rank?

The owners of the combating pets—Ye Hao and Su Yanying—were both left awestruck on the stage. The match ended too quickly and they didn't have nearly enough time to take in everything yet.

Through their "connection," Ye Hao knew that his Thunder Basilisk had fainted. Obviously, his seventh-rank dragon-type Astral Pet had been knocked senseless. Obviously.

How come?

HOW COME??

Ye Hao madly repeated the question in his mind.

Similarly, Su Yanying found it too difficult to accept reality. She should be glad that his Lightning Rat turned out to be the winner. Still, she didn't feel the joy of it at all. She wasn't the one fighting the match.

Fizz, fizz!

The Lightning Rat emerged from the crater with two swift leaps and happily toddled her way.

At this moment, Su Yanying remembered that she had to do something about her frozen legs, or she would lose them if her muscles were damaged. Quickly, she channeled some astral power to thaw herself out.

Crack.

She heard another cracking noise and saw Su Ping doing the same, although he seemed rather relaxed for some reason. The ice on his legs came off as he took a step forward, just like that.

Su Yanying found her mind bloated with too much confusion. That was a skill from a seventh-rank Thunder Basilisk. He broke out of it like it was nothing?

The settler guests were the first ones to recover from the unbelievable display, though they didn't look any less surprised. They could see that both pets were using their full strength back there, which meant the Thunder Basilisk would have emerged victorious if nothing went wrong.

Well, something went very wrong indeed.

They had witnessed how irregularly strong the Lightning Rat was during the previous matches. Nevertheless, there should be a limit to the creature's true potential. People thought they had seen the creature's "cap" when it lost against the Thunder Basilisk the other day.

And it wasn't a feeling of disappointment. On the contrary, they still considered the Lightning Rat to be an exceptional miracle.

That day, however, they might need to review that idea.

"That rat is fighting a little bit... differently, I think," a settler commented with a serious look.

His partner nodded. "Agreed. The skills are the same, except for the Thunder Rush. But it suddenly learned how to make better use of them to gain the upper hand, especially at the end. Thunder Rush is a supportive skill used for moving faster. Yet it somehow used its power to knock the basilisk off the sky. Such creativity."

"It reminds me of all those veteran Astral Pets who have gone through many battles during barren land expeditions. Fast, accurate and deadly. But experience alone can't help it counter the Leer skill. How did it manage to do so?"

"The Lightning Rat's strength didn't change. The tactics were different. If I'm not mistaken, Su Yanying wasn't the one issuing commands during the match."

It was a woman talking this time, who attracted everyone's attention with those words.

"Take a closer look at the young man next to her. Both of them were affected by the Thunder Basilisk's Frigid Brine, yet he already freed himself, while Su Yanying is still trying, as you can see." The woman threw Su Ping an inquisitive look.

She didn't show it, but she was very startled to see someone walk out of the ice trap as if he were shaking off some insignificant cobwebs. Even though they weren't the main targets of the Thunder Basilisk, what Su Ping did hinted at his extremely rich astral power reserves. Probably of the fifth rank or higher. With that kind of age, he was undoubtedly more talented than Ye Hao.

"I see..." The other settlers saw the same thing and all agreed.

"So, that young man is not from someone's family, but Su Yanying's helper?"

"Tsk. He looks even younger than Miss Su. By the way, Mister Vice Principal, which class is he from?"

Dong Mingsong frowned in confusion. "I... don't remember. Is he from this academy at all?"

As the vice president, he knew every outstanding student in this institution. Yet he couldn't remember seeing that young man. Could that be a student who always stayed low among people?

That was good news though. There would be another brilliant genius under his watch.

“Who’s his professor anyway?” he muttered to himself. “I’m going to remove his bonus for failing his job...”

On the stage, the judge made sure that the Thunder Basilisk wasn’t moving any longer and gladly announced the winner of the match.

It took some time for the audience to start applauding, which lasted a long time until the loud cheers could be heard miles away from the stadium.

That night, the famous Lightning Rat had put up another wonderful performance no one was expecting. None of the common spectators clearly saw how the rat had beaten the Thunder Basilisk, although that wouldn’t change their opinions regarding the awesome creature.

Dazzling fireworks marked the end of the festivities.

The wounded Thunder Basilisk and Ye Hao were gradually forgotten over the course of the celebration. The result of the exhibition match did nothing to affect his championship or his award money, yet people were not going to see him as an actual champion, that much was certain.

To make it worse, he did tell his basilisk to go all-out. Nobody would believe him if he were to say that he was going easy on the Lightning Rat because it was supposed to be an “exhibition.”

“Brother...” Ye Qingyin gave her brother a worried look.

The yelling crowds, the beautiful light shows and the joyful atmosphere had made Ye Hao’s lonesome figure look even more miserable. Ye Qingyin had always respected her brother since her childhood. Seeing him like this, she felt overrun by unbearable sadness.

## **Chapter 88: Special Admission?**

“Someone wants to see us?”

Su Yanying and Su Ping had yet to get off the stage when a manager of the academy walked over and invited them to the office building, saying that an important man was expecting them.

Su Yanying more or less knew who this “important man” was, since she had met him many times when her Lightning Rat made its name. And she felt excited to find out what kind of commendation she’d get after her rat’s brilliant performance.

She had only spent 10,000 astral coins at Su Ping’s shop to train her pet, which rewarded her greatly by instant-defeating a seventh-rank Thunder Basilisk. Whenever she thought about this, she couldn’t help but feel grateful.

Then she was terrified when she saw Su Ping already seated while helping himself with some hot tea.

This was the Vice Principal’s office!

Su Yanying felt it hard to stand properly while waiting for the Vice Principal as it was. And yet, Su Ping was already making himself at home.

“Get—get—get up from there,” She quickly urged. She wouldn’t want Su Ping to leave a bad first impression.

Su Ping was looking in another direction while checking the painting of a Purple-tailed Divine Phoenix on the wall. Just like the statue at the academy’s gate, this one also seemed to be the work of a master. Only... the phoenix didn’t look as awesome. It was only a Beast King, after all.

“What?” Su Ping heard the warning and slowly stood up, for he thought Su Yanying was calling him.

“The Vice Principal will be here soon. You don’t want him to see you like that!”

Su Ping sat down again. “What’s the big deal? Someone asked me to come, only to keep me waiting. It’s not like I need to ask for any favors. You know what? I’ll just leave if he doesn’t show up soon.”

Su Yanying decided not to argue because it made sense. Besides, the Vice Principal was probably asking for her. He didn’t know who Su Ping was or care how he behaved.

“Someone’s coming,” Su Ping said as he pricked up his ears.

At the same time, Su Yanying heard footsteps approaching and her heart skipped a beat; she quickly straightened herself at a seemingly proper spot beside the sofa.

The door of the office was pushed open, but no one came in. It seemed that whoever had just arrived was taking his time to check what was going on in the room.

“Mi—Mister Vice Principal, sir!” Su Yanying quickly uttered upon seeing not one, but several mighty figures outside, which only doubled her mental pressure. As someone who had recently gone through a lot in the academy, she managed to show her good manners by smiling politely.

An old man walking in front of the group nodded back with a kind smile and searched for the other “guest” in the office, only to see Su Ping’s head partially hidden behind the back of the sofa.

He wondered how Su Ping would react if he, as an elder, gave him a kind reminder to not slack off like that when someone important was present.

“Ahem. Welcome, Mister...?”

By doing this, Dong Mingsong meant to both announce his arrival and tell his assistant to leave.

Su Ping stood up so he didn’t appear too ill-mannered. He was a little surprised to see a total of seven people waiting behind the old man. Every one of them more or less had battle scars somewhere on their bodies. One of them even had the tip of his nose cut off, which gave him a horrid skeleton-like appearance. This man would surely scare kids out of their minds, that much was certain.

“Greetings.” Su Ping nodded slightly.

The simple response puzzled the visitors. This probably meant that Su Ping didn’t recognize the Vice Principal.

But how?

They realized that the young man they were looking at was not a student of the academy.

Dong Mingsong thought about the same thing and felt his mood drop. "Are you a student here, my boy?"

"No." Su Ping shook his head.

The other visitors quickly made up their own plans.

Meanwhile, Dong Mingsong felt greatly disappointed since he no longer held the right to decide which team could accept Su Ping. Su Ping's presence meant nothing to the academy as things stood.

A woman with red hair spoke up, "Judging from your age, you're a first-grader, am I right? Which school are you studying in?"

"I'm not currently receiving any teaching."

"You... what?"

As they previously discussed, this young man could be a better talent than Ye Hao. Someone like this had no proper education?

Dong Mingsong's eyes glimmered. "What's your name, young man? Are you perhaps interested in coming here? I can grant you free tuition, living expenses, an independent dorm and even an advanced Astral Pet pup upon your graduation. Or even an adult one, if you have good scores. What do you say? If you say yes, I can finish up the registration today so you can start your lessons tomorrow!"

Dong Mingsong spoke too fast, never giving the others the chance to say otherwise. Right then, they could only throw their hateful glares at the old man's back.

Meanwhile, Su Yanying listened with a look of disbelief.

The Vice Principal is inviting Su Ping to the academy? Free of charge? A good pet as a gift? Why have I never heard of any of this before??

Reduced tuition was a commonly-seen welfare usually provided to brilliant students. But not even the top scorer could simply get an advanced pet for free!

Su Yanying started to wonder if the old president was in his right mind that day.

Besides, she should be the one under the spotlight. Why was everybody looking at Su Ping instead? Did they already find out that Su Ping was the trainer of the Lightning Rat?

On the other hand, Su Ping was rather discontented by the offer. Luo Guxue had already invited him to become an honorary professor in the academy, yet this old man had offered him a lower spot.

"I'm sorry, but no."

## **Chapter 89: Invitations**

Both Dong Mingsong and Su Yanying were agape after hearing the response.

No??

This was THE Phoenix Peak Academy. Countless people would pay with their lives to be admitted. The Vice Principal directly invited Su Ping *and* provided many bonuses, but he actually refused? And he didn't hesitate in the least!

"You... think again, please," Dong Mingsong tried.

Su Ping shook his head. He did consider accepting Luo Guxue's suggestion, though he had yet to reach a solid decision. As for becoming a student? Definitely not.

Dong Mingsong's eyelids twitched at the absurd playout of events. Not even Ye Hao, the top ranker in the academy, enjoyed such privileges. He had already gone over the line by presenting those generous offers; he might have needed to talk with the president later to seek approval later, otherwise, he'd be paying the expenses himself.

He never thought his offer would be rejected like this.

A bulky man stepped ahead. "All right, Mister Vice Principal, you shouldn't force the guy since he said no. As far as I can see, an outstanding young man like this already has a dependable teacher. He doesn't need the academy. Heck, what he did back there was better than what your best graduate can do."

Dong Mingsong knew he didn't have a say on this so he stepped aside.

"What's your name, my friend?" the big man asked directly.

"How about you go first?"

"HA! You're funny. The name's Fang Baili. As in the fang of ferocious beasts!"

"I'm Su Ping. Though my life is hardly peaceful<sup>1</sup>."

Fang Baili bellowed with laughter. "I like you, man."

"Can't say the same. I'm not interested in dudes."

Fang Baili choked on his laughter and stared at Su Ping.

The others chuckled upon seeing their companion getting stumped like this.

The red-haired woman spoke again, "Baili, dear, you already have Su Yanying on your side, how about leaving Su Ping to us? Mister Su, I'm Ji Rongying. Or just call me Ying for short. I represent a Class A settler team working for the base city. By joining us, you'll receive—"

Another young man beside her didn't let her finish. "Chill out already. We're all Class A teams, aren't we? Besides, your team focuses on missions in Class A barren areas where six out of ten advanced battle pet warriors return in body bags. Are you seriously telling Mister Su to go to that kind of place, huh? Come on. My team is the best for settler recruits as we have multiple bases established around Class B areas. If you want safer jobs, Mister Su, we can train you in Class C areas as well. There will be teammates protecting you. I don't know about anything else, but we can make sure you stay alive while exploring."



“Can you now?” Another middle-aged settler smirked. “If someone tells you about being absolutely safe in the barrens, you’re talking either to a legendary battle pet warrior who can kick Beast Kings’ as\*\*s, or an amateur who doesn’t know what he’s talking about. I mean, we all know that Beast Kings sometimes show up in Class C areas. How can you fully protect anyone?”

“Nonsense! How often do you run into Beast Kings in a Class C barren land? Once in several decades? And there are so many Class C areas out there. If you’re afraid of that kind of stuff, you might as well stay home for the rest of your life!”

“Nothing is impossible. Besides, my team can do all that too.” The middle-aged man threw Su Ping a friendly look. “If you join us, Mister Su, you get an advanced demon-type Astral Pet trained to its adulthood. You don’t let another man protect you, you take care of yourself! Capiche?”

Su Ping didn’t have the chance to speak as yet another settler was already chipping in. “Humph! You made it as if that’s something rare. Demon-type pets come in a large variety, including strong ones and squishy ones. I would step back if you promised, like, a dragon-type pet instead. That would guarantee a useful result.”

“You talk as if you can afford one!”

“Of course we can. If Mister Su comes with me, I’ll raise enough funds to get him a dragon-type pet within a year.”

“A year, huh? So he works for you for a year *before* getting paid. What a smart plan you got there!”

“It’s better than your stupid demon anyway!”

The settlers started arguing without letting Su Ping speak at all.

Su Yanying felt more and more defeated after hearing all those insane offers presented to Su Ping. She didn’t get to enjoy these things by joining Fang Baili’s team. An adult demon-type? That would cost at least millions! Even more, if it had good potential!

2She began to wonder whether she had made the right choice.

Several days earlier, Fang Baili invited her to a café to talk over their future plans, during which she was too excited to decline any of the man’s conditions. She thought it was glorious enough to be chosen by a first-class settler team. There was no point in bargaining.

“Hey, hey, guys.” Su Ping tried making himself heard among the quarreling folks. “It’s good and all, but you know, I’ve never intended to become a settler.”

The heated discussion was instantly silenced.

“You, you don’t?” Fang Baili stuttered. “Even with that kind of skill??”

Su Ping’s response just reminded them of something they already had in mind. There was probably someone way more powerful acting as Su Ping’s backup. He didn’t need to risk his life gaining fortune and fame as a settler at all.

“I’m just not interested in this line of work. Sorry.”

If it was for improving himself, he could simply use cultivation planes without worrying about dying for real. If it was for money, he had his shop to help with that. All the recent income was enough to sustain his life, unless he needed a larger budget to buy a powerful pet.

And even if he did need a powerful pet, he could use the Incubation Pool in his shop and perhaps produce a Beast King if he was lucky. He had no reason to join dangerous expeditions with settlers when he could play it safe at home.

## **Chapter 90: Meet Acquaintance**

“Are you serious?”

“Do you know that, given your talents, joining any one of our teams can guarantee a monthly salary of over a million in the future? Aren’t you interested?”

Those people frowned with clouds over their faces. They had been arguing there for such a long time and it turned out that Su Ping claimed he had no interest. This was an opportunity that many so-called talents could never get in their lives and Su Ping had just turned it down.

Sitting on the couch, Dong Mingsong wore a strange look. He was having a *deja vu* kind of feeling. It was like the same thing that had happened just moments before...

Su Yanying didn’t know what words to use to describe her feelings right then. Su Ping had turned down the Vice Principal’s offer and had just refused the invitations of so many top-tier explorers’ teams.

He wasn’t interested in becoming a student nor an explorer. What was his interest?

Besides, Su Yanying didn’t understand what the explorers’ teams and the Vice Principal saw in Su Ping. The Lightning Rat had been trained in Su Ping’s store. However, it was evident that the one training the Lightning Rat was the mysterious master trainer working for his store. It had nothing to do with Su Ping, who didn’t train the Lightning Rat. It was unlikely that a master trainer could be this young. Could it be that those people were trying to approach that master by forging a relationship with Su Ping?

Wasn’t that too much of a trouble?

While Su Yanying’s thoughts were floating about, Su Ping gave his answer, “I am sorry. Please go and find someone else.”

Everyone looked at each other speechlessly as Su Ping claimed his refusal again. They were all frustrated. They had fought against each other for such a long time, but it was merely their wishful thinking. Su Ping had no desire to join them at all.

Since Su Ping had demonstrated his resolution, those people could only stop trying to persuade him. Besides, they were having some worries. Su Ping was young but he could escape from Frigid Brine. No matter how talented he might be, he couldn’t have learned this by himself. There had to be a powerful backer. Therefore, none of them were willing to risk offending such a connection.

“Fine.” Feng Baili sighed. Regret was written all over his face.

Ji Rongying stepped forward and handed Su Ping a card. "Here's my contact information. You may not need this now but in the future, if you're interested, you can contact me then. Our team will always welcome you."

What Ji Rongying did reminded the others. They offered their contact information as well.

Su Ping accepted all their cards and said, "I will take my leave if you don't have any other matters."

Everyone smiled a bitter smile and let Su Ping go.

When he was about to step out of the office, Su Ping had an idea. He turned to Dong Mingsong and said, "You are the Vice Principal, right? Can you please do me a favor?"

"Eh?" Dong Mingsong did not expect that Su Ping would talk to him all of a sudden. A second of surprise later, Dong Mingsong asked, "What is it?" His eyes were glowing. Su Ping had asked him for a favor. The former would then owe the latter.

Su Ping went on, "Promote my pet store in the academy. Tell students that the Lightning Rat was trained at my place. Students that want to have their pets trained can come to my pet store."

By luck, he had met the Vice Principal. This was the best advertisement opportunity, better than what the two minions under Su Yanying and Lan Lele could do.

Su Yanying was taken aback by Su Ping's words. This man had cast his eyes at the Vice Principal? The Vice-Principal of a famous school, he was the professor and an eighth-rank battle pet warrior. The Vice Principal enjoyed fame and prestige in the entire Longjiang Base City. How could he help with advertising?

Dong Mingsong was surprised as well. He didn't expect those words from Su Ping. What shocked him more was that, based on Su Ping's words, he ran a pet store and that genius Lightning Rat had been trained there.

The explorers were just as baffled. Young as Su Ping was, he was the owner of a pet store? Was this a family business? Was that Lightning Rat honestly trained in his pet store?

Feng Baili thought of something. He turned to Su Yanying and asked, "What was the strength of your Lightning Rat like before it was trained?"

Su Yanying became nervous as he asked this question. She knew that Feng Baili valued her mainly because of her genius Lightning Rat. Being its master, she had some credit.

However, she was well aware that she had done nothing. Before she handed the Lightning Rat to Su Ping's pet store, the Lightning Rat was just an average, low-rank Lightning Rat. But later on, the Lightning Rat had become a formidable being that had defeated a seventh-rank pet of the dragon family.

"Intermediate position of the first rank." Hesitating, Su Yanying said the truth. Lying would not get her anywhere. Given the connections and powers the explorers had, they could find out about the truth easily. Besides... she was eager to know if her strength would be recognized by them without the credit of training the Lightning Rat.

“Middle position of the first rank...”

Everyone was surprised, which was followed by silence.

It was a rank common amongst average Lightning Rats. To train a Lightning Rat of the first rank into something that could defeat the seventh-rank pet of the dragon family... that wasn't merely outstanding. It was unbelievable!

Not even a master trainer they knew could have achieved this!

They considered that the very best master trainers on this planet were incapable of this!

“Are you sure?” Feng Baili asked, being more serious than ever as he gazed at Su Yanying.

Su Yanying answered, “Yes, I am.”

A ray of light glistened in Feng Baili's eyes. He said to Su Ping, “Well, now I have to call you Mr. Su. I wonder where your pet store is. I want to pay a visit.”

“Sure.” Su Ping took out the name cards he had prepared and handed them out.

Everyone took a name card and looked at the address. It wasn't far away. This wasn't a store at a prime location and the name was mundane. They had never heard of it.

“I'll be going now,” Su Ping said after he distributed all the name cards. He could tell from their eyes that those people would pay a visit and might become key customers. He could make a fortune.

Dong Mingsong came back to his senses. He said at once, “Don't worry. I will promote your store for you,”

“Thanks.” Su Ping took off after he expressed his gratitude.

The others saw him out and left as well. They had gone there for Su Ping. Since he had left, there was no need for them to stay in the office. As for Su Yanying, she had signed a contract with Feng Baili. As far as the other explorers were concerned, she was one of them already and further talk with her was unnecessary.

Everyone walked out of the corridor with Su Ping. Along the way, they would meet some teachers from this academy. The teachers would greet the Vice Principal and the explorers as they crossed paths.

Once they arrived at the first floor of the office building, two people headed toward them. Su Ping knew one of them. It was Luo Guxue. With her was another middle-aged teacher, and they were discussing something.

Sensing a huge crowd's presence, Luo Guxue and the middle-aged teacher threw a glance. Luo Guxue looked up, and this one glance surprised her. She had to check carefully to make sure that she did recognize this young man.

“You are here.” Luo Guxue hurried over. Her voice was filled with pleasant surprise.

Su Ping nodded. “I came to watch the exhibition matches.”